

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF YORK

2023 Heat Relief Strategy for People Experiencing Homelessness

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The Heat Relief Strategy is a living document that will be updated annually to incorporate changes and enhancements in response to lessons learned.

1.0 Introduction

The Regional Municipality of York is committed to fostering welcoming and inclusive communities where people have access to the services they need. To create welcoming and inclusive communities for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, York Region partners with service providers to ensure programs, supports and services are delivered using a person-centered, equitable and collaborative approach. This approach reflects best practices that meet each person's unique needs, circumstances, and experiences.

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

York Region's Heat Relief Strategy for people experiencing homelessness provides access to expanded supports and services for people experiencing homelessness during the hot weather season. The 2023 Heat Relief Strategy is in effect from July 1, 2023, to September 30, 2023, although there may be occasions where periods of extreme heat fall outside of this date range, and involves:

- Advising partners and members of the public that extreme hot weather conditions and/or high humidity are expected or currently exist
- Providing information about additional supports and services available for people experiencing homelessness during the hot weather season
- Distributing supplies to help alleviate the effects of extreme heat for people experiencing homelessness who are unsheltered
- Collaborating with service providers to expand access to supports
- Opening overflow beds in emergency housing for people experiencing homelessness during extreme weather events (such as a tornado or flood)

1.2 EXTREME HEAT AND HOMELESSNESS

People experiencing homelessness or living in precarious housing are disproportionately vulnerable to adverse health effects of extreme heat compared to the general population. This increased risk is due to a combination of broad risk factors, including:

- Increased exposure to the outside environment
- Limited or no access to protective measures and supplies, such as sunscreen and shade
- Reliance on active travel, such as walking long distances outdoors
- Inadequate access to water
- Malnourishment
- Pre-existing conditions, such as physical or mental illness or substance use
- Clustering in urban cores, which can result in higher temperatures

Extreme heat is of particular concern for people experiencing homelessness, especially individuals who do not have access to shelter or cool spaces, because the effects of heat exposure are cumulative. The risk of illness due to heat exposure grows with each successive day without cooling. Warm overnight

temperatures may worsen health effects due to limited recuperation from daytime heat. It can take several hours for the body temperature to return to normal following heat stress, and once re-exposed, the body temperature can quickly return to dangerous levels.

While the impact of extreme heat can be deadly, there are methods to prevent and reduce negative health outcomes during extreme heat. Interventions such as warning the public of extreme heat, distribution of educational materials, street outreach for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, distribution of supplies (such as water, hats, and sunscreen), and cooling spaces are shown to be effective methods to reduce potential adverse health effects during extreme heat.

1.3 TEMPERATURE THRESHOLDS FOR EXTREME HEAT

Extreme heat is defined as a period of very high temperatures, typically accompanied by high humidity and lack of nighttime cooling.

In 2016, Public Health Units across Ontario collaborated with the federal and provincial governments to develop and broadly implement a province-wide [Heat Warning Information System \(HWIS\)](#). The HWIS provides a consistent, evidence-based approach to notify the public of heat warnings in Ontario. Heat warning criteria were developed based on the relationship between mortality, air temperature and/or humidex, along with other key factors such as air pollution, climate, and population characteristics.

Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings are issued by York Region Public Health based on the following criteria:

Level	Criteria	Duration
Special Weather Statement	First heat event of the season, at the discretion of Environment and Climate Change Canada, when heat warning criteria is not reached	No defined duration
Heat Warning	Temperatures are expected to be higher than 31°C <i>and</i> Overnight temperatures are expected to be higher than 20°C <i>and/or</i> Humidex is at least 40	Two days
Extended Heat Warning	Temperatures are expected to be higher than 31°C <i>and</i> Overnight temperatures are expected to be higher than 20°C <i>and/or</i> Humidex is at least 40	Three or more days

York Region Public Health receives early notifications from Environment and Climate Change Canada when temperature thresholds for a Special Weather Statement or Heat Warning are expected to be met. Notifications are also sent when the Heat Warning is expected to extend beyond two days, so that York Region Public Health can issue an Extended Heat Warning to the public. York Region Public Health is also notified when conditions are no longer in effect and will end an Extended Heat Warning. Other Public Health Units close to York Region, including Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, City of Toronto, Peel Region, Durham Region, and City of Hamilton, also receive the same notifications and use the same thresholds as York Region Public Health to issue Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings.

2.0 Heat Relief Strategy for People Experiencing Homelessness

2.1 ISSUING HEAT WARNINGS AND EXTENDED HEAT WARNINGS

Staff and community partners who work with people experiencing homelessness are notified of Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings so that additional precautions can be taken to help keep people experiencing homelessness safe.

The following steps are taken to issue Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings in York Region:

1. Environment and Climate Change Canada sends early notifications to York Region Public Health when thresholds for a Heat Warning are expected to be met.
2. York Region Public Health notifies partners by sending an email to their distribution list.
 - Homelessness Community Programs staff and community partners have been added to the York Region Public Health distribution list
 - Internal partners receiving notifications include Community Paramedicine, Access York, Strategic Engagement and Emergency Management, Transit Enforcement and Social Services
 - External partners receiving notifications include local municipalities, York Regional Police, Emergency Housing Central Intake Line, emergency housing providers, drop-in programs, food security programs, organizations providing mental health and addiction services, and other organizations providing services to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness
3. The email notification to partners advises that the **Heat Warning** will be in place for two days.
4. Through Strategic Engagement and Emergency Management, York Region Public Health issues social media posts and news items to advise the public of the extreme heat conditions.
5. Information on how to keep safe during extreme heat can be found on york.ca/ExtremeHeat.
6. Heat Warnings automatically expire after two days, as indicated in the email notification.
7. York Region Public Health issues an **Extended Heat Warning notification** when a Heat Warning extends beyond two days.
8. York Region Public Health notifies their distribution list once Extended Heat Warnings have ended.

2.2 DISTRIBUTION OF COOLING KITS

York Region's Homelessness Community Programs (HCP) team has prepared and distributed cooling kits to help mitigate the effects of extreme heat on people experiencing homelessness. Cooling kits have been provided to York Region's Access York, Outreach Services, Community Paramedicine, and Transit Enforcement. Cooling kits have also been distributed to emergency housing and drop-in service providers, and other community partners who support people experiencing homelessness. Cooling kits include:

- Reusable water bottle
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses
- Insect repellent
- Instant ice packs
- Spray bottle

- Sun hat
- Fan
- Light footwear
- Safety whistle
- Emergency safety blankets that provide protection from the heat
- Foldable wallet sized card with contact information and resources for people experiencing homelessness in York Region
- Wallet sized cards with resources on Naloxone, *Report Bad Drugs in York Region*, and the *National Overdose Response Service*
- Gift cards to accessible air-conditioned locations to purchase food and cold beverages

York Region Outreach Services staff have been provided with additional supplies for distribution, such as water carriers and tick removal kits.

2.2 EMERGENCY HOUSING CENTRAL INTAKE LINE

People experiencing homelessness in York Region who are seeking shelter can contact the Emergency Housing Central Intake Line (EHCIL) 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling **1-877-464-9675 ext. 76140**. The EHCIL refers people experiencing homelessness to available emergency housing spaces and provides referrals to other resources as appropriate. To maintain space in the emergency housing system for people in need of shelter, the EHCIL and York Region Outreach Services staff make efforts to divert people from emergency housing by helping them find safe and appropriate alternative housing options, such as staying with family or friends, and/or providing short-term emergency financial assistance.

Staff will provide people experiencing homelessness with additional supports during Heat Warnings, as appropriate, which may include transportation and gift cards to accessible air-conditioned locations to purchase food and cold beverages.

2.3 EMERGENCY HOUSING

Emergency and transitional housing, violence against women shelters, and drop-in programs provide a range of services to help people experiencing or at risk of homelessness strengthen life and housing stability.

During the hot weather season, the risks related to extreme heat are greatest during daytime hours. However, during daytime hours, air-conditioned facilities are open to the public and drop-in programs for people experiencing homelessness are in operation.

Due to the limited capacity of emergency housing and increasing demand for space, service providers will only be asked to provide overflow beds in emergency housing during the hot weather season when storms are forecasted that may result in extreme weather such as tornadoes and floods.

Expansion of Emergency Housing and Drop-in System Capacity

To expand emergency housing and drop-in system capacity, HCP has taken the following actions:

- Transitioned Inn from the Cold from a seasonal operation to a year-round service that is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including throughout the hot weather season

- Extended Blue Door’s Mosaic Interfaith Out of the Cold seasonal shelter program to June 15, 2023
- Resumed regular emergency housing operations at Kevin’s Place as of June 15, 2023, which increased system capacity for adult men experiencing homelessness. Kevin’s Place was previously used as a COVID-19 isolation facility between May 2022 and June 2023
- Increased emergency housing capacity for couples and families with children through a partnership between the Region, a local hotel, and Blue Door Support Services
 - The hotel program is an extension of services offered through Leeder Place Family Shelter
- Allocated new funding for rent assistance to help move people experiencing homelessness out of emergency housing and into longer-term housing in the broader community

More information about emergency and transitional housing facilities in York Region can be found at york.ca/EmergencyHousing

2.4 DROP-IN PROGRAMS

Drop-in programs for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness are operated by service providers throughout York Region to increase housing and life stability. Programs offer food and beverages, personal care services including washrooms with showers, access to technology and Wi-Fi, case management, peer support and opportunities for connection.

Drop-in Programs			
Program	Location	Eligibility	Hours
360°kids Home Base	10415 Yonge Street, Suite D Richmond Hill	Youth ages 26 and under	Monday to Friday: 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Belinda’s Place	16580 Yonge Street Newmarket	Women	Daily; 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Sutton Youth Services	20898 Dalton Road, Georgina	Youth ages 26 and under	Monday to Friday: 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Inn from the Cold	510 Penrose Street Newmarket	Adults	Monday to Friday: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. <i>Weekend hours to be added in August</i>
Krasman Centre	Richmond Hill Wave Pool 5 Hopkins Street	Adults	Sunday, Tuesday, and Saturday: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday: 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. Monday, Thursday, and Friday: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

To expand access to drop-in services for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness during the hot weather months, Homelessness Community Programs is:

- Expanding hours of operation at the Inn from the Cold and Krasman Centre drop-in programs to include evening and weekend hours
- Exploring the use of additional spaces where people experiencing homelessness can access specialized health and case management supports, food and beverages, hygiene supplies, and cooling kits

2.5 MUNICIPAL LOCATIONS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Municipal facilities are open for all York Region residents to access air-conditioned spaces during operating hours. Depending on the facility, access to water fountains, washrooms, computers, telephones, and Wi-Fi may be offered. The following addresses and hours are based on information from the webpages of the local municipalities.

Municipal Locations Open to the Public		
Municipality	Facility Location	Hours
Aurora	Aurora Community Centre 1 Community Centre Lane	Monday to Friday: 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.
	Aurora Family Leisure Complex 135 Industrial Parkway North	Monday to Thursday: 5:45 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday: 5:45 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday: 7:45 a.m. to 4 p.m.
	Aurora Public Library 15145 Yonge Street	Monday to Thursday: 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday: 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday: 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
	Aurora Town Hall 100 John West Way	Monday to Friday: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
	Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex 1400 Wellington Street East	Daily; 6 a.m. to 12 a.m.
East Gwillimbury	East Gwillimbury Civic Centre 19000 Leslie Street	Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
	East Gwillimbury Sports Complex 1914B Mt Albert Road	Daily; 6 a.m. to 12 a.m.
	Ross Family Complex 19300 Centre Street	Tuesday to Thursday: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
	Holland Landing Community Centre 19513 Yonge Street	
	East Gwillimbury Public Library Mount Albert Branch 19300 Centre Street	
	Holland Landing Branch 19513 Yonge Street	

Georgina	Georgina Civic Centre 26557 Civic Centre Road	Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
	Georgina Public Library – Keswick Branch 90 Wexford Drive	Tuesday to Thursday: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
	Georgina Public Library – Pefferlaw Branch 76 Pete’s Lane	Tuesday to Thursday: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
	Georgina Public Library – Peter Gzowski (Sutton) Branch 5279 Black River Road	Sunday: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
	The Link 20849 Dalton Road	Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Closed Saturday and Sunday
	York Region 24262 Woodbine Avenue	Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
	King	King City Library 1970 King Road
	Nobleton Library 8 Sheardown Drive	
	Schomberg Library 77 Main Street	
<u>Markham</u>	Angus Glen Community Centre and Library 3990 Major Mackenzie Drive East	Daily; 7 a.m. to 12 a.m.
	Aaniin Community Centre and Library 5665 14 th Avenue	Daily; 5 a.m. to 12 a.m.
	Armadale Community Centre 2401 Denison Street	Daily; 8 a.m. to 12 a.m.
	Cornell Community Centre and Library 3201 Bur Oak Avenue	Daily; 6:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.
	Crosby Community Centre 210 Main Street, Unionville	Daily; 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.
	Markham Centennial Community Centre 8600 McCowan Road	Daily; 6 a.m. to 12 a.m.
	Markham Pan Am Centre 16 Main Street, Unionville	Daily; 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.
	Milliken Mills Community Centre 7600 Kennedy Road	Daily; 6 a.m. to 12 a.m.

	Thornhill Community Centre and Library 7755 Bayview Avenue	Daily; 7 a.m. to 12 a.m.
	Unionville Library 15 Library Lane, Unionville	Monday to Thursday: 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday: 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
<u>Newmarket</u>	Magna Centre 800 Mulock Drive	Daily; 5:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.
	Newmarket Public Library 474 Park Avenue	Tuesday to Thursday: 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday: 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
	Ray Twinney Recreation Complex 100 Eagle Street West	Daily; 5:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.
	York Region 17150 Yonge Street	Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
<u>Richmond Hill</u>	Bayview Hill Community Centre and Pool 114 Spadina Road	Monday to Friday: 6:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday: 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday: 7:15 a.m. to 4 p.m.
	Centennial Pool 161 Newkirk Road	Daily*; 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. *Closed Thursday
	Ed Sackfield Arena and Fitness Centre 311 Valleysmede Drive	Monday to Saturday: 6:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.
	Elgin West Community Centre and Pool 11099 Bathurst Street	Monday to Sunday: 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.
	Langstaff Community Centre 155 Red Maple Road	Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
	Oak Ridges Community Centre 12895 Bayview Avenue	Monday to Friday: 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday: 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday: 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
	Richvale Community Centre and Pool 160 Avenue Road	Tuesday and Thursday: 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Wednesday and Friday: 6 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Saturday: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday: 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
	Richmond Hill Public Library – Central Branch 1 Atkinson Street	Monday to Thursday: 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday: 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday: 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.
	Richmond Hill Public Library – Oak Ridges Branch 34 Regatta Avenue	Monday to Thursday: 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday: 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.

	Richmond Hill Public Library – Richmond Green Branch 1 William F. Bell Parkway	Monday to Thursday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
	Richmond Hill Public Library – Richvale Branch 40 Pearson Avenue	Tuesday and Wednesday: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
	Rouge Woods Community Centre 110 Shirley Drive	Monday to Friday: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday: 8 a.m. to 11 p.m.
	York Region 50 High Tech Road	Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
<u>Vaughan</u>	Al Palladini Community Centre 9201 Islington Avenue	Monday to Thursday: 5:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Friday: 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday: 7 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
	Chancellor Community Centre 350 Ansley Grove Road	Monday to Thursday 8 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Friday 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
	Dufferin Clark Community Centre 1441 Clark Avenue West	Monday to Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday: 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
	Father E. Bulfon Community Centre 8141 Martin Grove Road	Monday to Friday 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday and Sunday 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
	Maple Community Centre 10190 Keele Street	Monday to Thursday: 5:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Friday: 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday: 7 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
	North Thornhill Community Centre 300 Pleasant Ridge Avenue	Monday to Thursday: 5:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Friday: 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday: 7 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
	Thornhill Outdoor Pool 26 Old Yonge Street	Monday and Sunday: 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday: 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Wednesday and Friday: 8:15 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. Saturday: 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.
	Vellore Village Community Centre 1 Villa Royale Avenue	Monday to Thursday: 5:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Friday: 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday: 7 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
	Woodbridge Pool and Memorial Arena 5020 Highway 7	Monday: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Tuesday to Thursday: 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Friday: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday: 11:45 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. Sunday: 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
	York Region 9060 Jane Street	Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Whitchurch-Stouffville	Whitchurch-Stouffville Leisure Centre 2 Park Drive	Monday to Thursday: 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday: 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday and Sunday: 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
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2.6 COMMUNITY MEAL PROGRAMS

People at risk of or experiencing homelessness can access community meal programs and prepared meals at no cost, which are offered daily at various locations throughout York Region.

Community Meal Programs	
Day	Location
Monday: 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.	St. John Chrysostom Church 432 Ontario Street, Newmarket
Tuesday: 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.	York Region Food Network 350 Industrial Parkway South, Aurora
Tuesday: 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.	Trinity United Church 461 Park Avenue, Newmarket
Wednesday: 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.	Christian Baptist Church 127 Main Street, Newmarket
Wednesday: 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.	Trinity Anglican Church 79 Victoria Street, Aurora
Thursday* 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. <i>*Second and fourth Thursday of each month only</i>	St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church 484 Water Street, Newmarket
Thursday: 5 p.m.	Keswick Presbyterian Church 23449 Woodbine Avenue, Georgina
Friday: 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.	Inn from the Cold 510 Penrose Street, Newmarket
Saturday: 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.	Trinity Anglican Church 79 Victoria Street, Aurora
Saturday: 4:30 p.m. to 5:45 p.m.	Crosslands Church 47 Millard Street West, Newmarket
Sunday: 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.	Valley View Alliance Church 800 Davis Drive, Newmarket

2.7 INDOOR TEMPERATURES

Homelessness Community Programs is working with partners, including Housing York Inc., emergency housing service providers and Housing with Supports operators to enhance access to air conditioning in congregate living facilities. Where possible, HCP will provide funding for the purchase of portable air conditioning units for common areas and bedrooms, to mitigate risks associated with prolonged exposure to heat in unventilated indoor spaces.

2.8 OUTREACH AND ENCAMPMENTS

York Region Outreach Services staff provide wraparound services and supports to people sheltering outdoors and in encampments year-round. This includes referrals to programs that offer rapid rehousing, income support, employment services, mental health and addiction programs, medical care and other individualized support as needed.

Outreach Services uses a Regional database to track encampment locations, that is updated regularly as encampment sizes and locations change. The presence of “heat islands” in some parts of the Region can increase heat-related risks for people living unsheltered during the summer months. Heat islands are urban areas that are likely to register higher temperatures due to a higher density of buildings and paved surfaces. Outreach Services will provide specific, targeted supports, including heat relief supplies, in areas where there may be increased risk during Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings.

The LOFT Crosslinks Outreach Van is a mobile service that provides food, clothing, harm reduction supplies and cooling kits to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in York Region. The Outreach Van operates seven days per week from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. and can be contacted by calling or texting **1-866-553-4053**.

2.9 TRANSPORTATION

York Region Homelessness Community Programs works with service providers and York Region Transit (YRT) to help people experiencing or at risk of homelessness access public transportation. Service providers supply clients with public transportation fares and offer supplementary transportation support, including taxi fares and rides through program vehicles. YRT’s [Mobility On-Request](#) transit service – a ride-sharing service that allows people to request transit when and where they need it – is available to seniors within select service areas throughout York Region.

YRT Enforcement staff will receive Heat Warning and Extended Heat Warning notifications from Public Health and support people experiencing homelessness using the transit system and facilities at bus terminals. YRT Enforcement staff have been provided with cooling kits, bus transfer tickets and other resources to distribute at their discretion to support people experiencing homelessness.

3.0 Roles and Responsibilities

Implementation of the Heat Relief Strategy involves York Region staff, local municipalities, and community partners. The following section outlines the roles and responsibilities of each program area:

York Region Homelessness Community Programs, Social Services Branch:

As the Service Manager, York Region Homelessness Community Programs provides supports and services to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness and coordinates the following elements of the Heat Relief Strategy:

- Provides supplies to service providers, community partners and partnering municipal facilities to help keep people experiencing homelessness safe during the hot weather season

- Monitors Environment and Climate Change Canada weather forecast to coordinate with emergency housing facilities to open overflow during extreme weather events
- Updates Public Health's email distribution list to include internal and external partners who provide services to people experiencing homelessness
- Provides supports to people living in outdoor spaces through dedicated Outreach Services staff
- Uses a Regional database to track and map encampment locations and identify areas of the Region that may experience higher temperatures
- Provides training to staff in local municipalities, including fire departments, community centres, libraries, and bylaw enforcement to deepen understanding on how best to support people experiencing homelessness and/or who may exhibit complex behaviours

York Region Public Health:

- Issues Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings through the email distribution list when the temperature forecast is expected to meet the HWIS thresholds
- Shares information and tips with the public about how to keep safe during hot weather at York.ca/ExtremeHeat
- Maintains an up-to-date email distribution list for Heat Warnings
- Notifies partners and the public when an Extended Heat Warning has ended

York Region Transit:

- Monitors transit riders, stops and terminals for individuals who may need support
- Offers complimentary transport or bus fare for individuals who need to get to emergency housing or other forms of shelter and/or cooling spaces
- Connects individuals to the Emergency Housing Central Intake Line, Access York, or Homelessness Community Programs staff for assistance
- Offers supplies to individuals in need of protective or safety measures including the distribution of cooling kits

York Regional Police:

York Regional Police work with residents, local businesses, and community organizations to promote strong, safe, and healthy communities. This includes connecting residents with human services and assisting individuals to find emergency housing or other forms of shelter, as appropriate, including throughout the hot weather season.

York Region Paramedic Services:

In addition to providing emergency medical response to York Region residents, during the hot weather season, Paramedic Services:

- Notifies other first responders of Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings
- Informs people experiencing homelessness when hot weather conditions are expected or currently exist
- Supports residents to find emergency housing or access to services, as appropriate

Emergency Housing Providers:

Throughout the year, emergency housing locations offer temporary shelter and provide a range of services and supports for people who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness and have no safe, alternative housing option. Emergency housing providers refer people seeking shelter to the

Emergency Housing Central Intake Line to reserve a space in emergency housing. During the hot weather season, emergency housing providers will:

- Distribute heat protection and safety supplies such as sunscreen, hats, and water bottles
- Open overflow beds during extreme weather events as directed by the Region

Local municipalities:

- Direct residents to heat relief services and supports
- Provide spaces for residents to cool down and supplies to mitigate the harmful effects of heat (to be provided by Homelessness Community Programs in targeted locations)
- Respond to inquiries during heat warnings and make referrals to the Emergency Housing Central Intake Line for emergency housing services, as appropriate

Other community agencies:

Community agencies throughout York Region provide daily services and supports to individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Agencies are encouraged to share Heat Warnings and Extended Heat Warnings over social media and refer residents seeking shelter or supports during extreme heat to the Emergency Housing Central Intake Line or York Region Outreach Services.

Additional Resources

1. [Heat Illness Requiring Emergency Care for People Experiencing Homelessness: A Case Study Series](#)
2. [Strategies to Mitigate the Impacts of Extreme Heat Events Among Homeless Populations in BC's Lower Mainland: A Review of Evidence-Based Approaches and Recommendations](#)
3. [World Health Organization. Heat and health](#)
4. [Extreme Heat and People Experiencing Homelessness](#)
5. [Current Evidence on the Effectiveness of Interventions During Heat Episodes](#)
6. [A Harmonized Heat Warning and Information System for Ontario \(HWIS\)](#)
7. [Developing a Harmonized Heat Warning and Information System for Ontario: A Case Study in Collaboration](#)

For more information about York Region's Heat Relief Strategy contact Erin Kelly, Program Manager, Housing Stability & Homelessness at erin.kelly@york.ca.