

Funding shortfall less than anticipated at men's shelter

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The Dufferin Men's Shelter is making progress in finding sustainable funding to remain open after being declared a 'project in difficulty' by the County of Dufferin.

During the Health and Human Services Committee meeting on Oct. 26, Dufferin County director of community services, Anna McGregor, provided councillors with the first monthly update on the men's shelter's finances.

'We have had a lot of communication with the new chair, we have County staff in attendance at their board meetings and for the month of September we actually provided \$1,774.17 for that month's shortfall; that's a lot less than they had anticipated,' said McGregor.

At their Sept. 14 meeting, Dufferin County Council was presented with a business plan from Keith Ward, board chair of the Dufferin Men's Shelter, asking to obtain \$215,000 in urgent funding to allow the shelter to remain open through the winter.

County Council approved a motion to provide funding up to \$116,000 to the Dufferin Men's Shelter based on the 'project in difficulty' model. The motion stipulated the funding would be given in monthly installments to reflect the monthly costs of operating the shelter.

Under the designation as a 'project in difficulty,' the shelter is required to share its monthly financial statements to allow the county to provide governance and support its financial shortfalls.

'I can say they are making progress and things are not as dire as they thought they were,' said McGregor. 'We are continuing to support in the background and we will continue to comeback and give you reports.'

According to McGregor, the men's shelter has secured additional funding through donors, which is why they didn't use the full monthly allocation from the county in September. The leftover money from the first month of council funding was carried over to help with future months when the shelter may experience bigger financial shortfalls.

'They might need a little bit of help in the new year, but it's not as dire as it was,' said McGregor. 'Each month we are actually looking at the money in and the money out, what they've got in donations and we're assessing as we go so that we don't suddenly have any surprises at the end of the year.'

The Dufferin Men's Shelter, located at 59 Townline in Orangeville, was opened by the Choice's Youth Shelter organization in March 2023. The shelter provides local men aged 25 years and up experiencing homelessness an alternative to living on the street while connecting them with resources to transition to stable housing and gain independence. The shelter initially opened with six available beds but increased due to demand and now has a capacity of 20 beds.

According to Ward, the men's shelter sees between 10 to 13 men each night but has also seen as many as 15.

The County of Dufferin previously provided the shelter with \$163,000 in funding when it opened earlier this year.

'I'm still on the fence as to where this is going to end up and I think it's still early day, but I can tell you the stuff that's in this report is miles and miles and miles ahead of where we were a month ago,' said Coun. Darren White, chair of the Health and Human Services Committee. 'I think some people figures out where they had to be and what they had to be doing to move it forward.'