

MEDIA RELEASE

*For immediate release
May 4, 2020*

Lanark County agencies collaborate to provide housing for vulnerable amid COVID-19

In true Lanark County style, numerous partners have come together to provide an important housing service for those in need during the COVID-19 crisis.

A collaboration of community agencies has developed and is staffing temporary self-isolation centres in two communities for people in precarious housing situations. One is for individuals who are COVID-19 positive, and the other is for non-symptomatic individuals.

“Lanark County never fails to join together and collaborate when it comes to our community and the safety of its residents,” said Erin Lee, Executive Director of Lanark County Interval House and Community Support. “We have a long history of coming together when it is needed most.”

The project was made possible through funding from the Social Services Relief Fund issued by the Province of Ontario and administered through Lanark County Social Services. Lanark County Mental Health took the lead to apply for the funding, with support and endorsement from about two dozen local agencies and businesses, which have offered coordination, staffing and in-kind and other contributions.

“It is truly remarkable how quickly our service providers and local businesses came together when this need was identified,” said Rebecca Fromowitz, Executive Director of Lanark County Mental Health. “Now some of our most vulnerable residents can have a safe place to stay that will help them to meet crucial needs during this difficult time.”

One centre, located in Perth, consists of a block of rooms and a number of staff who will work limited hours at an on-site office set up. This is a temporary option for those in Lanark County and Smiths Falls who are homeless, living in a group setting, or precariously housed and have no opportunity to socially distance or quarantine during the COVID-19 pandemic. These individuals have already tested positive for COVID-19, or have symptoms and need to be tested or are awaiting test results.

The collaboration for this site includes assessment services, arrangements for transportation, on-site support as well as virtual services for medical needs (daily wellness checks by the Lanark County Paramedic Service’s Community Paramedics), harm reduction, mental health, food and basic provisions. The Leeds Grenville Lanark District Health Unit is guiding infection control protocols. Clients who test positive for COVID-19 will be quarantined at the centre voluntarily. Clients staying at the centre must remain on the site property at all times except for required hospital/medical treatment.

Referrals to the COVID-19-positive centre should come through agencies by calling the Lanark County Interval House and Community Support (LCIHCS) crisis line (available 24/7) at 613 257-5960 or 1-800-267-7946 or TTY: 613-257-1952.

The centre for non-symptomatic individuals experiencing homelessness consists of a block of rooms in Smiths Falls and also includes food support and assistance with additional relevant supports.

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Those individuals can telephone the County at 613-267-4200 or 1-888-952-6275 during business hours and Victim Services Lanark County after hours at 613-206-1486.

“The isolation centres are a good news story of the community coming together to support very vulnerable individuals,” said Lanark County Social Services Director Emily Hollington, adding individuals experiencing homelessness can continue to contact the county for support. “Thankfully, with the Social Services Relief Fund, we are able to support individuals over a much longer period of time.”

“We all have to do our part to flatten the curve, and many partners have stepped up to do so,” added Lee. “We are just a really fortunate community. When there is an issue, Lanark County finds a solution. I don’t know of any other community that mobilizes the way we do, and I know we will continue to have conversations and work together to help our most vulnerable long after this crisis passes.”

Partner agencies include Carebridge Community Support, Cornerstone Landing, Lanark County Interval House, Lanark County Mental Health, Lanark County (Social Services), North Lanark Community Health Centre, Open Doors for Lanark Children and Youth, Ottawa Valley Family Health Team, Rideau Community Health Services, The Table Community Food Centre, United Way East Ontario, Lanark, Victim Services Lanark County, Lanark County Paramedic Service, and the Leeds Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit. Endorsement/support has come from the Almonte General Hospital, Carleton Place and District Memorial Hospital, Lanark County OPP, Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital, Smiths Falls Police Service, Town of Smiths Falls, and the Lanark County Situation Table.

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