

CAEH 2023 Presentation

November, 2023



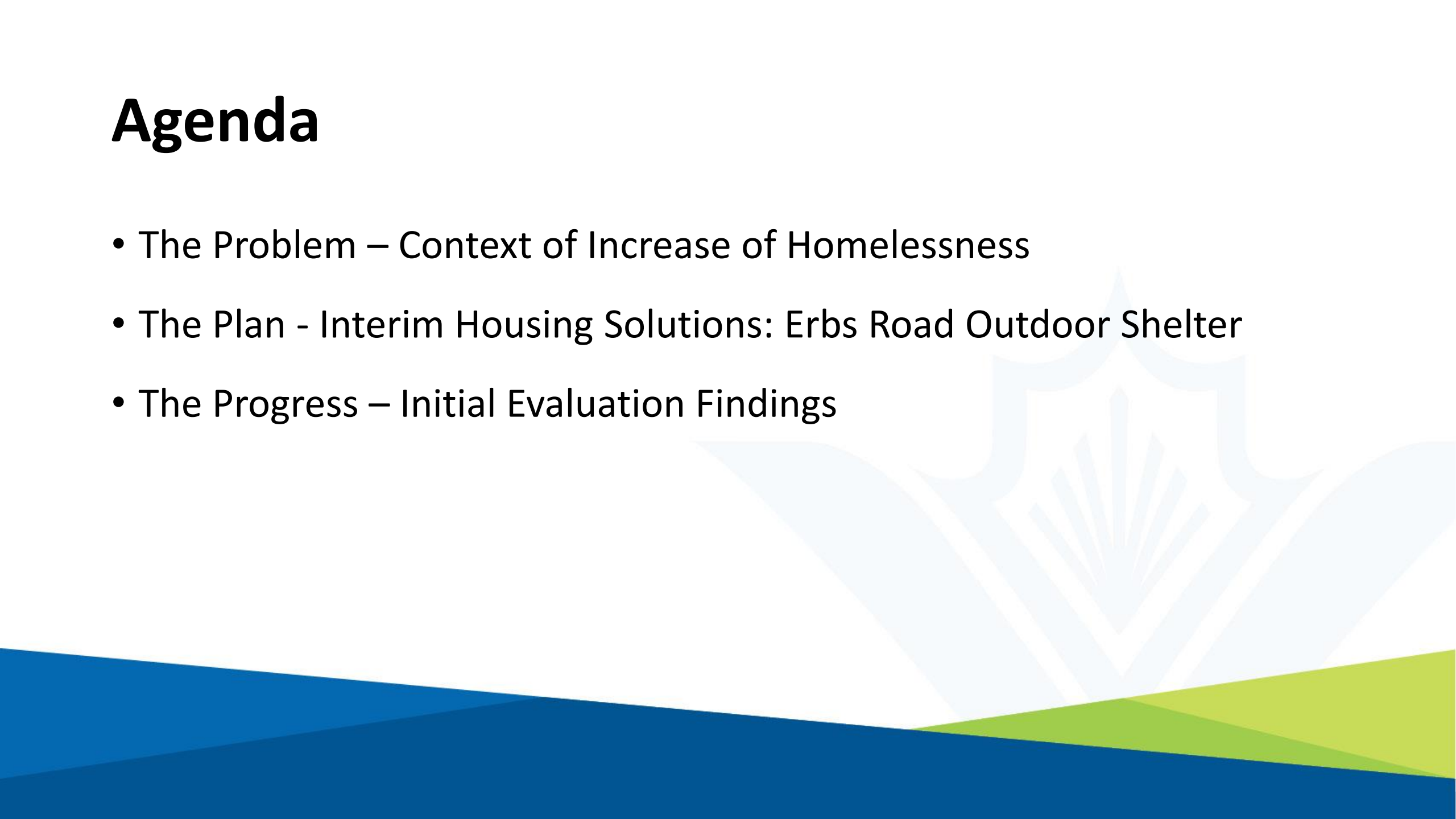
Region of Waterloo

Introductions

- Kelly-Anne & Chris McEvoy
- Region of Waterloo; Service System Manager in two-tier municipality
- Located on the Haldimand Tract



Agenda

- The Problem – Context of Increase of Homelessness
 - The Plan - Interim Housing Solutions: Erbs Road Outdoor Shelter
 - The Progress – Initial Evaluation Findings
- 

Current Context: Homelessness in Waterloo Region

Number of people currently experiencing homelessness in the Region is unprecedented, and similar to many communities across Canada - we are living in a crisis.

- 1,377 Individuals experiencing homelessness across Waterloo region in July 2023.
- **Chronic Homelessness**, similarly, is at unprecedented levels with 562 households experiencing chronic homelessness.
 - Chronic Homelessness has been increasing by approximately 28% each year since 2020.

Additionally, the Point in Time Count highlighted an increasing number of individuals sleeping rough (encampments, tents, vehicles, street).

Regional Response to Homelessness

Interim Housing Solutions



The Plan to End Chronic Homelessness

On June 22, 2022, Regional Council approved a motion directing staff to "**develop a plan to establish interim housing solutions for Regional residents experiencing homelessness including those currently residing in encampments**" for Council's consideration in August.

Interim Housing Solutions

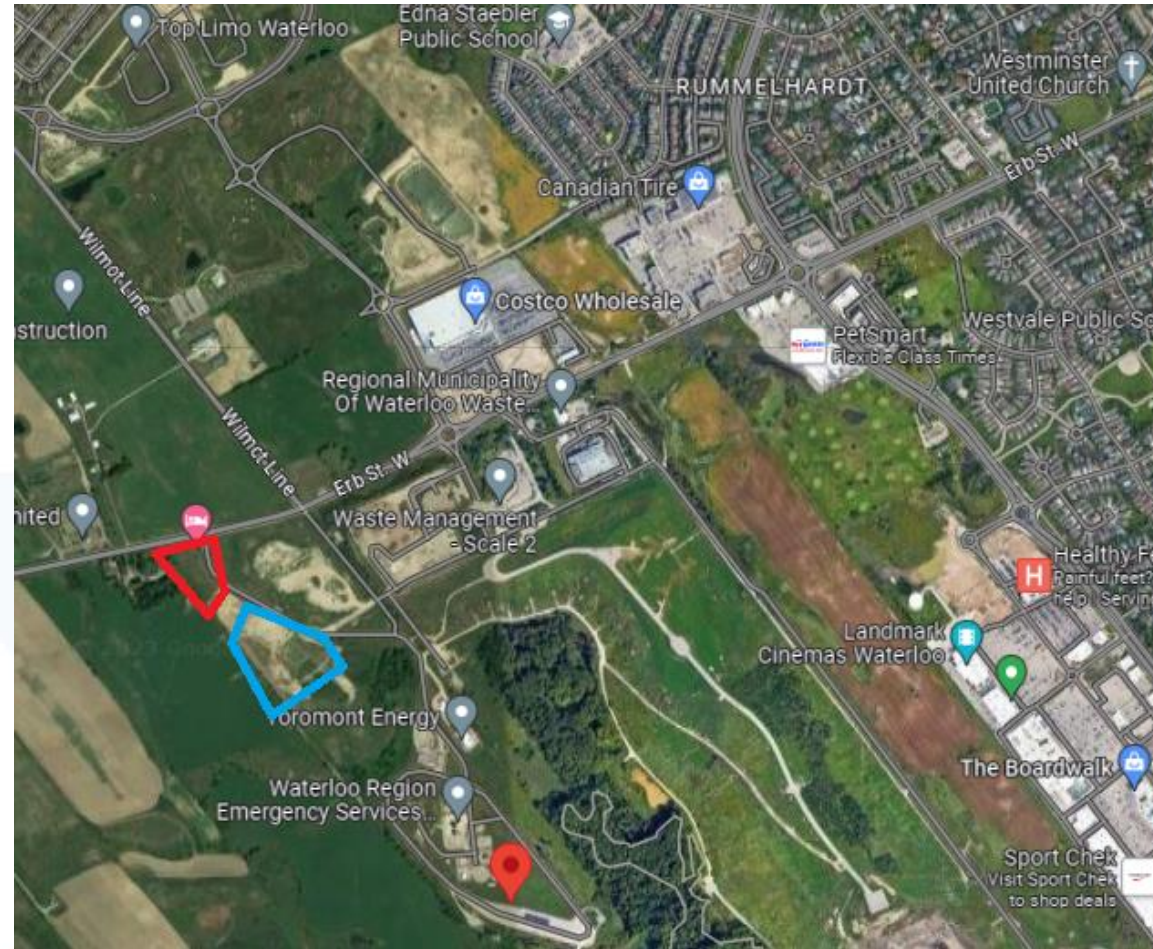
- In August 2022, an Interim Housing Solutions strategy was developed and approved by Regional Council to address this challenging situation, using four key tools:
 - Expanding the Transitional Housing Program;
 - Expanding the Home-Based Support Program;
 - Expanding the Emergency Shelter Program; and
 - **Permitting a temporary managed Hybrid Outdoor Shelter**
- 100% Region/tax-levy funded

Overview – Erbs Road Outdoor Shelter

- Region announced that a portion of the Regionally-owned property at 1001 Erbs Road in Waterloo will operate as the site of a new hybrid outdoor emergency shelter
- Hybrid Shelter accommodates 50 people currently experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and includes a shared common space
- Region is working closely with The Working Centre, City of Waterloo, Township of Wilmot, and community partners

Overview – Why Erbs Road

- Location is Regionally-owned, which allowed us to get the site up and running as quickly as possible to respond to the crisis
- Interim solution, as outlined in the Interim Housing Plan
- Part of the Housing Stability System
 - Provides one more option for those experiencing homelessness, in addition to the approximately 568 shelter/transitional housing spaces in the housing system



Emergency Outdoor Shelter Site Details

- Staffed by site operator 24/7 onsite
- Supports 50 individuals of all gender identities and those with pets
 - Participants were previously living rough/staying in encampments
- Layout
 - Community space with 50 cabins
 - Security booth, fencing
- NOW Housing units
 - Innovative, pilot model











Services

- A variety of programs and services are available onsite, which focus on life stabilization and permanent housing:
 - Health care services, including primary healthcare (methadone/safer supply)
 - Housing-focused services
 - Income support
 - Transportation
- The Working Centre provides connections and referrals to other offsite services in the community as needed depending on the needs of program participants

Erbs Road Shelter – Early Evaluation Findings

Summary of Participant Responses

	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Have Motivation to Find Housing 70% Responded <i>Positively</i>	Have Help to Recover 70% Responded <i>Positively</i>	Feel Safe 70% Responded <i>Positively</i>	Comparing ERS to Previous Encampment 70% Responded <i>Positively</i>
Feel Well Supported 65% Responded <i>Positively</i>	Feel Comfortable 65% Responded <i>Positively</i>	Comparing ERS to Other Shelters 50% Responded <i>Positively</i>	Satisfied with External Services 45% Responded <i>Positively</i>
Benefit from Programs & Activities 45% Responded <i>Positively</i>	Meeting to Work on Housing 55% Responded <i>Negative</i>	Have Never Stayed in Shelters Before 24%	Have Moved From ERS into Housing 3%

Tapestry of Quotables

"This locked door makes me feel safe".

"I was in jail and lost my housing, now I have no hope to get it back".

"No one helps you with housing you just get put on lists".

"I no longer have frozen hands and toes".

"Be better if they got to know people and their needs" (external services).

"Now I'm taking care of myself and making sure that I'm ok".

"In my tent I was depressed and not showering, so its night and day now".

"I just made the decision to change my cycle and talk to Lutherwood".

"There's no mental health treatment here".

"My confidence is better and staff are a big part of that".

"We are like a family here".

"I don't have to worry about being kicked out by security".

"First time sober this long".

"After my struggles and life experience, I would like to be home with my little girl".

"I felt unsafe at other shelters".

"Never been talked to about housing, I get my support from other homeless people".

"Its hard sometimes being so far out from the city".

"We need housing workers here".

"Some staff go above and beyond".

"Housing has been a top priority!"

"The neighbourhood is hostile".

"I've had two fires and was burned badly while living in a tent, so cabin feels more safe".

"Before I had to clean up at Tim Hortons. It was embarrassing and impacted my well-being".

"I've never stayed at a shelter before".

Next Steps

- Learn from and implement evaluation findings
- Begin transition planning in early 2024
- Explore additional outdoor shelter site in Cambridge

