



WEST HANTS REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY REPORT

Information ☐	Recommendation ☒	Decision Request ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
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To: West Hants Regional Municipality Council

Submitted by: Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer
(On behalf of the Diversity, Equitable and Inclusive Communities Committee or DEICC)

Date: November 25, 2025

Subject: West Hants Warming Centre Recommendation

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY

Nova Scotia Municipal Government Act,

RECOMMENDATION or DECISION REQUEST

The motion that the Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Communities Committee recommends...

COUNCIL ALLOCATE \$60,000 TOWARDS FUNDING AND OPENING A WARMING CENTRE FOR THE 2025/26 WINTER.

BACKGROUND

Homelessness in our region continues to occur and remains a topic that is passionately discussed by the committee. Homelessness can be attributed to many factors such as the low supply of affordable housing in our community, the cost of housing construction and steady increases in rental rates, making the reality of renting a unit in West Hants unreachable to many individuals and families. Some community members also face challenges related to substance-use disorders and challenges many of us do not face on a daily basis. Collectively, these conditions have resulted in ongoing members as well as new members of our community unhoused and living rough.

Property ☐	Public Opinion ☐	Environment ☐	Social ☒	Economic ☐	Councillor Activity ☐
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DISCUSSION

As the winter season quickly approaches, the risk of illness, injury, and even loss of limb or life increases significantly for West Hants community members who are experiencing homelessness. Exposure to freezing temperatures, wind chill, and unpredictable weather conditions places individuals without stable shelter in extreme danger. For these residents, access to a warming centre can quite literally mean the difference between life, severe medical complications, or death.

Over the past two winters, West Hants has operated temporary warming centres in collaboration with a local service provider (Caremongers Windsor-West Hants); first within the Windsor Community Centre and later in the Hants Aquatic Centre. These centers provided essential refuge during the coldest months of the year. While temporary, these initiatives demonstrated both the urgent need for a safe, low-barrier warming space and the community's capacity to mobilize resources quickly in response to crisis situations. However, they also highlight a broader need: a consistent, dedicated space staffed by properly trained individuals who can provide appropriate support to our unhoused community. This includes not only immediate shelter from the cold, but also trauma-informed care, crisis response, and connection to longer-term supports and services.

During the 2025–26 budget deliberations, significant discussion took place regarding funding various initiatives within West Hants. This year presented considerable challenges, as Council worked to create a balanced budget while also striving to maintain, or in some cases increase, service levels in response to residents' needs. As a result, many items were reduced or removed from the approved budget.

One of the major topics of debate was funding for the warming centre. While Council acknowledged the clear need for such a service, the consensus was that, given the range of local service providers already receiving various levels of provincial funding, it would be more sustainable for the Municipality to contribute space and cover the operational costs associated with that space. Local service providers, in turn, could collaborate to support the warming centre through staffing, volunteers, and shared resources. This collaborative model was seen as a practical approach to meeting community needs while staying within fiscal constraints.

At the October 28, 2025 Council meeting, a motion was passed to send a letter to the Province urging them to assume responsibility for establishing and funding a warming shelter in West Hants for the upcoming winter season. A recent update from a committee member identified that even if the Province ultimately provides funding to a local community organization, it is anticipated that a provincially supported warming centre would not be operational until at least January. This delay creates a critical service gap during the early winter months, when cold-related health risks begin to escalate.

Given this uncertainty, the Diverse, Equitable and Inclusive Communities Committee is requesting that Council allocate municipal funds to operate a temporary warming centre while discussions with the Province continue. While the Committee remains hopeful that provincial funding will materialize, it emphasizes that having an interim municipal response is essential to protect vulnerable residents in the immediate term.

NEXT STEPS

If approved, municipal staff will work with local service groups, volunteers, West Hants residents and elected representatives to create and operate a functional temporary warming centre.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Total financial request is \$60,000 to fund the operating costs of a temporary warming centre in West Hants.

To support the discussion, the projected balance for Operating Reserve is \$464,139 for March 31, 2026. WHRM's total operating reserves are at 8.7% of the current year's revenue (or 1.3% below the reserve policy threshold).

ALTERNATIVES

1. Council can choose not to fund this and continue as status quo, Continue with providing a dedicated space and assuming all operational costs for that space.
2. Council may choose to provide an alternative option of support.

ATTACHMENTS

None.

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER REVIEW

N/A

Report Prepared by: _____
Katie Rose, HR Manager

Report Reviewed by: _____
Carlee Rochon, Director, Financial Services

Report Prepared by:  _____
Mark Phillips, Chief Administrative Officer