

DECEMBER 08, 2024

ORGCODE CONSULTING INC.

**NORTHUMBERLAND
COUNTY: INITIAL
PROGRESS REPORT
FOR THE
COMMUNITY
LIAISON
COMMITTEE (CLC)**



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Town of Cobourg respectfully acknowledge that they are located in the traditional and treaty territory of the Michi Saagiig (Mississauga) and Chippewa Nations, collectively known as the Williams Treaties. First Nations, which include: Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Alderville, Scugog Island, Rama, Beausoleil, and Georgina Island First Nations.

They respectfully acknowledge that the Williams Treaties First Nations have been stewards and caretakers of these lands and waters, and that today remain vigilant over their health and integrity for generations to come.

This report was prepared in New Brunswick, which is the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, and Peskotomuhkati peoples. We acknowledge their enduring presence and stewardship of these lands.

AUTHORSHIP

This report was prepared by OrgCode Consulting Inc. OrgCode Consulting Inc. is responsible for errors in analysis and omissions. Commentary and recommendations are the responsibility of OrgCode Consulting Inc.

OVERVIEW

This report outlines the process undertaken to establish the **Community Liaison Committee (CLC)** for the integration of the new emergency shelter at **310 Division Street** in Cobourg, Ontario. Operated by **Transition House**, the shelter addresses immediate housing crises while fostering long-term stability for individuals. The CLC is designed to ensure transparent communication, collaborative problem-solving, and a focus on building trust between the shelter and the surrounding community.

The establishment of this CLC reflects widely recognized approaches that emphasize the importance of community engagement in successfully integrating emergency shelters. Community Liaison Committees are used across various sectors, including housing, healthcare, environmental management, law enforcement, and private industry, to foster two-way communication, address community concerns, and strengthen relationships with local stakeholders. By providing a forum for dialogue and collaboration, these committees help organizations build trust, enhance transparency, and ensure their operations are seen as valued assets within the communities they serve.

Transition House's work reflects the critical role that housing-focused shelters play in addressing homelessness. By offering safe, temporary spaces, these shelters provide immediate relief for individuals experiencing housing crises while reducing the need for outdoor encampments. Simultaneously, they emphasize long-term solutions, supporting individuals on their path to stable and permanent housing.

ACKNOWLEDGING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Recognizing the community's concerns about safety and the shelter's impact on the neighbourhood, the CLC was developed to serve as a bridge between Transition House and the Cobourg community. Key concerns identified by community members

include safety issues, potential disruptions to the neighbourhood, and the need for transparency in shelter operations. By prioritizing transparency, responsiveness, and collaboration, this initiative aims to address these challenges constructively and inclusively.

WHAT CLCS FOCUS ON

- **Dialogue and Solutions:** CLCs prioritize two-way communication and constructive problem-solving between the shelter and the community.
- **Community Integration:** CLCs help shelters become good neighbours by addressing concerns and identifying shared solutions.
- **Transparency:** They promote a better understanding of shelter operations while ensuring community voices are heard.

WHAT CLCS DO NOT DO

- **Supervisory Role:** CLCs are advisory bodies, not decision-making entities with authority over the shelter.
- **Day-to-Day Operations:** CLCs do not manage shelter activities but provide input to inform leadership decisions.
- **Direct Guest Interaction:** CLCs do not engage directly with or work with shelter guests.

By clearly defining these boundaries, the CLC establishes a foundation for constructive engagement while maintaining its focus on bridging the community and shelter leadership.

VALUE OF COMMUNITY LIAISON COMMITTEES

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION

CLCs are integral to successful community integration. They provide a structured platform for:

- **Continuous Engagement:** Ensuring ongoing dialogue between the shelter and community members.
- **Addressing Concerns:** Proactively resolving issues and fostering understanding.
- **Promoting Collaboration:** Establishing the shelter as a good neighbour and trusted community resource.

ENHANCING SHELTER OPERATIONS

CLCs offer a unique opportunity to provide valuable community insights that can enhance shelter operations indirectly. This is particularly important when:

- **Expanding Services:** Additional programming or phases are proposed at the shelter.
- **Improving Outcomes:** Transparent communication ensures that shelter operations remain responsive to local concerns.

While the CLC does not directly manage shelter operations, its advisory role enables informed decisions that benefit both the shelter and its neighbours.

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

CLCs bridge the gap in understanding by:

- **Demystifying Shelter Operations:** Helping the community learn about shelter processes, the realities of homelessness, and the successes of the shelter that often go unseen—such as the number of individuals successfully transitioning into stable housing.
- **Mutual Understanding:** Encouraging shelter leadership, staff, and guests to better understand community concerns and dynamics, fostering a shared sense of responsibility and collaboration.

KEY STEPS IN THE CLC DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

INFORMATION SESSION FOR COUNTY COUNCIL

- **Date:** August 13th
- **Purpose:** The session provided a foundational understanding of the benefits of CLCs and their role in integrating the 310 Division Street shelter into the community. It outlined how this specific CLC could operate, highlighting its potential to build trust, address community concerns, and foster collaboration. The session emphasized the importance of community engagement in ensuring the shelter's successful integration while maintaining a focus on solutions-oriented dialogue.

EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

- **Timeline:** Submissions were received before the in-person training on September 25th.
- **Details:** Prospective members were asked to provide basic demographic information, explain their interest, outline their understanding of homelessness,

and confirm their availability to participate in the selection process and subsequent meetings.

IN-PERSON TRAINING SESSION

- **Date:** September 25th

- **Focus Areas:**
 1. National and Provincial Homelessness Context

 2. Local Data and Updates on 310 Division Street

 3. Evidence-Informed Homelessness Reduction Approaches

 4. CLC Roles, Desired Outcomes, and Terms of Reference

- **Outcome:** The training provided prospective members with an opportunity to learn about homelessness at national and local levels and understand evidence-informed practices for reducing homelessness. Participants were also introduced to the CLC's structure, goals, and expectations, enabling them to make an informed decision about whether pursuing membership was the right fit for them.

VIRTUAL INTERVIEWS

Following the training, participants who confirmed their continued interest in joining the CLC were invited to a 30-minute virtual interview. Due to the high level of interest, **24 interviews** were conducted during the week of October 21st.

Interview Questions:

1. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?
2. Can you share any personal biases you are aware of that might influence your involvement on the CLC, and how would you ensure they don't affect your decision-making?
3. Tell us about a time when you worked with a challenging team member. How did you handle the situation, and what did you learn from the experience?
4. What do you believe are the unique challenges this community faces regarding homelessness, and how do you think these dynamics will impact the shelter's work?
5. What specific skills or experiences do you bring that would benefit the CLC in supporting the shelter and the broader community?
6. What outcomes would you like to see the CLC achieve within the next year, and how do you think the committee can contribute to these goals?
7. *(For those who did not attend the training session)* Can you briefly describe what you understand the role of the CLC to be, and NOT to be?

COMPETENCY SCORING AND MEMBER SELECTION

Competency Scoring Matrix

Candidates were assessed across eight competencies:

- Communication Skills
- Conflict Resolution

- Cultural Competency
- Leadership and Teamwork
- Knowledge of Homelessness and Housing Issues
- Problem-Solving Skills
- Local Knowledge
- Ethics and Confidentiality

Each competency was scored on a scale of 1-5, with evaluators documenting specific examples and observations during the interview. Scores from the three evaluators were totalled, with a maximum possible score of 120 per candidate.

FINAL SELECTION

The following composition was prioritized to ensure diverse representation and expertise:

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Chloe Craig
- Erisa Katona
- Rob James
- Kendra Simmons
- Bob LeDrew
- Catherine White

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- Hillary Allen
- Kim Gay
- Sheri Syer
- Beth Bellaire
- Liz Greaves
- Brenda Whitehead

DELEGATES

- Carolyn Rutherford, CHCN
- Jennifer Bogart, DBIA
- Daniel Gaito, Trinity United Church
- Kim Wilkinson, Community Paramedics
- Chris Challenger, Town of Cobourg
- Janice MacDonald, Cobourg Police Services
- Emma Taylor, Northumberland Hills Hospital Community Mental Health
- Ike Nwibe, Executive Director, Transition House
- Meaghan Macdonald, Board Chair, Transition House

COUNTY REPRESENTATIVES

- Bill Smith
- Rebecca Carman

FACILITATOR

- Chris Gorman, OrgCode Consulting Inc.

The composition of the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) intentionally brings together individuals with diverse perspectives, varied professional and lived experiences, and deep ties to the Cobourg community. From immediate neighbours of 310 Division Street to representatives from key sectors such as health, mental health, law enforcement, faith-based organizations, local business, and the **Town of Cobourg**, the committee reflects the community's breadth and strength. Transition House leadership ensures alignment between the CLC's advisory role and shelter operations, while county representatives provide critical regional context.

This carefully balanced group fosters a collaborative, inclusive environment for addressing community concerns and supporting the successful integration of the shelter. By drawing on the unique expertise and insights of its members, the CLC is well-positioned to build trust, promote transparency, and serve as a model for constructive dialogue between residents, stakeholders, and leadership.

TERMS OF REFERENCE (DRAFT)

TRANSITION HOUSE MISSION

Transition House's mission is to provide services that alleviate individuals' immediate housing crises as a first step toward being quickly and permanently re-housed with the right supports. To achieve this, Transition House is committed to the following principles:

- **Quality Service:** Meeting community needs by demonstrating openness to input from stakeholders.
- **Strong Partnerships:** Building trust, clarity of purpose, and mutual benefit with partners.

- **Increased Community Impact and Visibility:** Responding to community partners' requests for information and clarification about services.
- **Accountability:** Ensuring the integration of the new emergency shelter at 310 Division Street into the neighbourhood with minimal impact to Cobourg community members.

The Community Liaison Committee (CLC) will support these goals by serving as an advisory body, not a decision-making body with supervisory authority over the shelter. Members are encouraged to discuss concerns, ideas, and perspectives, seeking to develop common ground. The guidance and feedback provided by the CLC will inform Transition House's decisions regarding the shelter's integration with the community.

PURPOSE OF THE CLC

The CLC exists to:

1. **Foster Positive Relationships:** Build and maintain positive relationships between Transition House, the shelter's neighbours, and the broader community.
2. **Facilitate Two-Way Communication:** Serve as a platform for the community to share concerns and feedback while receiving updates on shelter operations and initiatives.
3. **Collaboratively Address Challenges:** Identify and address challenges associated with the shelter's integration through collaborative problem-solving.
4. **Promote Transparency and Trust:** Enhance transparency and build trust through ongoing dialogue and engagement.

- 5. Time-Limited Operation:** The CLC is planned to operate for one year, after which its effectiveness and continued need will be evaluated.

GROUP EXPECTATIONS AND OPERATING PRINCIPLES

CLC members are expected to uphold the following principles to ensure effective collaboration and meaningful outcomes:

- **Foster Respect:** Treat all members, stakeholders, and community perspectives with dignity.
- **Seek Consensus:** Aim for agreement through open dialogue and shared understanding.
- **Promote Collaboration:** Work collectively to identify solutions and resolve concerns.
- **Focus on Problem-Solving:** Address issues with a constructive, solution-oriented approach.
- **Encourage Inclusivity:** Ensure diverse voices and perspectives are heard and valued.
- **Build Active Listening:** Engage in thoughtful, empathetic communication.
- **Commit to Accountability:** Take responsibility for actions and decisions.
- **Develop Expertise:** Increase knowledge of homelessness and reduction efforts.

MEETING SCHEDULE AND ADMINISTRATION

- **Frequency:** Meetings will occur monthly, with flexibility to adapt based on the needs of the shelter and community.
- **Initial Meetings:** OrgCode will facilitate the first three meetings to establish group dynamics and provide orientation.
- **Community Feedback:** Meetings will incorporate feedback gathered through the established CLC email system, ensuring that all community members have equal opportunities to be heard.

ADMINISTRATION

- Meetings will follow a structured agenda, distributed in advance.
- Minutes will be recorded and shared with members for review.
- Provisions will be made for onboarding new members, as needed, to ensure continuity and representation.

MEMBER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

CLC members will:

1. **Abide by the Terms of Reference:** Participate in discussions constructively and collaboratively.
2. **Attend Meetings Consistently:** Provide insights, expertise, and feedback to assist Transition House in its operations and programming.
3. **Respect Confidentiality:** Uphold the confidentiality of materials flagged as confidential.
4. **Promote Transparency:** Share non-confidential updates with their networks to promote transparency and awareness.

- 5. Collaborate on Solutions:** Develop solutions that support the shelter's positive integration into the Cobourg community.
- 6. Act as Community Liaisons:** Share accurate, non-confidential information about the shelter to counter misinformation and build trust.

SUCCESSION PLANNING

To ensure the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) maintains its effectiveness and continuity:

1. Identifying New Members:

- Open calls for new members will be conducted as needed through public channels, including local media, social media, and community newsletters.
- Prospective members will submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) form, detailing their qualifications, availability, and motivation for joining the CLC.

2. Selection Process:

- Applicants will be evaluated using a predefined scoring rubric based on communication skills, cultural competency, knowledge of homelessness, and ties to the community.
- An interview panel, including current CLC members and Transition House leadership, will assess shortlisted candidates to ensure alignment with the CLC's objectives and values.

3. Onboarding New Members:

- New members will receive an onboarding package with an overview of the CLC's purpose, recent meeting minutes, key ongoing issues, and the finalized Terms of Reference.
- A mentorship system may be established, pairing new members with experienced members to ensure seamless integration into the group.

4. Transition of Departing Members:

- Outgoing members will provide a brief summary of ongoing priorities, community concerns, and recommendations to facilitate continuity.
- Departures will be announced at meetings to ensure transparency and allow time for recruitment, if needed.

5. Ensuring Balanced Representation:

- The CLC will periodically review its composition to address gaps in representation, prioritizing lived experience and local stakeholder perspectives.

MEMBER ROLE DEVELOPMENT AND ASSIGNMENT

To ensure the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) operates effectively and capitalizes on members' skills and expertise, ongoing roles will be identified and assigned after the initial meetings:

1. Role Identification:

- During the first few meetings, the CLC will collaboratively determine key roles needed to support its objectives and address emerging priorities.

Examples of potential roles include:

- **Chairperson:** Facilitates meetings and ensures agenda adherence.
- **Secretary:** Records minutes and manages meeting documentation.
- **Community Outreach Representative:** Liaises with the broader community to gather and relay feedback.
- **Evaluation Lead:** Tracks progress on CLC goals and prepares reports on success indicators.

2. Role Assignment:

- Members will have the opportunity to express interest in specific roles based on their skills, experience, and availability.
- Roles will be assigned by consensus, ensuring alignment with individual strengths and the CLC's needs.

3. Periodic Review of Roles:

- Assigned roles will be reviewed periodically to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the committee and to allow for rotation or reassignment if necessary.

4. Role-Specific Support and Training:

- Where needed, members will receive support or training to fulfill their assigned roles effectively.

5. Maintaining Flexibility:

- The CLC will remain adaptable, allowing for the creation of new roles or reassignment as priorities evolve.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The CLC operates on a consensus-based approach to decision-making, ensuring all voices are heard and respected.

1. Consensus-Based Approach:

- Decisions will be made collaboratively, with the aim of reaching agreement through open dialogue and shared understanding.

2. Contingency for Non-Consensus:

- Transition House-Directed Decisions: For issues directly impacting shelter operations or policies, unresolved matters will be referred to Transition House leadership for final consideration, with the CLC's input documented as advisory recommendations.

- CLC or Community-Focused Decisions: For matters related to the CLC's activities or community initiatives, the committee may:
 - Delegate the issue to a subcommittee for further exploration and recommendations.
 - Use a majority vote as a last resort, ensuring all perspectives are recorded.
 - Modified Consensus (% threshold determined by members)
- 3. **Commitment to Advisory Role:**
 - The CLC is an advisory body focused on fostering dialogue and providing constructive feedback. Final decisions on shelter operations and policies remain the responsibility of Transition House leadership.
- 4. **Open and Honest Dialogue:**
 - Members will respect the needs and opinions of others while clearly communicating their own perspectives to ensure productive discussions

ROLES OF SHELTER LEADERSHIP AND FACILITATORS

- **Shelter Leadership:** Transition House leadership will share updates on shelter operations, programming, and community impact while also committing to actively listening to the concerns, suggestions, and perspectives of CLC members and the broader community. This includes fostering open, empathetic dialogue to address issues and strengthen relationships with the community.
- **Facilitators:**
 - Ensure meetings remain focused, productive, and aligned with the group's purpose and principles.
 - Promote Inclusivity: Facilitate discussions to ensure all voices are heard and valued.

- Provide Tools and Strategies: Offer guidance to navigate complex or contentious issues constructively.

SUCCESS INDICATORS

The effectiveness of the CLC will be evaluated based on:

- 1. Enhanced Community Trust:** Demonstrated by reduced concerns and improved perceptions of the shelter.
- 2. Actionable Recommendations:** Constructive collaboration resulting in actionable recommendations, such as enhanced neighbourhood engagement strategies, adjustments to shelter policies to minimize community impact, or the introduction of new programs to support shelter clients and neighbours.
- 3. Increased Awareness and Understanding:** Measured through feedback from community members, shelter staff, and guests, highlighting the shelter's contributions and successes.

AMENDMENTS TO THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Once finalized during the initial CLC meeting in December, the Terms of Reference will be reviewed periodically to ensure they remain relevant and effective. Amendments can be proposed by any CLC member and will require consensus for approval.

KEY OUTCOMES OF THE INAUGURAL MEETING

The inaugural meeting of the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) was held on December 17, 2024, marking the official launch of this collaborative initiative. The meeting provided an opportunity for members to connect, establish shared goals, and begin identifying focus areas for the committee's work. Key highlights and outcomes from the meeting are as follows:

1. Setting the Stage

The meeting began with a review of the CLC's purpose and scope, emphasizing its advisory role in fostering trust, transparency, and collaborative problem-solving between Transition House and the community. Members expressed their commitment to working constructively towards the successful integration of the 310 Division Street shelter into Cobourg.

2. Icebreaker Activity: Hopes and Priorities

Participants shared their hopes for what the CLC can achieve over the coming year and identified key priorities for how the group should operate.

- **Hopes** included:
 - Building trust and strengthening relationships between the shelter, residents, and stakeholders.
 - Supporting the shelter's integration into the community in a way that enhances mutual understanding and reduces misconceptions.
 - Demonstrating tangible, measurable outcomes for both residents and the community.
 - Proactively addressing concerns through actionable solutions.
 - **Focusing on Action and Impact:** Ensuring the CLC operates as an action-oriented group that actively tackles challenges and drives real change, rather than being a forum for discussion without results.

- Priorities for Group Operations included:
 - Maintaining transparency and open communication.
 - Engaging in respectful, solutions-focused collaboration.
 - Proactively engaging with the broader community to share updates and counter misinformation.

3. Focus Areas for the CLC

Through a closing activity, members identified specific topics for the CLC to address moving forward:

- **Community Safety:** Ensuring the safety of both shelter residents and the surrounding neighbourhood, particularly during shelter discharges.
- **Communication Frameworks:** Communication emerged as a central theme for the committee's work. Members prioritized the development of processes to:
 - **Hear from the Community and Transition House:** Ensure ongoing two-way dialogue where both the community and Transition House staff can share feedback, concerns, and updates.
 - **Communicate Internally:** Create mechanisms for CLC members to collaborate and share information efficiently within the group.
 - **Share Back with the Community:** Develop strategies to share relevant updates, progress, and decisions with the broader community in a clear and accessible way.

- **Education and Awareness:** Increasing understanding of homelessness and the shelter's role in providing critical services.
- **Measuring Success:** Defining and tracking key indicators to demonstrate progress and impact.

4. Foundation for Action: Outcomes from the First Meeting

The meeting concluded with a commitment to finalize the Terms of Reference, establish a communication cheat sheet, and schedule future sessions to address priority topics. Members emphasized their dedication to making the CLC a results-driven body that addresses real challenges and delivers meaningful improvements for both the community and the shelter. In line with this commitment, members agreed to dedicate the next meeting to a 4-hour workshop, allowing for in-depth focus on key priorities and actionable planning.

NEXT STEPS

FINALIZE TERMS OF REFERENCE

- Incorporate feedback from the inaugural meeting into the draft Terms of Reference, including clarifications on roles, confidentiality, and communication frameworks.
- Share the finalized Terms of Reference with CLC members for review and formal adoption at the next session.

PLAN AND FACILITATE THE NEXT WORKSHOP

- Organize a **4-hour workshop** as the second meeting to allow in-depth focus on the CLC's priority areas, including community safety, communication strategies, and success indicators.
- Develop a detailed agenda to guide the workshop, ensuring actionable outcomes and clear responsibilities.

ENHANCE COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK

- Create a **communication cheat sheet** to clarify key roles, responsibilities, and contacts for both internal collaboration and external outreach.
- Design a strategy for how the CLC will:
 - Hear feedback and updates from both the community and Transition House.
 - Share information and progress among CLC members.
 - Distribute relevant updates to the broader community to maintain transparency and build trust.

COLLABORATE ON KEY FOCUS AREAS

- The CLC will continue to develop actionable plans to address the initial focus areas identified during the inaugural meeting:
 - **Community Safety:** Work collaboratively to propose strategies that enhance safety for both shelter residents and the surrounding neighbourhood, particularly during discharges.

- **Education and Awareness:** Explore ways to increase understanding of homelessness and shelter operations to counter misconceptions and reduce stigma.
- **Measuring Success:** Begin defining key success indicators and creating a framework for tracking and reporting progress.

DEVELOP A PUBLIC-FACING SUMMARY

- Prepare a clear and concise summary of the inaugural meeting to share with the broader community.
- Include highlights of key outcomes, next steps, and the CLC's commitment to action and transparency.

SCHEDULE FUTURE MEETINGS

- Establish a schedule for future meetings and workshops, ensuring adequate time for progress reviews, new priorities, and collaborative discussions.
- Ensure flexibility to adapt the meeting format based on the CLC's evolving needs and priorities.

CONCLUSION

The creation of the Community Liaison Committee (CLC) marks a meaningful step in fostering mutual understanding and collaboration between Transition House and the Cobourg community. Through transparent communication, inclusive engagement, and a proactive commitment to addressing concerns, the CLC is well-positioned to support the successful integration of the 310 Division Street emergency shelter into the neighbourhood.

This initiative not only underscores the importance of community-driven approaches in addressing housing crises but also highlights the incredible talent, compassion, and dedication within the Cobourg community. The overwhelming number of skilled, empathetic, and committed individuals who applied to be part of the CLC reflects the community's collective investment in finding better solutions for those experiencing homelessness. Many applicants shared deeply personal stories about how homelessness has directly impacted their families and lives, further demonstrating the profound connection between the community and this important work. Their diverse perspectives, talents, and lived experiences will undoubtedly shape the CLC's efforts and outcomes.

The inaugural meeting reinforced the group's commitment to progress and action. Members emphasized their desire for the CLC to be a results-driven body focused on tangible outcomes. Their decision to expand the next meeting into a 4-hour workshop exemplifies their dedication to diving deeply into key focus areas, such as community safety, communication strategies, and measurable success indicators. This proactive and collaborative approach will enable the CLC to address challenges head-on while fostering trust and achieving meaningful change.

CLCs like this one provide vital platforms for building trust, fostering dialogue, and working collaboratively toward shared solutions. They offer a structured framework for addressing concerns while promoting understanding and showcasing the value of shelters as both integral community assets and essential parts of the housing journey for many people experiencing homelessness. Through the CLC's work, Transition House and the Cobourg community can continue to strengthen their partnership, creating a neighbourhood that is more informed, connected, and supportive of its most vulnerable members.

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The establishment of this CLC is a testament to what can be achieved when communities come together with empathy, respect, and a shared commitment to positive change. Together, these efforts will not only enhance local services but also inspire a broader culture of collaboration and understanding in addressing homelessness.