

Simcoe County Homeless Enumeration

April 24 to 26, 2018

Simcoe County Point-in-Time Count and Registry Week

The Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness and United Way Simcoe Muskoka are partnering with the County of Simcoe to conduct the 2018 Simcoe County Point-in-Time Count and Registry Week from April 24 - 26. These activities will serve the purpose of counting and understanding the people who are experiencing homelessness in Simcoe County, and identifying those who wish to be included on a prioritized list for housing and outreach services. We are looking for volunteers to assist with the Point-in-Time Count and Registry Week. Our goal is to end homelessness in Simcoe County.

The Point-in-Time Count will take place from 2 p.m. on Tuesday, April 24 to 2 p.m. on Wednesday April 25. It will take place throughout Simcoe County at pre-determined indoor and outdoor locations. Registry Week will take place from 2 p.m. on Tuesday, April 24 to end of day on Thursday, April 26 throughout Simcoe County during different times and indoor and outdoor locations that have been pre-determined to reach the most people who are affected by a lack of housing. Early morning and late night street surveys are likely in each region and volunteers are necessary for success.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Point-in-Time Count?

The Point-in-Time (PiT) Count is done during a 24-hour period to provide an estimated snapshot of the extent and nature of homelessness in Simcoe County on a given night. It will gather information on both the number of persons/families experiencing homelessness, as well as their demographic characteristics and service needs.

The methodology of the PiT Count has been used in many communities across Canada, making it possible to compare results across the country. Surveys taking place across Simcoe County during the night of Tuesday, April 24 will be strategically scheduled to capture the most people in each area at a time when they will likely be settled down where they are planning to spend the night (in shelters and on the street).

Why is the PiT Count important?

The PiT Count is funded by the Government of Canada through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS). The goal of this strategy is to reduce homelessness by helping to move people who are chronically or episodically homeless from the streets or homeless shelters into permanent housing. It's about catalyzing change at the local and national levels to end homelessness.

In 2016, Ontario became the first province in Canada to require its communities to enumerate homelessness locally every two years. This will ultimately improve our understanding of homelessness across the province and provide us with valuable results that we can compare over time to measure our progress in addressing homelessness.

Findings from the PiT Count will demonstrate housing and service needs specific to the Simcoe County area. It will also provide information to aid organizations, funders, and all levels of government to plan for the funding and service needs of people experiencing homelessness locally.

What is Registry Week?

Registry Week is a comprehensive check-in across Simcoe County to not only count, but to identify as many people as possible who are experiencing homelessness. A short health and housing survey will be completed with all people experiencing homelessness who are willing to participate (including those who are staying in emergency shelters, on the street or "couch-surfing").

The community will then work to support those identified as most vulnerable to access the housing and supports they need as quickly as possible.

Why are we doing both the PiT Count and the Registry Week?

The PiT Count provides a snapshot of homelessness (unsheltered, sheltered, and in transitional programs) in a 24-hour time-period. Registry Week is important to conduct in addition to the PiT Count because it is a way to reach those who are provisionally housed (the hidden homeless or "couch-surfers") who are not included in the PiT Count. Service agencies estimate that this group is the larger group of people experiencing homelessness. We need more specific information about both groups to begin solving the problem of homelessness. Collecting person-specific data is the key to ending homelessness for our most vulnerable (and often anonymous) homeless neighbours. Registry Week will allow us to know every homeless individual by name and understand their specific needs. A coordinated outreach and triage assessment process will allow us to act on the community-wide information that the two approaches provide.

Not everyone will want to participate in Registry Week. We still want to be able to count these people because this helps us to measure the need for shelter and services in Simcoe County. Where individuals consent, the PiT Count and Registry Week surveys will be administered together. By conducting both surveys, we hope to be able to reach and include as many people as possible who need housing.



What kind of information will the survey collect?

Through a voluntary survey, participants in the PIT Count are asked questions on their age, gender identity, sexual orientation, aboriginal status, military status, immigration status, income sources, how long/how many times they have been homeless, whether they have accessed emergency shelter recently, whether they have migrated to Simcoe County recently, and what happened that caused them to lose their housing most recently.

Participants in the Registry Week survey will be asked the same questions, along with their names and more personal information that will enable housing outreach workers to better find and match available housing to meet their needs. Survey tools are designed to collect information about individuals, families and youth.

Who will count?

Surveys will be conducted by approximately 200 volunteers, including people who have experienced homelessness, social service providers, health care providers, outreach workers, and community volunteers. Volunteers must be over 18 years of age to participate.

Where will they count?

Teams of volunteers will go to assigned outdoor and indoor locations. Street teams will count in outdoor locations where it has been assessed, through a pre-count process, that people experiencing homelessness are likely to be. Additional locations will be designated for Registry Week surveys. The methods for both surveys may include:

- Indoor Shelter Surveys – the sheltered surveys will include all emergency shelters, domestic violence shelters, and transitional housing programs in Simcoe County.
- Street Surveys – the street surveys will reach people living in public/outdoor places that are not suitable for human habitation.
- Service Counts – these surveys will be in local public institutions (ie. libraries, recreational centres) and non-profit service providers (ie. drop-in centres, food banks, meal programs, etc.).
- Data from Agencies/Government – includes those residing in institutions (ie. hospitals, holding cells, detox clinics) who do not have a permanent address.

How will volunteers know what to do?

Volunteers will be trained in safety considerations, interviewing, consistent survey administration processes, confidentiality, and obtaining consent. This training will take place in various locations throughout Simcoe County between April 16 and 23. Training sessions will take place in the afternoons and evenings and will be 1.5 to 2 hours in length. A short training review and an opportunity for debriefing will also be provided to all volunteers.

Additionally, all survey teams will include one experienced professional in the social services sector or an individual with lived experience to guide the process.

How is 'homelessness' defined?

People are considered homeless if they are:

1. Unsheltered – this includes people living in public or private spaces without consent or contract and people living in places not intended for permanent human habitation.
2. Emergency Sheltered – this includes people using emergency shelter programs (including emergency motel accommodations, and Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters).
3. Provisionally Accommodated – this includes people who are using interim housing, such as short-term transitional housing or who are staying in temporary accommodation or whose housing lacks tenure (ie. those commonly referred to as "hidden homeless" or "couch-surfing").

For more information, please contact Olivia Forrest or Toni Crowe:

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