

The Corporation of the County of Hastings

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WARMING CENTERS – COUNTY SUPPORTS BELLEVILLE AND BANCROFT

BELLEVILLE – In a statement released today, Hastings County Warden Rick Phillips addressed the issue of establishing warming centers in both the City of Belleville and the Town of Bancroft.

“The discussion and decision to establish a warming center at Belleville City Council last night was a timely and important one,” said Hastings County Warden Rick Phillips.

“There is no doubt that as the cold weather approaches communities across the County, like Belleville, need to turn their attention to helping people who need this kind of temporary shelter. While warming centers have not been part of the County’s operations, we will do all that we can to support our communities who wish to set one up,” stated Phillips.

“In Belleville’s case, the County has offered \$30,000 towards the cost of renovating the old police station, as well as working closely with Fire Chief MacDonald to connect to counselling and other supports in order to help the center be successful. I know our staff will do all that they can to help the Chief,” added Phillips.

“Likewise, the County has been actively engaged with the Town of Bancroft to help them as winter approaches. We have set aside \$25,000 to go towards the cost of operating a center once the Town has secured a location. Similarly, our staff will assist the Town where we can, with connecting to other supports to address issues such as counselling and security matters,” said Phillips.

“Warming centers are in my mind indicative of the larger issue that we are all grappling with. There is no doubt that across the County we need more supportive housing, like the 40-unit Home for Good facility in Belleville that we recently built and opened. As soon as we opened it in April, it was full,” said Phillips.

“This kind of housing model that brings dedicated support services directly to people where they live is one of the most effective residential housing solutions that we have, in my opinion,” stated Phillips.

“However, we cannot and should not shy away from acknowledging the fact that there are people in our communities who have serious mental health and addictions problems who cannot be housed, even in our supportive housing facilities like Home for Good. This is a major gap in the health care system that both the province and federal governments must address. People need treatment so that they can be successful in a Home for Good setting and I am calling on senior levels of government to close the treatment gap, so that we can really help these individuals better thrive in our communities,” said Phillips.

“So as we help Belleville, Bancroft and perhaps other municipalities with the immediate need for a warming center this winter, let’s all re-double our efforts to develop more projects like Home for Good as a long-term solution to this important supportive housing issue,” concluded Phillips.

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