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PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP A COMMUNITY AND HEALTH SERVICES MULTI-YEAR PLAN

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends:

- 1. receipt of the presentation by Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Managing Director, Strategic Services Integration and Policy and Lisa Gonsalves, Manager, Program and Policy Development**
- 2. that staff be requested to report back in October, 2009 with a status report on the development of the Multi-Year Plan**
- 3. adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report dated February 26, 2009, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services**

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The Region develop a Community and Health Services Multi-Year Plan, as outlined in Sections 4.1 and 4.2 of this report.
2. Regional Council consider early investment options, at a total amount of approximately \$1 million in 2009 and \$1.3 million annually beginning in 2010, as outlined in Section 4.3 and *Attachment 1* of this report, as part of Phase 1 in the development of the Multi-Year Plan.
3. These early investments be funded through the 0.2% of the tax levy increase for the 2009 Operating Budget reserved for social services and social housing.

2. PURPOSE

This report seeks Regional Council approval to develop a multi-year plan for the Community and Health Services Department (C&HS). The development of a C&HS multi-year plan responds to Council's direction to begin work on a strategic planning framework for the mandated and Council approved programs and services of the newly formed Community and Health Services Department.

This report also highlights the approach that will be taken over 2009/2010 to develop and implement the multi-year plan, including early investment options, that have been designed in response to best meet pressing economic realities and Regional Council's

direction to allocate 0.2% of the tax levy increase for the 2009 Operating Budget for social services and social housing.

The original focus for the plan was to address critical community needs and service gaps resulting from provincial under-funding of social and health services provided through the Region and impacting on our clients. Because of recent concerns about a sharp economic downturn in Ontario, the plan will also provide direction on how C&HS can best support vulnerable York Region residents who are being impacted.

3. BACKGROUND

Why develop a Community and Health Services multi-year plan?

York Region is facing rapid growth and a changing social fabric that will require coordinated approaches and service responses across C&HS programs

While York Region is still a predominantly well-educated and well-resourced community of two-parent families, the Census 2006 data shows York Region is facing a changing social fabric that will bring significant challenges and opportunities. These include:

- Rapid growth in all age groups, with longer term trends toward an aging community. Between 2001 and 2006, children aged 0 to 14 increased by 14%, people between 15 and 64 by 23%, and people who are 65 and over by 39%. Overall population growth during the same period was about 22%.
- The number of low income residents is also increasing – by 55% between 2001 and 2006. As of 2006, about 112,500 residents are living in low income households. People living alone and single parent families are also growing – by 33% and 37% respectively between 2001 and 2006. With growing economic uncertainty, the risk of homelessness and poverty for these groups may rise over the next year.
- Increasing diversity; in 2006, 43% of York Region residents were immigrants and 37% were visible minorities.

The Region plays an important role in meeting the human service needs of these residents through a range of supports. These needs are often complex and require multi-service and coordinated supports. With the reorganization of the Region's community, housing, and health services into one department, and with the realities of a significant economic downturn, there is an opportunity and need to develop more integrated solutions.

Uploading of social service costs by the Province creates new opportunities for reinvesting funds and improving service outcomes

Through the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, the Province has now committed to a long-term plan for uploading the costs of income re-distribution programs (i.e. GTA Pooling, Ontario Works benefit costs, Ontario Disability Support Program benefit and administration costs, Ontario Drug Benefit) and working with municipalities to improve service delivery and outcomes for residents.

Through a C&HS multi-year plan, the Region will be positioned to identify service gaps and growth-related pressures on C&HS programs and prioritize strategic spending as funding opportunities become available through uploading. The multi-year plan will also provide a platform for responding to the new provincial accountability arrangements for cost-shared community and health services as identified in the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review.

Poverty Reduction Strategy initiatives aim to reduce child and family poverty

The Province has also recently developed a long-term poverty reduction strategy with a target of reducing the number of children living in poverty by 25% over five years. The Strategy will include annual provincial investment into initiatives that will improve income assistance, housing, employment and family and health supports to assist the more vulnerable residents of the Region. The Poverty Reduction Strategy initiatives will be key factors influencing the directions within the multi-year plan.

In response to the current economy and job losses in the Region, and to put in place some key interventions to help our more vulnerable residents, through this report staff will also be recommending some immediate short-term early investment options for Council's consideration. These will be aimed at helping to keep more vulnerable residents from falling between the cracks and contributing to our economy and our communities.

Human services are a critical part of long-term plans but operate in a dynamic policy and economic environment. This impacts the level and types of services required by residents

The Region has a well developed framework for long-term and strategic planning through Vision 2026, the Sustainability Strategy, and the Regional Official Plan – all of which recognize the value of human services and human services planning in supporting the quality of life of residents.

To support the realization of these longer-term goals, it is important to establish shorter-term objectives and strategies that are responsive to changing community needs and policy priorities. Good human services planning requires an adaptive and flexible approach so long-term demographic trends, such as aging, can be balanced with

unforeseen economic events, changes in the socio-economic composition of populations, and new policy directions from other levels of government.

In relation to the C&HS multi-year plan, the current economic uncertainty and provincial initiatives such as the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, Aging in Place and poverty reduction will be key factors influencing our service delivery and planning over the next several years.

What are some key elements to human services planning?

Coordinated, multi-year human services planning is a relatively new field for municipal government. A review of jurisdictions that have undertaken human service plans (i.e. Ottawa, Waterloo, Peel, Sudbury, and Boulder, Colorado) show some best practices that can help guide the approach for developing the C&HS multi-year plan. Below are some of the common elements for success of human services plans that were reviewed.

Plans align with corporate strategic planning and focus on services within the municipal mandate

Human services plans align directly to broader strategic goals. They also act as policy guides to identify critical issues as well as where funding or new initiatives are needed to support annual business plans and expenditure decisions.

Focusing on programs and services which municipalities can realistically influence is also important so outcomes can be identified, tracked, and evaluated effectively.

Plans must be realistic and require flexibility

Human services plans require flexibility and realistic planning horizons. Human Services can be dramatically affected by changing economic and policy environments, new social and economic information, data, and mandates of municipal councils. These realities need to be incorporated so plans stay focused and grounded in the best information available.

Service plans are key building blocks

Many municipalities, including York Region, engage in program-specific service planning and community data analysis. Human services plans can build on these service plans, supplemented by consultations with key community stakeholders, to identify common issues and integrated approaches.

Developing plans can be a lengthy process

As municipal human services are directly, and indirectly, linked to services provided by others, broad internal and external consultation is crucial to developing a realistic,

sustainable and implementable plan. Depending on the scope of services covered and the range of consultations used the process for developing coordinated human service plans typically ranged from two to three years.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 Purpose and scope of C&HS multi-year plan

The multi-year plan will guide strategic community investment and program development for C&HS provincially-mandated and regionally approved programs over a five year cycle

The multi-year plan will focus specifically on provincially mandated and Council approved programs and services provided through C&HS branches – Social Services, Housing and Long Term Care, Emergency Medical Services, Public Health Services, Strategic Service Integration and Policy, and Business Operations and Quality Assurance.

From a departmental perspective, the purpose is to develop overarching strategic directions as a framework for developing future C&HS initiatives or enhancements in the annual budget and business planning cycles.

The plan will:

- Highlight and assess key issues or challenges.
- Develop strategic directions or themes on how to respond to issues identified. These will be linked to areas where C&HS can influence.
- Identify C&HS actions that will contribute to keeping the Region's long-term goals on track.

A five year timeframe is recommended

The plan will be a five year plan that will be forward moving and refreshed every five years. Each five year plan will build upon the former multi-year plan(s). Multi-year plans may be adjusted as policy or other changes warrant. Vision 2026 already sets out broader longer-term goals that speak directly to the human service needs of York Region residents. The C&HS multi-year plan will show how these goals are impacted by shorter-term change and how programs and services may need to adjust.

More importantly, as previously mentioned, human services planning is greatly impacted by services to shifting socio-economic and policy environments. Therefore, where human services are concerned, plans that go beyond a five year cycle are not always realistic or reliable for some service areas. Long-term planning can be appropriate for some services, such as long-term care beds but it is more difficult for others, such as employment related services or income assistance, that are influenced by changing economic conditions and

policy from other levels of government, which could not have been foretold even a year ago.

The plan will also acknowledge the external factors that impact our services. It will be important to highlight that for many of the human services issues facing the Region, C&HS will only have a limited capacity to respond for services that are not within our mandate (e.g. developmental services for adults) or where the department is only one of several service providers (e.g. long-term care and seniors services).

The multi-year plan will be people and community-focused

Strategic directions for the C&HS multi-year plan will be people and community-focused – not defined by branch mandates. This recognizes that human services needs require a range of supports and interventions across different C&HS branch responsibilities.

The multi-year plan will align with other regional strategic plans and bridge current corporate planning processes

From a corporate perspective, the multi-year plan will be designed to help the Region sustain progress in meeting the goals and action areas set in Vision 2026, the Regional Official and Corporate Plans, and Sustainability Strategy as they relate to the programs and services C&HS provides.

It will operate as a “mid-level” plan that links the Region’s strategic and annual business planning cycles. Table 1 below highlights these linkages.

Table 1
C&HS Multi-Year Plan Context

Plan Cycles	Process	Contents
Longer-term, Medium term updates	Regional Official and Corporate Plans Vision 2026 Sustainability Strategy	Goals, strategic actions and indicators
	↓	
Medium-term, Annual reviews	Community & Health Services Multi-Year Plan	Challenges, strategic directions and initiatives
	↓	
Annually	Budget & Business Plan	Financial and human resource requirements
	↓	
Varies by program	Operational Service Plans	Service challenges, initiatives and requirements

4.2 Proposed approach to develop C&HS multi-year plan

The multi-year plan will be developed in phases

Given the length of time to develop similar plans in other jurisdictions, a phased approach is being proposed to show progress. Table 2 below highlights the key milestones which are based on receiving Council approval.

Table 2
C&HS Multi-Year Plan – Milestones

Project Deadlines	Date
Reports to Council	
Community Services and Housing Committee	March 11, 2009
Regional Council	March 26, 2009
Project commencement	
Phase 1 completion	April 2009
Phase 2 completion	Summer/Fall 2009
Phase 3 completion	Winter 2009/Spring 2010
First multi-year plan drafted and finalized for Council approval	2010
<i>Phase 4: First multi-year plan implemented</i>	2010 – 2015

Phase 1 will include defining the purpose and scope for the multi-year plan, including scans of human services plans in other jurisdictions. This committee report reflects the major outcomes of Phase 1.

Phase 2 will focus on the major tasks required in developing the plan, including a review of existing program-related service plans, investigate ways to forecast service demands for C&HS programs and services based on demographics and population growth trends, identifying key issues and alignments with other regional plans, undertaking internal and external consultations, developing strategic directions and actions, and devising an implementation strategy (e.g. review cycles, annual reporting). This will also include a review of related provincial initiatives and how they align with the C&HS multi-year plan approach (e.g. Provincial Municipal Fiscal Service Delivery Review, poverty reduction and long-term affordable housing strategies, etc.)

Phase 3 will include plan review, preparation and approvals.

Phase 4 will be the implementation of the first multi-year plan. Every five years a multi-year plan will be released that will build on the previous plan(s).

A C&HS inter-branch steering committee will oversee all phases of the multi-year plan process in close consultation with other departments, where appropriate. Regular report-backs on the plan progress will also be provided to Council.

4.3 Early Investment Options

Early investment options can help kick-start Phase 1 of the multi-year planning process and allow Council to take immediate, proactive action

The ongoing uploading of social services costs to the Province is an opportunity for Regional Council to consider some early investment options as part of Phase 1 of the C&HS multi-year planning process.

With the recent economic uncertainty, York Region's lower income residents are facing added risks of poverty and homelessness over the next year. The early investment options highlight where the Region can take immediate, proactive, preventative action now to keep more residents contributing to York Region's economy and communities and avoid the need for more costly interventions later on.

To support this goal, the proposed early investment options as outlined in *Attachment 1* are designed to work to:

- Improve supports to the working poor.
- Improve supports to C&HS clients with multiple barriers.
- Respond to residents' immediate needs.

Attachment 1 provides more details on the proposed early investment options. These options were developed outside the 2009 budget process and reflect initiatives that are:

- Responsive to the impact of the recent economic downturn on vulnerable residents.
- Easily implemented.
- Have an immediate impact on client outcomes or reducing service gaps across department programs and services.

In some cases, the early investment initiative responds directly to a provincial funding shortfall or gap. For example, there has been a general consensus by a number of municipalities across the province, along with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario that the introduction of the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) and the ending of the lump sum Back-to-School and Winter Clothing Allowance, has resulted in unexpected financial hardship for many families receiving Ontario Works. These families are under-resourced even with the introduction of the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB). Given the high cost of housing and food in York Region, it is unrealistic to expect families on social assistance to put sufficient money aside each month for these seasonal expenses. While the Ontario Child Benefit will ultimately help families with lower income provide for their children by removing children's benefits from social assistance and creating a separate child benefit, many families receiving Ontario Works still need assistance with funds to pay for important seasonal items. The proposed Backpack and Winter Coat early investment initiatives will help to alleviate and mitigate some of the implementation issues with the OCB and assist families in avoiding shortfalls in the family budget.

It should be noted that these early investments will not alleviate all needs but they will relieve a number of the most pressing and easily addressed needs.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The proposed early investment options for the initiatives, set out in *Attachment 1*, total approximately \$1 million in 2009 and \$1.3 million annually beginning in 2010. These investments will be funded through the 0.2% of the tax levy increase for the 2009 Operating Budget reserved for social services and social housing.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

C&HS programs and services benefit residents living in all of York Region's local municipalities. This and subsequent C&HS multi-year plans will provide an approach to better identify, plan, and target services and programs, recognizing that community needs and issues vary across different municipalities.

The proposed early investment options will help support local economies and communities by stabilizing many vulnerable residents facing economic uncertainty, providing critical supports to help vulnerable populations, and improving access to service.

7. CONCLUSION

The global environment, York Region's changing social fabric and growing communities will require strategic and coordinated service responses that can adjust to the dynamic policy and economic environment in which human services operate in Ontario.

As the provider of a range of community, housing, and health services, the Community and Health Services Department is proposing a multi-year plan approach that can position the Region to respond proactively to changing community needs, economic conditions, and provincial policy developments, while supporting progress toward the Region's long-term and strategic goals.

As a first step in developing the multi-year plan, early investment options are also being proposed for Council consideration.

For more information on this report, please contact Cordelia Abankwa-Harris, Managing Director, Strategic Service Integration and Policy at Extension 2150.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause is attached to this report.)