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COMMUNITY FUNDING 2004 ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, February 17, 2005, from the Commissioner of Community Services and Housing:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received by Committee and Regional Council.
2. York Region communicate the need for the Federal government to provide ongoing, stable funding for homelessness services as the Supporting Community Partnership Initiatives (SCPI) funding is ending.
3. York Region communicate the need for increased funding for community services in The Regional Municipality of York to the Province of Ontario.

2. PURPOSE

This report presents to Committee and Council the accomplishments and successes of the Community Development and Investment Fund (CDIF) Strategy in 2004.

3. BACKGROUND

The CDIF is comprised of provincial, federal and municipal funding initiatives that provide services for residents of York Region. These funds include the National Child Benefit (NCB), the Ontario Works Community Placement (CP) Performance Bonus, Homelessness Initiatives funds and the Municipal Purchase of Service fund.

On April 18, 2002, Council approved the CDIF Strategy which became effective with the 2003 Business Planning cycle. The Strategy established the framework within which the Community Services and Housing Department plans, manages, funds, and evaluates community development projects, including the purchase of community-based services. Under the CDIF there are two “funding envelopes”. One envelope is for department-identified projects, and the other is for community proposed projects which are identified through a Request for Proposal (RFP) process.

The first annual RFP was released on September 25, 2003, and closed November 13, 2003. Proposals were evaluated by the CDIF evaluation committee, comprised of York

Regional staff and funders from the Federal, Provincial and not-for-profit sectors. In addition to enhancing the objectivity of the process, the participation of other funders allows the committee to refer initiatives that are not recommended for CDIF funding to other, more appropriate funding sources and to prevent duplication of investments among funders.

Based on the recommendations of the evaluation committee, Regional Council approved 17 proposals for funding. Regional Council also authorized the Commissioner of Community Services and Housing to receive and allocate any new or reallocated CDIF funding that becomes available in-year. Therefore, including both department-identified initiatives and community projects, it was possible to fund an additional 22 projects throughout the year. This brings the total to 39 projects funded in 2004. These 39 projects allowed over 50 agencies to provide services to York Region.

During the fall of 2004 the Region issued its second RFP under the CDIF, inviting the submission of proposals for projects to be funded in 2005. On November 18, 2004, Regional Council approved the recommended projects for 2005.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 CDIF Projects for 2004

In 2004, the Community Services and Housing Department purchased services from over 50 York Region community agencies through CDIF. These agencies open their services to residents in every municipality of the Region in the following key priority areas:

Table 1
CDIF Funding in 2004

Priority Area	Funding Amounts
Employment and Financial Supports	\$ 93,000
Family, Children and Youth	1,285,000
Homeless Initiatives	1,195,000
Strategic Planning/Capacity Building	123,000
Total	\$2,696,000

Thirty nine distinct projects provided a wide range of community services in York Region to over 30,000 residents and their families (*see Attachment 1*). Projects included:

- Child and family supports, such as child care and special needs funding, child nutrition and funding for recreation programs for low-income children.
- Outreach services to the homeless, homelessness prevention and emergency supports for those facing homelessness, and training for front-line homelessness workers.
- Peer mentoring, emergency and counselling services to at-risk youth.

- Employment skill development through training and volunteer opportunities for Ontario Works recipients.

4.2 Monitoring and Evaluation of Projects

Projects were monitored through the review of regular project reports required by the Purchase of Service contracts signed with community agencies. Agency reports included data on the delivery of contracted services, as well as updates on project expenditures. Close monitoring of projects alerted staff to potential concerns and opportunities for reallocation of funding where project expenditures varied from projections. This allowed the Department to maximize the use of available funding and increase the number of projects funded within the budget allocation.

In addition, during 2004 many projects received site visits from Regional staff as part of the monitoring process. These visits allowed Regional staff an opportunity to provide guidance and advice as appropriate.

Information collected for monitoring and compliance purposes does not always reveal the less quantifiable community development benefits of the projects funded through CDIF. Therefore, in January, 2005 six projects were selected for on-site interviews based on the following criteria:

Projects:

- That were new or innovative.
- That were particularly complex.
- With agencies that received regional funding for the first time.
- Where in-year monitoring indicated that an evaluation was warranted.
- Where a funding source required an evaluation.

The objectives of the interviews were to review with each agency the achievement of project goals and objectives, to identify lessons learned in the implementation of the projects and to discuss with the agency unplanned benefits or community development successes yielded by the projects. These interviews were an opportunity for Regional staff to learn from agencies and improve the process for future years. They also support community development through Regional staff sharing best practices and potential solutions to challenges faced by the agencies.

Based on these visits, the most striking unplanned successes achieved through CDIF are:

1. Supporting and engaging new Canadians and visible minorities.

Many projects provided services to, and secured active participation from, new Canadians or visible minority residents. Two successful projects directly targeted these groups to provide information, training and support networks. In addition, approximately 90% of participants in a project directed to support informal child care providers are recent immigrants.

2. Breaking down silos between service sectors and levels of government.

Agencies were a vital part of the information transmission networks available to residents in the region. Almost every agency visited provided clients with connections to other services. Often, direct contacts were made on behalf of clients.

3. Building the community's capacity to respond to residents' needs by building social capital.

In addition to providing specific services and information, projects were vital components of a network of social supports that contributed to the development of social capital in the Region. For example, a small project for Tamil at-risk youth became an important support network for these youth.

Lessons Learned

In addition to these successes, the site visits revealed lessons learned that staff can share with other service providers. Many projects tailored their service delivery to be more responsive to clients or to optimize service delivery to clients. For example, clinics that assisted the homeless and others to secure official identification were often scheduled for the evenings as this was more appropriate for clients. Also, the project providing supports and training to informal child care providers conducted their seminars in the evenings at various locations around the Region to encourage optimum participation.

4.3 Project Outcomes

Outcomes listed for projects are based on reports received from each agency (*see Attachment 1*). Above and beyond the services provided, many projects contributed to service integration, partnerships between agencies serving the same clients which avoided duplication, and the support of volunteerism in the community.

4.4 Service Integration

Service integration results in better service to clients, as they can access appropriately bundled services from the Region. Service integration is a program-wide CDIF goal, and it was promoted in a number of different projects in 2004. For example:

- An innovative project employed a coordinated service delivery model involving the Region, local municipalities and other recreation service providers to provide recreational activities for children and youth of low income families.
- The Community Mental Health Association hired a housing community development worker to assess resources that would meet identified needs in social housing developments, build community partnerships and engage residents.
- The Region continued its collaboration with nine Municipal Parks and Recreation Departments to implement summer recreational programs for children of Ontario Works participants and social housing residents.

4.5 Partnerships

Partnerships result in more effective and efficient services to clients, and are therefore another key goal of the CDIF Strategy. In 2004, partnerships were developed and fostered in a number of CDIF projects. For example:

- The Women's Support Network of York Region and the York Region District School Board developed a protocol for serving South Asian female high school students dealing with sexual violence and its effects.
- Family Day Care Services and York Region Food for Learning continued to partner to facilitate the funding of school nutrition programs for students. The nutrition project also benefited from in-kind contributions from the Health Services Department, including staff expertise and the use of office space. The Food for Learning programs required the active participation of school principals, who supervised the program and handled financial and administrative responsibilities.
- Pathways for Children, Youth and Families Home Base project received referrals of 'at risk' children from neighbouring schools, enlisting support of the Boards of Education.
- The Canadian Mental Health Association again administered funding for the York Region Alliance to End Homelessness to provide training programs for workers in homelessness agencies. The York Region Alliance to End Homelessness is comprised of representatives from approximately 60 community agencies that work to address homelessness in the Region. The Alliance's Education sub-committee coordinated the workshops through which all Alliance members had access to training.

There was also ongoing informal collaboration between agencies. The Housing Help Centre, which maintains a database of rental accommodations for vulnerable residents, also displays an extensive array of community service brochures and often refers clients to other support agencies.

4.6 Community Input and Volunteerism

Community input on project administration and monitoring was promoted through both committee participation and direct volunteer service as noted below:

- The Women's Support Network of York Region in its diversity project compiled a database of more than 131 potential volunteer trainees and began training volunteers from the South Asian community who could serve the female members of its community who deal with the effects of sexual violence.
- The use of community volunteers was an integral part of the Youth Assisting Youth program, which recruited and trained over 90 peer volunteer mentors in its work with bullies and victims of bullying.

- The York Region Abuse Program continued to coordinate and benefit from over 25,000 hours of volunteer service in fundraising and service delivery in 2004.
- Delivery of school nutrition programs under the Food for Learning project strengthened the volunteer input of parents.

4.7 Relationship to Vision 2026

The CDIF Strategy is implemented in a manner that supports the Vision 2026 goal of responding to the needs of our residents. The Strategy also addresses the Vision 2026 goal of quality communities for a diverse population.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The CDIF Strategy is managed within the current budget allocations set aside for each fund contained within the Strategy. In 2004, funding available in the CDIF Strategy totalled \$2.7 million, of which 95% is derived from federal and provincial sources for the Community Services and Housing Department to manage as part of its service system management function. It is anticipated, however, that by 2006 much of the current funding from provincial sources, in particular, could either disappear or be greatly reduced. This will result in a significant reduction of available funding and inevitable service reductions unless alternative sources of funding can be secured.

At the same time, homelessness funding under the federal Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) will come to an end in 2006. Although SCPI funding is not part of the CDIF strategy, it has been a major source of funding for homelessness projects. The loss of this funding source will increase pressure on the limited homelessness funding that is part of the CDIF strategy and will leave important community supports without funding in 2006.

The Strategy provides sound accountability practices in the disbursement of funds. The Strategy and process is managed within the current approved staffing levels for the Department. The benefits to the community of bringing these much-needed service dollars into York Region in such a focussed and cost-effective way are far-reaching.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Residents of all municipalities benefited from the initiatives generated by these service dollars. In total, this relatively small investment benefited over 30,000 residents across the Region. The strategic investment process and the model that has been put in place will continue to enhance these benefits.

7. CONCLUSION

The Council-approved CDIF Strategy allows the Region to plan, manage and fund the purchase of community-based services in York Region, in a way that ensures both the process and the results are accountable, fair, and equitable. The 2004 year marked a very successful second year of implementing the CDIF Strategy, with many project successes.

It is clear that using this funding to strategically purchase badly needed community services from those who are best equipped to deliver them, and monitoring the use of these dollars, is a very cost efficient and effective way of supporting the needs of residents.

Both the federal and provincial governments recognize the value of leveraging the community agency capacity. Unless these levels of government continue to provide appropriate levels of funding in this sector in the next two years, the CDIF will be significantly reduced and York Region agencies will be forced to cut some services. This will add to the chronic under-funding and service gaps in community and human services experienced by the Region.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause was included in the agenda for the March 9, 2005 Committee meeting.)