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HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVES—2005 ALLOCATIONS

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

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Council approve the proposed 2005 funding allocations for the Housing Help Centre and the Homelessness Prevention Program as follows:
 - a) Housing Help Centre—\$92,339
 - b) Homelessness Prevention Program—\$250,000

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Regional Council with an update on the projects currently funded under the Provincial Community Partners Program and Hostel Redirection Program, and to request approval of the proposed 2005 Budget allocations.

3. BACKGROUND

In the summer of 2000 as part of the Local Services Realignment, the Region took on the administration of the Community Partners Program with funding from the Ministry of Community and Social Services. This funding supports the Housing Help Centre (HHC), which has been operating since 1994, providing listings of accommodations for rent across York Region and acting as an information centre for housing-related issues.

In the fall of 2001, the Region approved the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP), as a pilot project run by the Salvation Army in Newmarket. The program was designed to provide one-time financial assistance for individuals and families to either retain or obtain housing.

In December 2002, because of the success and demand of the program, Council approved base funding of \$200,000 for the HPP composed of \$64,800 from the Provincial Hostel Redirection Program and the balance from Regional funds. This was followed by approval in April 2003 of an additional \$50,000, totalling \$250,000 on an annualized basis.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

4.1 Project Results 2004

Following are the details of the success of the programs in 2004.

4.1.1 Housing Help Centre—Citizens for Affordable Housing York Region

This Centre provides a local contact for both landlords and tenants to either register or locate housing across York Region. The Centre has also become a referral source for other York Region departments and community based agencies when assisting clients to locate housing. The Centre developed materials to advertise affordable housing across York Region.

With the introduction of housing listings on their website, contacts for both landlords and tenants have risen significantly. In 2004 the Center housed a total 188 clients of which 174 remained housed for a minimum of three months. In 2004, the Centre relocated to larger accommodations in Richmond Hill after operating in Aurora for 10 years and the provider looks forward to serving a wider client base in the new facility.

Total funding for 2004 was \$85,346.

4.1.2 Homelessness Prevention Program—Northridge Community Church of the Salvation Army

The HPP, operated by the Salvation Army, has been providing one-time financial assistance to individuals and families across the Region to prevent, establish, or stabilize their housing since its launch as pilot project in September 2001. An external evaluation of the pilot program showed that it was more cost effective to keep people housed then to risk having to accommodate them in emergency shelter. For example, the average cost to house a family of four in the emergency shelter was \$6,080 (\$40/person/day x 38 days). At the same time the average cost to assist households through the HPP program was \$1,367.

As a result, Council approved a base budget of \$200,000 for the Program in 2002 (of which \$130,000 was Regional funding) and a further increase to \$250,000 in 2003 (of which \$187,500 was Regional funding), when demand for service continued to grow. The balance of funds were provided by the Province under the Hostel Redirection Program.

This service has been designed to provide assistance to low income working families and individuals who are not in receipt of Ontario Works assistance and Ontario Disability Support Program, and who are at risk of losing their homes or place of shelter. The HPP stabilized housing for 233 households in 2004.

In 2004, the Province announced two new programs, the Provincial Rent Bank Program and the Energy Emergency Program. These programs provide York Region with one-time funding of \$639,133 to address issues of rental arrears, as reported in September

2004, and one time funding of \$125,070 to assist residents with energy related expenses. These funds were advanced to the Region and are reserved for these programs.

For Consolidated Municipal Service Managers that have established a rent bank, this money can be used to expand their services to reach even more residents. The provincial funding is not intended to replace the municipal funding that currently supports prevention programs but is intended to be used as a part of a broader delivery model of homelessness prevention supports and in York Region will be used to complement the existing HPP program. The new one-time Provincial Rent Bank funding was approved by the Province to begin allocation in 2005 and be spent over two years. The new one-time Provincial Energy Emergency funding was approved by the Province to be spent during the last quarter of 2004 and the 2005 year.

4.2 Project Goals and Budgets 2005

These programs continue to provide valuable service to significant numbers of vulnerable residents in York Region and are budgeted to continue in 2005.

The providers have set the following goals in 2005.

4.2.1 Housing Help Centre—Citizens for Affordable Housing York Region

- Continue to develop and maintain the capabilities of the Centre's website.
- Continue to work with the York Region Alliance to End Homelessness and other community agencies to promote public awareness.
- Continue to provide quarterly and annual reports to the Region on items such as numbers served, clients followed up on and number of landlords and agencies who utilize the service.
- The provider expects to assist 175 individuals and families to stay in housing in 2005.
- In order to accommodate the increased rent at the new location and the need for temporary part-time staff support, the proposed budget for 2005 is \$92,339.

4.2.2 Homelessness Prevention Program—Northridge Community Church of the Salvation Army

- Continue to provide assistance to individuals and families to prevent homelessness.
- Continue to provide counselling, anger management, and referrals to other types of services such as budget counselling, alcoholics anonymous, and gamblers anonymous in order to stabilize and prevent reoccurrences.
- Continue to work with other community agencies to promote public awareness.
- Maximize the funding to client services while still providing an adequate administration budget in order to maintain staffing and program stability, as agreed with the Region.
- To deliver other programs within the program parameters of HPP, such as the Provincial Rent Bank and Energy Emergency Programs, under separate contracts with the Region.
- The HPP program aims to assist 230 households in 2005.
- The proposed budget is \$ 250,000

In addition to the clients served through the HPP program, an additional number of individuals and families will receive assistance through the Rent Bank Program and the Energy Emergency Fund. At minimum, an additional 30 families may receive assistance with energy related expenses through the Energy Emergency Fund and up to an additional 100 families may receive assistance from the Rent Bank Program for up to a maximum of two months rent arrears.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The costs of these programs are planned for in the proposed 2005 budget. The details of these costs are shown in the table below.

Table 2
Proposed 2005 Budget

Program	Provincial Funding (\$)		Regional Funding (\$)	Total Budget Request (\$)
	Community Partners	Hostel Redirection		
Housing Help Centre	77,664		14,675	92,339
Homelessness Prevention Program		68,050	187,500	250,000

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

There is no direct financial impact on local municipalities. However, residents of local municipalities who find themselves homeless will receive support under these initiatives. The prevention of homelessness supports quality of life in local communities.

7. CONCLUSION

These services address several of the priorities identified in York Region's *Community Plan to Address Homelessness (Update 2003)* by providing supports to the homeless and at-risk population of York Region.

While these programs cannot resolve the complex issues that lead to homelessness, they do provide short term, concrete actions to improve the condition of some of the Region's most vulnerable residents.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.