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2009 SOCIAL HOUSING INNOVATION FUND DISBURSEMENTS

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends the 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. Regional Council approve the full list of 2009 Social Housing Innovation Fund disbursements included in *Attachment 1*.
2. The Commissioner of Community and Health Services be authorized to allocate any new or remaining Social Housing Innovation Funds that may become available during the course of 2009.

2. PURPOSE

This report requests approval for the disbursement of up to \$337,052 of the Social Housing Innovation Fund.

3. BACKGROUND

The Social Housing Innovation Fund was established in 2007 to assist housing providers to meet new standards for playgrounds and accessibility modifications

At the October 18, 2007 meeting, Council adopted Clause No. 4 of Report No. 8 of the Community Services and Housing Committee, establishing a Social Housing Innovation Fund of \$500,000 from the \$9.665 million Provincial Development Opportunities for Ontario Renters (DOOR) funding. Some of the guiding principles for the fund as approved at the June 21, 2007 Council meeting, through the adoption of Clause No. 3 of Report No. 6 of the Community Services and Housing Committee, include:

- Using funds for housing related purposes not allowed under other very prescriptive programs.
- Distributing funds to extend and complement existing housing investments.
- Increasing access to those who are disabled, where possible.

The fund was established to assist housing providers to make much needed playground and accessibility upgrades. It was proposed to make the funds available on a cost-share

basis to maximize the use of the funds. Cost sharing for the providers was set at 50% for playgrounds and 25% for accessibility upgrades. However, with the adoption of the report at the October 18, 2007 meeting, Council gave the Commissioner of Community and Health Services the authority to waive all or a portion of the contribution based on a solid business case. The report suggested that a maximum of 20% of the Innovation Fund would be allocated to providers unable to make their contributions. Experience has now demonstrated that this level of contribution is not attainable for most housing providers.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Housing providers submitted requests totalling \$500,212

The Region received eleven requests from eight housing providers. Three housing providers submitted two requests each, one for playground upgrades and one for accessibility upgrades. Proposals were reviewed by housing program, operations and technical staff to ensure that playground equipment meets prescribed standards and that accessibility modifications improve opportunities for disabled people to fully participate in their housing community. The total amount of Innovation Fund requests is \$500,212. The total cost for all of the recommended projects is \$337,052.

\$211,115 is recommended for playground upgrades through the Social Housing Innovation Fund

Housing providers submitted six playground requests for total estimated project costs of \$239,634, broken out as follows:

- Three new playgrounds.
- Required repairs to two others bringing them up to Canadian Standards Association standards.
- The creation of an accessible parkette for one housing provider.

Of the total playground project requests, \$211,115 is recommended for disbursement. Most of the housing providers in this category have no ability or a limited ability to pay for the playground upgrades, but have high numbers of children living in their complexes with no safe place to play in the community. Regional staff will assist housing providers receiving Social Housing Innovation Fund dollars as required with the project management and by grouping requests for pricing as appropriate for further project cost savings.

\$125,937 is recommended for accessibility upgrade projects through the Social Housing Innovation Fund

Five accessibility upgrade requests were received with total estimated project costs of \$260,581. The proposed projects include automatic door openers, elevator door sensors, bathtub modifications for ease of entry, and washroom grab bars.

Of the total accessibility project requests, \$125,937 is recommended for disbursement. The difference is made up of housing provider contributions and disallowed requests due to a lack of a demonstrated need for the project and the low benefit to the greater number of tenants of the housing provider. Most of the housing providers are unable to make all of their cost-share contribution. Regional staff will assist housing providers receiving Social Housing Innovation Fund dollars as required with the project management and by grouping requests for pricing as appropriate for further project cost savings.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The uses of these DOOR funds for the identified projects provide a unique opportunity to address community needs that would not be adequately met through the existing program. All received and recommended requests fall within the original \$500,000 allocation and have been included in the 2009 approved budget.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The identified playground category projects will work toward ensuring that children have a safe place to play in their respective communities, which is integral to the well-being of any community. Furthermore, the accessibility category projects will enable the people of those communities to participate and age in place in their communities of choice.

7. CONCLUSION

As social housing providers have limited resources with which to meet changing regulatory requirements and tenant needs, the Region through this Social Housing Innovation Fund will help housing providers ensure that children in their communities have safe places to play and that people with disabilities have the accessibility modifications they need.

For more information on this report, please contact Sylvia Patterson, General Manager, Housing and Long Term Care at Ext. 2091.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

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