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FEDERAL HOMELESSNESS FUNDING UPDATE HOMELESSNESS PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, March 13, 2008, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council endorse the 2008 update to *The York Region Community Plan to Address Homelessness*.
2. Council approve the recommended initiatives, as identified in *Private Attachment 2*, to be funded 100% by the federal government's new homelessness program, the Homelessness Partnership Initiative, with no tax levy impact.
3. The Commissioner of Community and Health Services be authorized to allocate the balance of the Homelessness Partnership Initiative funds for capital projects and other projects which fall within the Homelessness Partnership Initiative federal guidelines and *The York Region Community Plan to Address Homelessness*.
4. The Commissioner of Community and Health Services be authorized to execute purchase of service agreements under the Homelessness Partnership Initiative and any ancillary documentation to give effect thereto.

2. PURPOSE

This report presents the second update to *The York Region Community Plan to Address Homelessness (Community Plan)* and presents recommendations for projects to receive funding under the Homelessness Partnership Initiative. *Private Attachment 2* to this report comprising a list of the recommended projects to receive funding is to be considered in a closed session of Committee and Council because its subject matter pertains to security of Regional property.

3. BACKGROUND

York Region has been administering federal homelessness funding since 2001

In late 1999, the federal government responded to requests for support in dealing with the growing problem of homelessness in Canada by establishing the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), a program funded through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).

SCPI Program—York Region allocated \$3.2 million from March 2001 to December 2007

In 2001, York Region was allocated \$1.6 million in funding for a three-year period. The Region worked with HRSDC and a Community Planning Group comprised of community stakeholders including homelessness service providers, Aboriginal representatives and members of the business community to complete the *Community Plan*. In 2002, York Region was confirmed by HRSDC as the “Community Entity” to act as the delivery agent on behalf of the federal government.

In 2003, the Government of Canada announced the extension of the program Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative 2 and a further \$1.6 million allocation to the Region for a three-year period.

In total, the two phases of SCPI provided \$3.2 million to York Region for services and facilities to residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In late 2006 Homelessness Partnering Strategy announced

On December 19, 2006 a new federal initiative entitled the Homelessness Partnering Strategy was announced and a report regarding the new program was presented to Council in April 2007 (Clause No. 3 of Report No. 4 of the Community Services and Housing Committee).

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Homelessness Partnership Initiative funding released

As part of the broader Homelessness Partnering Strategy, the federal government announced the Homelessness Partnership Initiative, a two-year initiative to replace the SCPI program.

This program is positioned by the federal government as an interim initiative while work is done to engage other federal departments, provincial homelessness funders and other

potential stakeholders in developing a long term national Homelessness Partnering Strategy. The term of the program is April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2009. York Region is a priority area with funding at approximately the same annual rate as SCPI (i.e. \$530,000/year), for a total of \$1.06 million over the two year period. The program is administered by Service Canada on behalf of HRSDC.

York Region to continue as “community entity”

As with the previous SCPI programs, the Region is expected to act as the funding manager on behalf of the Federal Government. To carry out this role the Region executes an agreement with HRSDC to access funding which the Region in turn contracts out to community service providers to carry out activities to benefit the Region’s homeless and those at risk of homelessness. Funded activities must meet the goals and priorities established in the *Community Plan* update.

Completing the *Community Plan* update

One of the requirements for participation in the Homelessness Partnership Initiative is the completion of an update to *Community Plan*, which was last revised in 2004.

Because this has been found to be a valuable strategic planning tool, the Region and a broad range of community representatives (the Community Planning Group) had already begun work on a *Community Plan* update when the new federal initiative was announced at the end of 2006.

To satisfy the federal program requirement, an abbreviated form of the *Community Plan* was submitted in the format stipulated by Service Canada. This format required that very specific targets and outcomes be identified for federal funding.

Community Planning Group identifies funding priorities

As with the previous SCPI programs, the Region and the Community Planning Group agreed that initiatives funded through the time-limited federal funding must be sustainable once the funding term expired on March 31, 2009. Of the \$1.06 million, it was recommended that approximately \$300,000 be offered to service providers in the form of a request for proposals and approximately \$600,000 would be retained by the Region for capital projects to maintain and improve the supply of supportive housing. The balance of the funding is allocated to the Region’s administrative costs.

Having completed this task, the Community Planning Group returned to the completion of the full update and the final document was completed in February, 2008. A summary of the update is attached to this report (*see Attachment 1*).

Highlights of the *Community Plan* update

Using the guidelines of the federal government framework and building on the needs of York Region, the Community Planning Group identified a number of priority areas and objectives for each priority. The following were given a high priority by the Community Planning Group:

Table 1
Community Plan Highlights

Priority	Objective
There is a serious shortage of affordable housing supply in York Region, including supportive housing.	To increase the supply of affordable housing, including supportive housing.
Poverty is one of the root causes of homelessness.	To develop a coordinated community poverty reduction strategy.
Supports and services for homeless individuals and families, and those who are at risk of becoming homeless, are limited and don't meet the needs of York Region residents.	To improve the service capacity of the sector serving the homeless and at risk.
There is a need for improved knowledge, and increased utilization of knowledge, as well as public education and advocacy on homelessness in York Region.	To improve the community's knowledge and understanding of homelessness in York Region.
There is a need for community development activities to further the community's ability to reduce homelessness.	To improve the community's capacity to reduce homelessness.

Region planning public forum on homelessness in 2008

It is proposed that the Region invite community representatives to co-host a half-day forum on homelessness issues in York Region in 2008. This forum would serve as a venue to introduce the final updated *Community Plan* and offer an opportunity to discuss successes to date and future options for addressing the goals outlined in the document.

Service agencies invited to submit proposals for homelessness services

The service priorities identified in the submission to Service Canada were the basis of a Purchase of Service Request released to community service providers on January 24, 2008 which closed on February 14, 2008.

As was the practice with the previous SCPI program, proposals were reviewed by a Community Advisory Board consisting of various funding agencies such as United Way of York Region, Ontario Trillium Foundation and provincial ministries. The recommendations of the review panel are outlined in *Private Attachment 2*. With Council's approval, projects will commence immediately and terminate on March 31, 2009.

Approximately \$600,000 allocated for capital projects

The balance of the allocated federal project funding was identified by the Community Planning Group to be used for capital projects to improve the supply of transitional and supportive housing in the Region.

Because of the short funding period for the Homelessness Partnership Initiative, the Community Planning Group agreed that the Region would retain control of these funds, largely because of the ability to leverage other funds and possible sites.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The York Region community has been allocated a total of \$1,060,748 over the period April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2009 under the Homelessness Partnership Initiative. This amount has been included as a 100% federally funded program with no tax levy impact in the 2008 operating budget for the Community and Health Services Department. The *Community Plan* sets out three funding streams for this allocation:

1. \$300,000 (approximate) for service projects.
2. \$600,000 (approximate) for capital projects to improve housing supply.
3. \$160,000 to offset Regional administration costs.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

All York Region communities benefit from this funding. Participation in the Homelessness Partnership Initiative program will benefit all York Region communities by strengthening quality of life and providing vital services to the most vulnerable residents.

7. CONCLUSION

The Region's continued participation in federal homelessness initiatives is consistent with its role as Service Manager and continues the commitment to working with other levels of government and the community to work towards homelessness prevention and mitigation.

For more information on this report contact Sylvia Patterson, Director, Housing Services Branch at Ext. 2091.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachments referred to in this clause were included in the agenda for the March 19, 2008 Committee meeting.)