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COMMUNITY FUNDING 2005 ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report, March 28, 2006, from the Commissioner of Community Services, Housing and Health Services:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. This report be received for information.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide information about the activities and results of the 2005 Community Development and Investment Fund (CDIF). In 2005, the Community Development and Investment Fund benefited over 30,000 residents of York Region.

3. BACKGROUND

On April 18, 2002, Regional 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 projects, including the purchase of community-based services. CDIF funding is flowed through two envelopes – Department Initiatives and Community Initiatives. Department initiatives include programs and services directly delivered or purchased through Purchase of Service contracts. The Community Initiatives include projects identified through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process where eligible community agencies are invited annually to submit proposals to provide community programs funded by the Region.

Under the CDIF Strategy, the Department manages funds from federal, provincial and municipal initiatives to provide much needed community services and programs to the residents of York Region. These funds include the National Child Benefit (NCB), Homelessness Initiatives and Municipal Purchase of Service funds.

3.1 CDIF Projects for 2005

The selection of projects to be included in CDIF in 2005 began in the fall of 2004 when the Region issued its annual call for proposals inviting submissions from eligible community agencies. The CDIF Strategy clearly outlines the necessary criteria for agencies to be considered eligible and these criteria are included in the Region's proposal call.

Proposals were evaluated by a CDIF Evaluation Committee, comprised of York Regional staff and representatives of funding agencies from other levels of government and the not-for-profit sector. The participation of these external funders in proposal evaluation enhances the objectivity of the process, prevents the duplication of investments among funders in the Region and allows the proposals not recommended for CDIF funding to be directed to other, in some cases, more appropriate funding sources.

On November 18, 2004, the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee were presented to Regional Council for approval. Council approved \$1.3 Million in funding for 21 community projects under CDIF.

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. This enabled the Region to respond to emergency funding needs and allocate additional dollars received in-year in a timely and efficient manner.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Through CDIF in 2005, many community-based programs and services were able to provide important supports to York Region residents. In all, more than 30,000 residents across York Region benefited from the CDIF strategy in 2005. Services were provided to children, youth, families and individuals. In all, 60 projects received funding through CDIF, with a total investment of \$3.4 Million. This included a one-time increase in NCB funding.

As in the past, all projects that received CDIF funding were required to address one or more of four priority areas which reflect the mandate and strategic direction of the Community Services and Housing Department and address the changing and growing needs of our communities. The priority areas are:

- Child and family supports, such as special needs supports, child nutrition and funding for recreation programs for children of low-income families.
- Outreach services to the homeless and to prevent homelessness as well as emergency supports for those facing homelessness.
- Employment skill development through training and return-to-work opportunities for Ontario works participants and low-income residents.
- Initiatives that build capacity, facilitate enhanced collaboration and service integration amongst agencies.

4.1 Monitoring and Evaluation of Projects

Each project was monitored through staff reviews of project reports received at various intervals during the term of the project. Agencies reported specific data on the delivery of contracted services and included updates on project expenditures. Close monitoring of

projects alerted regional staff to potential concerns and opportunities for re-allocation 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 and services funded under CDIF.

Various projects also 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, as well as discuss agency performance.

Further to this, in January 2006, nine community-based projects were selected for on-site reviews using 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 further evaluation was warranted.
- Where the funding sources required an evaluation.

The objectives of the review visits were to explore the achievement of project goals and objectives, to identify issues/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 reviews were an opportunity for regional staff to conduct a more in-depth review, learn from agencies and improve processes for future years. They also supported community development through the sharing of best practices and potential solutions to challenges faced by agencies.

4.2 Findings of Project Review Visits

The project reviews use a standard questionnaire designed to gather information about the project development and implementation. As the Region's population continues to grow, the need for community supports such as those provided by CDIF is also growing. In addition to providing much needed community services, an important part of CDIF is enabling agencies to reach out to meet the changing needs of the Region's growing population. No major issues were identified, but through the reviews that were conducted, the following successes and best practices were noted.

1. Supporting and Engaging new Canadians

Many projects provided services to, and secured active participation from, new Canadians. Two successful projects – Targeted Employment Support Services and Making a Change Together, a Job Developer initiative, directly targeted these groups to provide information, training and referral to other support networks, while CDIF funding also supported a major initiative to develop a Welcome Centre which would serve as a one-stop information, referral and support service that would assist recent

immigrants to York Region in their search for health, employment and other community services.

2. Successfully Targeting the Needs of Vulnerable and At-risk Populations

Many at-risk York Region residents received specific and direct services that either reduced their vulnerability or provided support mechanisms. For example, a drop-in project, Home Base, provided almost 1,000 at-risk youth with basic needs, counselling, employment services and community resource referrals to assist them in re-integrating in society and becoming contributing residents.

3. Enhancement of Services and Programs Already in Place

CDIF projects also assist in building a broader network of social supports by making existing programs and services available to more people. In one project, the Georgina Public Library was funded to initiate the operation of extension centres which provide borrowing, story time programs, library resource and referral information in four locations across Georgina. The Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring project was supported to provide more timely mentoring services to young children at risk. In addition, CDIF also made it possible for the Rainbows Program to enhance and expand its services that support children who have become at-risk due to the tragic effects of family loss.

4.3 2005 Project Outcomes

As part of the preparation of this activity report, a complete summary of the project outcomes for all CDIF projects was developed. This summary of individual outcomes is included in *Attachment 1*. In all, over 30,000 children, youth, families and individuals benefited from a total of 60 CDIF projects in 2005. In addition, CDIF is also successful in encouraging agencies to work better together and establish partnerships in the delivery of services. Some examples of this success are outlined below.

4.3.1 Service Integration

Service integration results in better service to clients, as they can access appropriately bundled services within York Region. Service integration, a program-wide CDIF goal, was promoted in a number of different projects in 2005. For example:

- The Region continued its collaboration with nine Municipal Parks and Recreation Departments to implement summer recreational programs for children of social housing residents.
- A Housing Outreach Program supported over 40 young parents to secure and maintain safe, affordable housing. In addition, this project worked with other community agencies and the broader community to address the issues that impact a young family's ability to secure housing.

- Through the Learning Centre for Georgina, CDIF funding supported a multi-sector planning and service integration project – Linking Georgina – in developing a Function Based Operation system for approximately 20 service providers. The newly adopted system is designed to reduce overlap and duplication of service, and improve delivery of family and children’s services to Georgina residents.

4.3.2 Partnerships

Partnerships result in more effective and efficient services to clients, and are another key goal of the CDIF Strategy. In 2005, partnerships were developed and fostered in a number of CDIF projects. For example:

- CDIF funded an innovative project that allowed Blue Hills Child and Family Services (an established main stream agency) to partner with the Toronto Chinese Community Services an ethno-cultural agency in building capacity to improve Children’s Mental Health Inclusion practices for families in the Chinese community in York Region.
- The Positive Parenting Program developed a framework and implemented a pilot project with multi-sector partners aimed at building the capacity of children’s service agencies.
- The Region, in partnership with all nine local municipalities and both School Boards implemented a Swim to Survive pilot program teaching over 2,450 grade three students from 54 schools the basic skills required to survive an unexpected fall into water. The participating schools were chosen by the two school boards from areas with a high percentage of new immigrant families and families with limited resources where children are considered least likely to participate in traditional learn to swim programs.

4.3.3 Community Input and Volunteerism

Community input on many of the services was facilitated through consultations with lead agencies and the RFP process. In addition, many CDIF projects provided opportunities for direct volunteer involvement, while for others volunteer involvement was essential for delivering services. The following are some examples of volunteer involvement:

- A Multilingual Access Program (MAP) project by Jewish Child and Family Services trained and deployed qualified volunteers to assist new immigrants to York Region who faced linguistic and cultural barriers. The volunteers assisted newcomers by providing a range of services which included translations, help to complete application forms and preparation for employment with the aim of having newcomers more fully access services available in the community.

- The York Region Food for Learning program provided in-school nutritional breakfasts and snacks to York Region students through the co-ordination of numerous community volunteers.
- A pool of community volunteers who are also mental health survivors provided warm-line telephone support and referrals to those with mental health challenges and their families.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The CDIF Strategy is managed within the current budget allocations set aside for each fund included within the Strategy. In 2005, 95.6% of CDIF funding came to the Region from the federal and provincial governments.

The Strategy is effective in disbursing funds to agencies across York Region who are best able to use limited funding to serve the particular needs of their communities. The Region supports agencies and monitors the programs to ensure that funds are used effectively and efficiently. As York Region continues to grow, the need for a solid network of community supports will be important to achieving and maintaining strong, healthy communities. As such, the Region will continue to work with the other levels of government to ensure that York Region receives a fair share of the funding available.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

The CDIF Strategy is an efficient, cost-effective and flexible way to purchase needed community services for residents across York Region. In 2005, as in past years, residents in all nine local municipalities benefited. Over 30,000 residents in the Region benefited from CDIF funded programs and services. As the Region continues to grow and diversify, it is essential that CDIF remains adequately resourced. This will enable the Region to continue responding to the changing needs of residents for community services, identifying new agencies to provide programs and services, and encouraging strong linkages between agencies.

7. CONCLUSION

The CDIF Strategy enables 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.

In 2005, the CDIF Strategy was successful in making a variety of community services available to children, youth, families and individuals across York Region. In addition to

helping people in need, CDIF also facilitated inter-agency co-operation and collaboration, thus building important social service capacity and creating a strong network of community based supports. This is an important investment in our communities that is actively supporting the changing needs of our growing and diversifying population.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

(The attachment referred to in this clause was included in the agenda for the April 12, 2006 Committee meeting.)