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NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS INITIATIVE: REGIONAL HOMELESSNESS FUND AND SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE PHASE 2, AMENDMENT AND EXTENSION

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, May 4, 2006, from the Commissioner of Community Services, Housing and Health Services:

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. Council approve the Homelessness Program allocation plans as detailed in this report with expenditures totalling \$690,274, funded 100% federally with no tax levy impact.
2. The Commissioner of Community Services, Housing and Health Services be authorized to reallocate any un-disbursed National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) funds during the duration of the agreement with Human Resources Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) within the framework of the program requirements and *York Region's Community Plan to Address Homelessness Update-2003*.
3. The Regional Chair write to the federal minister responsible for homelessness funding to urge the government's commitment to long term financial support of the Region's strategies to mitigate homelessness. Letter to be copied to area MP's, MPP's and to the NHI delivery agents in each of the regional municipalities in the Greater Toronto Area.

2. PURPOSE

This report provides details of youth homelessness funding allocations of \$160,000 under HRSDC's Regional Homelessness Fund (RHF).

This report further provides details on an additional administrative year for unfinished Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative 2 (SCPI 2) projects from April 1, 2006–March 31, 2007 and an Extended SCPI 2 year with additional funding allocations of \$530,374 for the same period.

3. BACKGROUND

In late 1999, the federal government responded to requests from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the provinces for collaboration and support in

dealing with the growing problem of homelessness in Canada by establishing SCPI, a program funded through HRSDC. York Region received \$1.6 million under the program over a three-year period.

In 2001, York Region worked with HRSDC and service providers in the community to complete *York Region's Community Plan to Address Homelessness*. In 2002, York Region was confirmed by HRSDC as the "*Community Entity*". The Community Entity acts as the delivery agent on behalf of the federal government. In 2003, The Government of Canada announced the extension of the NHI and York Region received notification that the total allocation of funding to the Region over the next three years would be \$1,626,865. This brought the total allocation to the community to \$3,253,730.

In 2004 and 2005, two Request for Proposals (RFP's) were released, inviting proposals from community agencies for funding under SCPI 2. A total of 21 projects were recommended by the Community Advisory Board (CAB), a panel of York Region funders who were brought together to evaluate SCPI proposals.

In 2005, HRSDC indicated that additional funds of \$160,000 would be available under the RHF youth initiatives. York Region submitted an application for the RHF in October 2005.

In November 2005, the Honourable Joe Fontana issued a news release announcing a one-year extension of the NHI program. This extension allows current SCPI 2 projects, without additional funding, to be completed by March 31, 2007. An announcement in February 2006 of an additional one-year funding pot of \$530,374 brings York Region's total SCPI funding allocation to \$3,784,104.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

The RHF funds of \$160,000 and the SCPI 2 extended funds of \$530,374 must be allocated quickly in order to ensure the project completion date of March 31, 2007. The proposed action was reviewed and approved by CAB on March 21, 2006.

4.1 Regional Homelessness Fund of \$160,000

This is funding targeted to youth homelessness. HRSDC is preparing a new Service Agreement. In order to maximize the time available, qualifying projects that had not been funded, but reviewed through a public process, were again reviewed. There were no projects that met the youth homelessness criteria.

Consultation with Regional staff identified a need for a youth initiative in the southern part of the Region, specifically in social housing and multi-cultural areas. In consultation with the Family and Children's Services Division, the project parameters were established. The program will emphasize community capacity building by connecting at-

risk and homeless youth to community services and programs. Youth outreach programs and activities will be initiated as a means of contact with the youth.

The emergency and Violence Against Women shelters in York Region also provide significant service to youth. A limited RFP was issued to the shelters in March 2006.

Table 1
Recommended RHF Projects

Service Provider	Project Description	Budget
York Region-Family and Children's Services Division	Community Youth Co-ordinator	\$80,000
Regional Shelters	Youth initiatives	\$70,000

4.2 SCPI 2 Extended Funds of \$530,374

The SCPI 2 extended funds are equivalent to one-third the original SCPI 2 funding allocation. It was the announced intention of the previous federal government that this additional funding would serve as a bridge to a new federal homelessness initiative which was under development. The new government has not made clear its policy with respect to support for homelessness programs.

Projects under this initiative must be completed by March 31, 2007. A plan for funding allocation was required before a contract with HRSDC could be executed. The tight timing requirements encouraged staff to use a strategy that would satisfy HRSDC and York Region. Staff first considered projects that had previously been reviewed through a public process. A funding plan to continue selected SCPI 2 projects (*see Table 2*), two Community Development Investment Fund (CDIF) previously qualifying but unfunded projects (*see Table 3*), and several capital projects, were approved by CAB on March 21, 2006.

Table 2
Existing SCPI 2 Projects Recommended for Extended Year Funds

Service Provider	Project Description	Budget
J & J Women's Centre of York Region	Poverty Relief Worker	\$27,000
York Region Food Network	Expansion and Operation of Core Programs	\$22,000
York Region Food Network	Public Education Co-ordinator	\$26,250
Canadian Mental Health Association	Nin-Os-Kom-Tin	\$16,800

Lance Krasman Memorial Centre	Toll Free Warm Line	\$1,000
Capital Projects	In support of Current Projects in York Region	\$278,708

Table 3
New SCPI 2 Projects Recommended For Extended Year Funds

Service Provider	Project Description	Budget
Canadian Mental Health Association	Housing Outreach Worker	\$61,300
Yellow Brick House on behalf of the Alliance to End Homelessness	Women's Shelter Needs Assessment	\$25,520

4.3 Long Term Federal Funding Commitment

In 2006, the Region will be reviewing and updating the *York Region's Community Plan to Address Homelessness Update-2003*. This document will assist the community in long-term planning and effective use of homelessness funds.

There is an urgent need for the federal government to commit to the mitigation of homelessness through long term funding of homelessness programs. Piece meal program funding with short funding time frames does not allow community agencies the opportunity for long range project planning, stability in staffing, and development of substantial capital projects.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of these initiatives until March 31, 2007 will be paid for through HRSDC funding.

A portion of the SCPI funding was allocated in the *Community Plan Update* for administration and evaluation of the program in York Region. The amount of federal funding for this purpose is \$10,000 from the RHF and \$71,796 from the SCPI 2 extended funds.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

While there will be no financial impact for local municipalities, the programs being provided through SCPI will certainly benefit vulnerable residents of these communities as most serve all of York Region no matter where they are based.

7. CONCLUSION

These NHI build on previous homelessness programs and have provided funding for programs and services for homeless people in York Region. Despite the short-term nature of the funding, the Region's strategies to alleviate homelessness have had a positive impact on people's lives, but the success of these initiatives has been limited. To better ensure long-term success, communities such as York Region should encourage the Federal Minister responsible for homelessness to provide long-term funding for local strategies to help mitigate homelessness across the country.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.