

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Community and Health Services Committee

FROM: Adelina Urbanski, Commissioner of Community and Health Services

DATE: September 12, 2012

RE: **Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative**

This memorandum provides a summary of the Province's recently announced Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) and highlights next steps the Community and Health Services Department (C&HS) will take to access CHPI funding.

The Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative consolidates and replaces five provincial homelessness funding programs

On July 24, 2012, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) announced CHPI, a \$246 million initiative. The provincial announcement is included as *Attachment 1*. CHPI acts on the Province's commitment as part of its *Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy* to consolidate provincial homelessness funding programs currently administered by municipal Service Managers. Program consolidation was also one of the recommendations of the *Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review*. MMAH worked with a group of Service Managers, including York Region, over the past year on the development of CHPI.

Effective January 1, 2013, the following programs will be consolidated and replaced with CHPI:

- **Emergency Energy Fund** – assists residents facing energy related emergencies with utility arrears and reconnection costs
- **Emergency hostels** – provides short-term lodging and a temporary personal needs allowance until an emergency situation is resolved
- **Domiciliary hostels** – provides permanent supportive housing for vulnerable adults who require limited supervision and support with daily activities
- **Rent Bank** – assists low-income residents facing eviction with repayment of rental arrears
- **Consolidated homelessness prevention program** – provides funding for program supports to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness

The Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit is being removed from Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Programs

As announced in the provincial budget on March 27, 2012, effective January 1, 2013, the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) will cease to exist and will be removed from Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). CSUMB is currently a mandatory benefit issued to OW and ODSP clients to help with the costs of establishing a new principal residence, preventing eviction or discontinuance of utilities, or maintaining a new residence where there is a threat to the health or welfare of a client. The provincial investment in CHPI includes an amount which equals 50 per cent of the current provincial expenditure under CSUMB.

Service Managers will have greater flexibility to use provincial funds to meet local needs

The six programs mentioned above currently operate under separate provincial policy and funding guidelines that are often cumbersome to administer, inconsistent in eligibility requirements, and restrictive in the services that they can fund. CHPI is intended to provide Service Managers with greater flexibility in how they use homelessness funds reflecting local needs and priorities. Based on this, it allows for a “made in York Region” approach to preventing and reducing homelessness going forward. Provincial accountability and reporting will be simpler and guided by outcomes-based policy objectives.

CHPI’s vision is for a better coordinated and integrated system that is people centred, outcomes-focused and reflects a Housing First approach to prevent, reduce and address homelessness. Over time, CHPI is expected to shift services from reactive to proactive responses. Service Managers will be assessed based on two outcomes:

- People experiencing homelessness obtain and retain housing
- People at risk of homelessness remain housed

Service Managers can use CHPI funding in the following service categories:

- Emergency Shelter Solutions (e.g. emergency shelter and/or safe bed)
- Housing and Related Supports (e.g. permanent housing, rental allowance)
- Services and Supports (e.g., street and housing outreach, food banks, housing search)
- Homelessness Prevention (e.g. rent support/eviction prevention).

The Province has established a technical working group to advise on CHPI program guidelines

On August 9, 2012, the Province began consultation through a technical working group with Service Managers. The working group will meet between August and October 2012 to provide input on transition planning, program guidelines, investment plan/service agreement templates, and performance indicators. York Region’s representatives on this working group are Cordelia Abankwa, General Manager, Social Services, and Nancy Lennox, Manager, Community Programs.

York Region will receive \$10,497,859 annually under the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative

Overall, CHPI is a positive announcement for York Region as the funding formula now includes core housing need. Core housing need is defined as households who spend over 50 per cent of their gross income on housing and, or, also have issues related to suitability and adequacy. The allocation is likely to remain at the same level for quite some time. The Province has indicated that enhanced funding will not be likely in the future if municipalities subsequently open any new emergency and transitional housing initiatives. Therefore, it would be prudent to ensure the allocation is protected for when York region's new beds are brought on stream.

As communicated to Community and Health Services Committee in June 2012, York Region's vision is for an integrated system of client-centred services that promote housing stability within the community. Housing stability means helping people either retain housing or are re-housed when faced with crisis or homelessness through a continuum of individualized supports. The vision will focus resources on preventing homelessness, while helping people who are homeless with transitional supports to find and keep housing.

York Region's vision, which aligns with CHPI's policy outcomes, is currently guiding C&HS' reform of York Region's emergency homelessness services. Separate from CHPI, York Region provides tax levy funding to help address service gaps and community needs in homelessness prevention programs and supports. CHPI will not replace the need for these investments. The long-term goal is to align current and future funding and investment decisions, including funding under CHPI, to support the strategies and priorities that will be identified under these initiatives once approved by Council.

Developing alternative supports to OW and ODSP clients to address the elimination of CSUMB will be an immediate priority

As noted above, effective January 1, 2013, CSUMB will no longer be available under OW or ODSP. CSUMB has been a critical support for OW and ODSP clients who face severe housing instability. Being able to access CSUMB quickly to pay for last month's rent and household start up costs (bedding, dishes, furniture), for example, is essential to help people secure housing in York Region's tight rental market if facing eviction or transitioning from emergency shelters.

An immediate priority for 2013 will be to develop alternative service delivery models under CHPI, to ensure the continuation of timely and responsive support to prevent homelessness and help people living in emergency shelters find new housing.

Community and Health Services will report back to Council in winter 2012/13 with a program implementation strategy

As noted, C&HS staff will participate in MMAH's technical working group to develop program details. Annual investment plans will be required by the Region for the years 2013, 2014 and 2015 at which time it is anticipated that a multi-year plan can be presented. The details and requirements of the annual investment plan are still in development and will be brought to Committee and Council when program implementation strategies are fully realized.

In the interim, for 2013, the full range of existing homelessness prevention programs will be maintained. Over 2013, an integrated homelessness service model that incorporates CHPI funding, the results of the Emergency Homelessness Services Review, the Social Assistance Review Commission and the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan will be developed. In addition, a CSUMB replacement strategy will be prepared and changes will be communicated with the community.

Adelina Urbanski
Commissioner of Community and Health Services

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Attachment - 1

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July 24, 2012

Mr. Bruce MacGregor
Chief Administrative Officer
Regional Municipality of York

Dear Mr. MacGregor:

I am writing to inform you about the introduction of the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) and to provide details about the first year's funding allocation for the Regional Municipality of York under this program.

A commitment to housing and homelessness program consolidation was one of the outcomes from the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review. Consolidating housing and homelessness-related programs is a key part of Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS) to transform the housing system and put people first. Under LTAHS, the Province committed to consolidate the following housing and homelessness related programs:

- Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program;
- Emergency Energy Fund;
- Emergency Hostel Services;
- Domiciliary Hostel Program; and,
- Provincial Rent Bank.

Beginning January 1, 2013, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will assume financial and administrative responsibility of the new consolidated program. The Province has been working closely over the past year with a group of Service Manager representatives, selected by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and the City of Toronto, on the development of the new program. The input from this group has been invaluable to shaping the CHPI.

The vision for the new program is a better coordinated and integrated service delivery system that is people-centered, outcome-focused and reflects a Housing First approach to prevent, reduce and address homelessness. Over time, this approach will shift the focus of services from reactive responses to homelessness to more proactive and permanent solutions focused on the following two key outcomes:

1. People experiencing homelessness obtain and retain housing; and
2. People at risk of homelessness remain housed.

Under the CHPI, Service Managers will have increased flexibility to use the consolidated funding in any of the following service categories:

1. Emergency Shelter Solutions (e.g. emergency shelter and/or safe bed);
2. Housing and Related Supports (e.g. permanent housing, rental allowance);
3. Services and Supports (e.g. street and housing outreach, food banks, housing search); and,
4. Homelessness Prevention (e.g. rent support/eviction prevention).

All programs and services that are eligible under the current homelessness-related programs will continue to be eligible under the new program. Furthermore, many additional programming options will now be possible as a result of enhanced program flexibility.

The new approach to provincial homelessness program funding will combine funding from the five existing homelessness-related programs listed above into a single funding envelope. Service Managers will have greater flexibility to use this funding to address local homelessness-related priorities and to better meet the needs of individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative is a 100% provincially funded investment that amounts to approximately \$246 million for 2013-14. This includes the current level of funding associated with the five existing programs and the scheduled upload of the Emergency Hostel Services portion of Ontario Works – consistent with our commitment under the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review. This amount also includes 50 per cent of provincial expenditures from the former Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) and the scheduled upload related to CSUMB.

The Ministry will consult with Service Manager representatives through a Technical Advisory Group, composed of Service Manager Representatives selected by AMO and the City of Toronto, for input on the following elements of the consolidated program:

- Performance indicators and metrics;
- Guidelines for the newly consolidated program; and,
- Investment Plan/Service Contract templates.

Further details on the program design, guidelines and reporting requirements will be provided to each Service Manager upon completion of the work of the Technical Advisory Group – scheduled for early Fall 2012.

Details of the First Year's Funding Allocations

Funding will be issued in quarterly instalments. The first instalment will be issued in January 2013. For planning purposes, the allocation for the Regional Municipality of York in January 2013 will be \$ 2,452,499, and for April 2013 to March 2014 will be \$ 10,497,859. We will provide you with the final figures for these allocations by September 10, 2012.

The allocation for each Service Manager is based on a combination of current funding and needs-based funding as follows:

1. Base Funding: This part of the envelope consists of current funding for the five programs being consolidated. Allocations are based on a combination of:
 - What each Service Manager currently receives under four of the programs (Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program, Emergency Energy Fund, Domiciliary Hostel Program, Provincial Rent Bank); and,
 - Each Service Manager's most recent three-year average of expenditures for Emergency Hostel Services (to account for changes in demand for these services over time).
2. Needs-Based Funding: This part of the envelope consists of the reinvestment from the CSUMB program (removed from social assistance and reallocated to the consolidated program) and the scheduled upload of Ontario Works financial assistance for both Emergency Hostel Services and CSUMB.
 - Funding is allocated according to each Service Manager's share of households in Deep Core Housing Need (a Statistics Canada measure that identifies households who spend over 50 per cent of their gross income on housing and, or, also have issues related to suitability and adequacy).

The new CHPI represents a significant change for both Service Managers and the Province and is an important step toward transforming Ontario's housing and homeless system. We also recognize that the current five programs may be delivered within different departments across Service Managers. We appreciate your assistance in ensuring this information is shared as most appropriate.

We are committed to working with Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards in the development of a more people-centered housing and homelessness system and will work with staff of the Regional Municipality of York to facilitate an effective transition to the new program while maintaining stability for clients. In the coming days, you will receive an invitation to a webcast presentation that will provide more detail on the program design and allocation model of the CHPI. We ask that you share this invitation with the appropriate staff members in your organization and, if applicable, inform us of any particular staff member that can act as a main contact for the new program.

We look forward to hearing from you if you have any questions. Please contact Ian Russell, Team Lead by telephone at 416-585-6965, or by e-mail at ian.russell@ontario.ca for more information.

Sincerely,

(original signed by)

Janet Hope

Assistant Deputy Minister

Housing Division

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

cc. Adelina Urbanski, Commissioner of Community and Health Services
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