

**FEDERATION OF CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES
NATIONAL HOUSING POLICY OPTIONS TEAM (NHPOT)**

The Community Services and Housing Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendations contained in the following report, August 22, 2003, from the Commissioner of Community Services and Housing:

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council approve further support of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' (FCM) National Housing Policy Options Team (NHPOT) by providing a financial contribution of \$12,000 for 2003/2004.

2. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide Regional Council with details of the activities of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' NHPOT, and to seek Council support for further financial support to this effort.

3. BACKGROUND

In November 1998, the Mayors of Canada's largest cities passed a resolution declaring homelessness a national disaster. The preliminary findings of a review of homelessness prevention in York Region conclude that while there is a low rate of absolute homelessness in York Region, a growing proportion of the population faces risk of homelessness.

Through FCM, the NHPOT was created with a mandate to promote action by the Federal government on homelessness and affordable housing.

In fall of 2000, Council approved funding of \$15,000 and participation by a Regional representative, in support of the initiative. In April of 2001, Council approved a further contribution of \$11,000.

The NHPOT membership has continued to grow and now includes many mid-sized and smaller municipalities, as well as the large cities and Regions who have been involved from the beginning. The group has conducted a number of activities to lobby the Federal government to provide funding for affordable housing and other homelessness solutions.

Regular updates on progress are provided to Community Services and Housing Department staff through national conference calls on (at least) a bi-monthly basis.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Throughout 2002 and into this year, NHPOT continued an intensive lobbying effort with the Federal government to ensure that homelessness and the need for affordable housing remained on the Federal agenda. These efforts culminated in three significant announcements in the February 2003 Federal Budget:

1. Renewed commitment to the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) homelessness program in the amount of \$135 million annually over three years.
2. Commitment of an additional \$320 million over five years for affordable housing.
3. An extension of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) for three years at \$128 million per year.

In the 2-year period from 2001 to 2003, York Region benefited greatly from participating in these initiatives, for example:

- Phase One of SCPI provided \$1.7 million to facilities and services for the Region's homeless and at risk residents. As well, it is anticipated that a further \$1.6 million will be flowed to York Region between 2003 and 2006 during the second phase of SCPI funding.
- An initial allocation of 300 units of affordable housing assistance, representing up to \$7.5 million in federal funding, has been announced under the Community Rental Housing Program.
- The RRAP program is providing \$1.8 million for the Armitage Gardens apartments at the Newmarket Health Centre site.

A review of homelessness initiatives in York Region (part of the homelessness prevention review) found that Regional activities funded through these sources have made solid progress in meeting the needs of those who were homelessness or at risk of homelessness.

To build on this progress, NHPOT has two prime goals for the immediate future:

1. To work with all stakeholders to overcome barriers to implementation of the Federal Affordable Housing Program. NHPOT is keenly aware of the delivery issues facing Ontario municipalities in particular.
2. To devise means to ensure that the private sector re-enters the market, in partnership with all orders of government, for a long-term solution to the current housing and homelessness crisis.

Both of these goals fit closely with the Region's efforts to implement the Housing Supply Strategy. These goals support an enhanced focus on homelessness prevention, which is identified as a need in York Region in the preliminary findings of the homelessness prevention review.

FCM is requesting a contribution from members of 1.5 cents/per capita. Based on the most recent population data, the amount to be paid would be \$12,000 (803,780 X .015) to

earn York Region full membership, including a position on the NHPOT Steering Committee.

The Region's continued participation in a national program of this nature signals to the community that the Region is committed to promoting action on homelessness and affordable housing.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Funds are available through the Social Housing Administration Budget for 2003 to cover the cost of this initiative.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

Although there is no immediate direct impact on area municipalities, a successful effort to improve Federal support for housing programs will benefit area municipalities in meeting the housing needs of their residents.

7. CONCLUSION

Participating at the national level is consistent with the recommendations of a number of York Region's long-term planning initiatives including the Housing Supply Strategy and Human Services Strategy as the community works to meet the goals of Vision 2026. Continued participation signals that the Region is committed to working with senior levels of government to manage the issues of homelessness and affordable housing.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.