
Niagara Region

REPORT TO: Co-Chairs and Members of the
Public Health and Social Services Committee

SUBJECT: 2008 Homelessness Service Contract
Ministry of Community and Social Services
Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program (CHPP),
Emergency Energy Fund (EEF), Water Filter Fund (WFF)

RECOMMENDATION

That this Committee recommend to Regional Council that the Regional Chair and Clerk be authorized to execute the necessary documents to enter into the 2008 Homelessness Service Contract with the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Staff are in receipt of correspondence from MCSS (Appendix 1) requesting that the Ministry's 2008 Homelessness Service Contract be signed.
- The contract represents funding for the Emergency Energy Fund (EEF) (100 per cent of Provincial Subsidy = \$172,088/Regional Contribution= \$0), the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program (CHPP) (100% Provincial Subsidy = \$509,264/Regional Contribution= \$0), and the Water Filter Fund (WFF) (100 per cent of Provincial Subsidy = \$151,360/ Regional Contribution= \$0), for a total contract of \$832,712.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Provincial funding provided through this contract falls within the approved 2008 Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities Homelessness budget.

PURPOSE

This report has been prepared to obtain approval for corporate signatures regarding the MCSS 2008 Service Contract for CHPP, EEF and WFF.

BACKGROUND

MCSS has continued its funding through the 2008 Service Contract for the CHPP which is consistent with the new funding model implemented in January, 2006 and supports the Niagara Homelessness Services Community Plan (NHSCP).

The EEF commenced in 2004 to assist low-income Ontarians with energy arrears, security deposits and reconnection costs necessary to sustain permanent housing. Funding continues at 100% through MCSS.

Created in 2007, the WFF will enable municipalities to provide assistance to low-income households for the purpose of removing lead content from drinking water. Implementation in Niagara will occur in 2008. MCSS funding for this initiative will be provided at 100%.

Community Services administers the CHPP, EEF and WFF through Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities.

REPORT

Funding Shortfall

In early 2008, Niagara Region requested \$1,062,912 in CHPP funding to support the priorities identified in the Niagara Homelessness Services Community Plan (NHSCP) developed through community consultation in 2006. The funding received represents a variance of \$569,560. However, the MCSS was able to provide a one-time increase of \$29,590 and a base 2% increase in funding which will be flowed to agencies to support increased costs.

Although the approved funding level did not match our request, Community Services staff are working with agencies, other funding sources, and the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), to expand the social infrastructure needed to respond to homelessness and will continue with its evaluations of these programs to support community planning in this area. A Request for Proposal process will be undertaken shortly to align CHPP funding allocations with the NHSCP.

The execution of this Service Contract will demonstrate Ministry, as well as Region, commitment and investment in the following programs.

Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program (CHPP)

Introduced in 2006 the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program (CHPP) goal is the reduction and prevention of homelessness through a coordinated effort directed at prevention and emergency relief, re-housing, and stabilizing households in permanent accommodation.

To achieve this goal, CHPP funding is allocated as follows:

- Canal View Homes in Welland with providing support services and housing to the psychiatrically disabled.
- Housing Help Centres in St. Catharines and Project S.H.A.R.E. in Niagara Falls for the delivery of housing placement and supportive services in their communities

- Homelessness outreach services in Niagara through Community Care of St. Catharines and Thorold, providing direct service to the homeless population living on the street.

Transitional Supported Housing Pilot – Manchester

In March 2007, MCSS advised Community Services that \$108,000 was available to launch and evaluate the Transitional Supported Housing Plan Pilot (THSPP) in St. Catharines. Utilizing an RFP process, the Niagara Branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), was selected as the successful proponent to manage the pilot and provide supports to the residents. The funding represents approximately 80% of the costs associated with the 18 month project. CMHA has provided in-kind contributions to cover the balance of incurred expenditures. The TSHPP is designed to address the problem of homelessness by providing supported transitional housing to individuals experiencing persistent homelessness (see COM 31-2007).

The Project, in full swing and operating at 100% occupancy has had an immediate and positive impact on the participants and has been well received by the Manchester residents. The participants have assisted with the implementation of a United Way funded youth orientated project run by the RAFT. One participant has been successful in acquiring the life skills necessary to transition to his/her own apartment in the community.

Energy Emergency Fund (EEF)

The EEF, established in 2004, assists low-income Ontarians with energy arrears, security deposits and reconnection costs whereby financial assistance is paid directly to the individual's energy provider. It is anticipated that the demand for the program will rise given the increase in utility costs and the state of the current economy. Consequently, it will be a challenge for individuals on fixed incomes and the working poor in Niagara to remain housed.

Community Services, in consultation with housing help agencies, has recently shifted to a local service delivery model where approximately 10% more of the funding dollars will be targeted toward providing direct supports for utility arrears. It is anticipated that that the new model will improve approval timelines, strengthen communication between utility providers and housing help centres, and reduce administrative costs (see COM 64-2008).

Water Filter Fund (WFF)

As reported in COM 57-2007, Niagara received funding from MCSS to implement the Water Filter Fund (WFF) program. The fund provides water filters that remove potential elevated lead levels from drinking water for eligible individuals/families.

Niagara Region used the Water Filter Funds to provide NSF53 standard water filters and replacement cartridges to low-income households. Each household is eligible to receive the benefit up to \$100. The benefit will only be provided to households who meet the potentially "at risk" demographic which are:

- individuals/families who live in a house built before 1960
- social assistance households (Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program recipients) that include a pregnant woman and/or children aged 0 to 6; and

- low income households with net household income of \$20,000 or less that include a pregnant woman and/or children aged 0 to 6.

Water Filters are requested through our discretionary benefits team and are distributed throughout all of our SAEO sites. A total of 85 Water Filters have been distributed to families throughout Niagara since the inception of the program in May 2008. As indicated in the chart below, the majority of Water Filters have been distributed to families with children aged 0-6 who are in receipt of Ontario Works.

	Ontario Works	ODSP	Low Income
Pregnant	8%	1%	0
Children	82%	6%	1%
High Levels of Lead	0	0	1%

Community Services continues to work with stakeholders to ensure that eligible families receive the water filters.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

Original signed by

Original signed by

Brian Hutchings, Commissioner
Community Services Department

Mike Trojan
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared by Finola Malone, Program Cost Analyst, Operational Support Services, and reviewed by Cathy Cousins, Director Operational Support Services and Sarah Pennisi, Director Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities.

Appendix 1 Correspondence requesting that the Ministry's 2008 Service Contract for EEF, CHPP and WFF be signed.