



SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION

REPORT TO:	CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS
DEPARTMENT:	SOCIAL SERVICES
PREPARED BY:	Valerie Colasanti, General Manager
REVIEWED BY:	Ronald G. Van Horne, Chief Administrative Officer
MEETING DATE:	October 21, 2020
INFORMATION ITEM:	Reaching Home: COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan Funding

BACKGROUND

Council received an information report dated May 20, 2020 titled Reaching Home: Designated Communities Stream, noting that the Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Minister for Families, Children and Social Development, announced that the Government of Canada designated Lambton County as one of six new communities selected to receive funding to prevent and reduce homelessness under the Designated Communities Stream of Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy.

Reaching Home provides long-term stable funding to communities that face challenges with homelessness. Funding is provided to a single body, known as a Community Entity, in this case Lambton County, which distributes the funding to support local priorities identified in the community's homelessness plan. All funded programs must support a Housing First model. Housing First is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centres on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed.

The Government of Canada recently announced Lambton County will receive an additional \$632,925 in funding to help extend and expand the emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

DISCUSSION

Reaching Home, Canada's Homelessness Strategy is a community based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness across Canada using the Housing First approach. It supports the goals of the National Housing Strategy, in particular, to support the most vulnerable Canadians to maintain safe, stable and affordable housing, and to entirely eliminate chronic homelessness in Canada.

This new incremental funding allocation is provided under Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan to Support People Experiencing and At Risk of Homelessness and is intended to complement the current Reaching Home funding of \$376,116 received for the 2020-21 fiscal year. Under the COVID-19 funding communities are encouraged to use the additional funding to:

- Extend emergency COVID-19 measures.
- Invest in activities that promote housing stability.
- Undertake activities to prevent future inflows into homelessness.

Within 30 business days of receiving the funds, communities are required to provide an investment plan that describes how the additional funds will support the community's homelessness response to COVID-19. This includes planned investments in housing placements/stability as well as activities that will help prevent homelessness given their importance in containing the spread of COVID-19, particularly as the cold weather approaches. The Reaching Home Community Advisory Board will be required to review and endorse the Community plan for the County of Lambton.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Social Services will receive an additional \$632,925 COVID-19 funding from the Federal Government for the 20-21 fiscal year. There is no financial impact to the County.

CONSULTATIONS

Consultations took place with Employment and Social Development Canada, the County of Lambton Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee, and the Manager of Children's Services and Homelessness Prevention.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Delivering the Reaching Home program is consistent with the County's Mission Statement to promote an enhanced quality of life through the provision of responsive and efficient services accomplished by working with municipal and community partners.

The activities of the Department support the Community Development Area of Effort #3, Community Development, in the County of Lambton's Strategic Plan, specifically:

- Advocating in a manner that raises the profile of the County and its needs in order to secure improved government supports, funding, grants, and other resources.
- Developing programs and initiatives that address poverty reduction and promote social belonging.

- Planning for and responding to the ever-changing needs of an aging population, homelessness and retaining young people in the community while supporting their transition to being employed community members and future leaders.

CONCLUSION

The Reaching Home COVID-19 funding will assist the County of Lambton's Social Services Division to support individuals and families experiencing and at risk of homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic.