
REPORT TITLE: COVID-19 Funding for the Vulnerable Update

FROM: Janice Sheehy, Commissioner of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION

That the 2021 Housing Support gross revenues and expenditures be increased by \$18,817,906 as a result of additional provincial Social Services Relief Funds (Phase 3) in the amount of \$10,703,506 and the Ontario Isolation Centres Initiative Funding in the amount of \$8,114,400;

And further, that the 2021 Income Support gross revenue and expenditures be increased by \$200,000 as a result of additional provincial funding under the Temporary COVID-19 Isolation Emergency Support Fund;

And further, that 2420 Surveyor Road Capital Project 19-5035 funding source be revised from Regional Housing Reserve (R1160) to Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) in the amount of \$7,554,961, with no net impact to the Housing Master Plan envelope.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- To date, the Region of Peel (Region) has received \$13,125,392 of emergency COVID-19 funding for the homeless from the federal government, through the Reaching Home program.
 - The Region has also received \$32,108,288 from the provincial Social Services Relief Fund.
 - Together, these funds have supported the Region's COVID-19 response for the homeless. The funds were also allocated to 94 agencies, that have assisted over 403,000 Peel residents throughout the pandemic.
 - In addition, the Region has received from the province \$400,000 of Temporary Isolation Emergency Support Funds as well as \$313,338 to improve access to much needed mental health supports for the homeless and other vulnerable groups.
 - In addition, the Region has received \$29,282,400 of funding through the Ontario Isolation Centre Initiative.
 - Four isolation centres operate in Peel, providing individuals and families with a safe space to self-isolate during the pandemic.
 - Given that all funds are temporary, staff has begun to plan for the transition back to pre-COVID-19 service levels beginning in the fall of 2021. At the same time, and in order to sustain and build on the gains achieved, a review of service levels is underway for most housing and homelessness programs.
 - Staff will return to Regional Council in the fall of 2021 with the results of this review.
-

COVID-19 Funding for the Vulnerable Update

DISCUSSION

1. Background

Throughout 2020-2021 and as previously reported to Council, the Region has received temporary emergency COVID-19 funding for the homeless and other vulnerable populations from the federal and provincial governments. This temporary funding has been provided by the federal government through the Reaching Home program, and the provincial government through the Social Services Relief Fund, the Ontario Isolation Centre Initiative, one-time mental health and addictions support and the Isolation Emergency Support Fund.

Since the last update to Regional Council on March 25, 2021, the Province has allocated an additional \$8,114,400 to the Region under the Ontario Isolation Centres Initiative and \$200,000 under the Isolation Emergency Support Fund.

The table below lists all temporary COVID-19 emergency funds for the homeless and other vulnerable populations received to date from the federal and provincial governments.

COVID Emergency Funds for the Homeless and Vulnerable Allocated to Peel	
Federal Government	
Reaching Home COVID-19 Emergency Funding	\$13,125,392
Provincial Government	
Social Services Relief Fund	\$32,108,288
Isolation Emergency Support Fund	\$400,000
One-time Mental Health and Addictions Support	\$313,338
Ontario Isolation Centre Initiative	\$29,282,400
Total Provincial Funding	\$62,104,026

This report provides Regional Council with an update on how funds have been spent up to March 31, 2021 and how the additional allocations have been committed.

2. Emergency Reaching Home and Social Service Relief Fund Allocated to Date

As of the end of March 2021, the \$13.1 million of federal Reaching Home COVID-19 emergency funding has been fully committed, with \$12.8 million spent. Funds can be spent up to June 30, 2021.

As of the end of March 2021, \$21.4 million of funding allocated to the Region through the Social Services Relief Fund has been spent. The remaining \$10.7 million of funding has been fully committed. These funds can be spent up to December 31, 2021.

These COVID-19 emergency funds from the federal and provincial governments have been used to support the Region's COVID-19 response for the homeless and other vulnerable

COVID-19 Funding for the Vulnerable Update

populations. This includes funding to 94 community agencies, to assist over 403,000 vulnerable Peel residents throughout the pandemic.

Full details about how all funds have been committed and/or spent can be found in Appendices I, II and III.

3. Ontario Isolation Centre Initiative

As of the end of March 2021, \$5.1 million of the Region's initial allocation of Ontario Isolation Centre Initiative funding has been spent.

This funding is used to operate the Voluntary Isolation Housing Program, using hotels across Peel. These sites support Peel residents impacted by the virus who can't safely self-isolate at home.

To date, four isolation sites have been opened, providing a total of 363 rooms. Three of these sites are funded with Ontario Isolation Centre Initiative funding. The fourth site is funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada. Between March 2020 and March 2021, 1,528 individuals have participated in Peel's COVID-19 Voluntary Isolation Housing program.

The voluntary isolation housing program has helped stop the spread of the virus amongst the homeless in Peel. It has also shown to increase positive housing outcomes. Between February 1, 2021 and March 31, 2021 there were 788 stays at the COVID-19 isolation facility. Of those, 168 indicated they did not have stable housing at the time of intake. By the time of discharge, 91 of those 168 (54 per cent) had improved their housing status.

As previously reported to Council, the Region of Peel received \$8,114,400 in Ontario Isolation Centre Initiative funding in April 2021. As a result, all four isolation sites have sufficient funding to continue to operate, if required, to June 30, 2021. Should the need for four isolation centres continue beyond this date, staff will return to Council with a recommended contingency plan.

4. Isolation Emergency Support Fund

On April 1, 2021 staff was advised that the province had allocated an additional \$200,000 to Peel to support the provision of emergency financial assistance to individuals who are awaiting test results, identified as COVID-19 positive, and/or who are required to self-isolate due to COVID-19. Between January to March 2021, a total of \$178,685 was spent. The funding is intended to support individuals who do not qualify for other social assistance programs and other federal or provincial income assistance, and for whom financial hardship poses a direct barrier to COVID-19 testing or completing a required period of isolation. The funding period is from April 1, 2021 to June 30, 2021.

In addition, the Region is collaborating with six designated "High Priority Strategy Lead" community agencies to connect individuals and families with available supports and emergency financial assistance, so they can isolate safely at home, or at a community isolation centre.

COVID-19 Funding for the Vulnerable Update

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

Emergency COVID-19 funding for the homeless and other vulnerable groups from the federal and provincial governments is temporary. Ontario Isolation Centre Initiative funds are only available to June 30, 2021. Social Service Relief Funds are fully committed and must be spent by December 31, 2021.

To date, these funds have helped 94 community agencies that serve the homeless and other vulnerable groups to adapt and/or expand their services and stay open throughout the pandemic. Increased cleaning, purchase of Personal Protective Equipment and virtual software platforms allowed agencies to follow all COVID-19 health and safety protocols. Isolated and at-risk residents have been provided with grocery gift cards and/or grocery baskets. Additional services for crisis counsellors and online mental health supports have been provided. Isolated seniors have been able to access laptops and iPads to allow their participation in virtual socialization and medical appointments.

The funds have also allowed the Region with our partners, to offer new temporary services, and enhance service levels to reduce long-standing and growing service gaps to our community's most vulnerable. For example, the provision of onsite medical assessments at the downtown Brampton drop-in centre has decreased the need for clients to attend hospitals during the pandemic. Supports provided at isolation centres have not only protected clients from the virus but have improved access to other health supports, while improving housing outcomes as well.

Without additional temporary or permanent funding, staff will need to transition back to pre-COVID-19 service levels for the homeless and vulnerable clients, beginning in the fall of 2021. This means that the gains made through additional drop-in centres, improving access to health supports, and lowering occupancy rates in Regional shelters, will be lost.

Planning for this transition has begun. In order to sustain and build on these gains, a review of service levels is underway for most housing and homelessness programs. Staff will return to Regional Council in the fall of 2021 with the results of this review. This will include funding recommendations for Council's consideration in advance of 2022 budget deliberations. The results will also inform ongoing advocacy for increased permanent funding from federal and provincial governments.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Human Services has received an additional \$8,114,400 from the Province for the Ontario Isolation Centre Initiative, \$10,703,506 through the Social Services Relief Fund (Phase 3) and \$200,000 under the Temporary COVID-19 Isolation Emergency Supports Fund.

The 2021 Housing Support gross expenditures and revenues will be increased by \$18,817,906 due to this additional provincial funding and the 2021 Income Support gross expenditures and revenue will be increased by \$200,000. Similar to other COVID-19 related funding received in Human Services, the funding announcements require equal amounts of expenditure and revenue and have no net impact on the 2021 Budget.

Recognizing the updated direction received from the Province in late January 2021, with respect to Social Service Relief Funds allowing for the redirection from operating to capital, staff determined that a reallocation of Phase 2 and Phase 2 Hold Back funds of \$7,554,961 could be allocated to the Surveyors Capital Project 19-5035. This allocation will replace \$7,554,961 in

COVID-19 Funding for the Vulnerable Update

Regional housing capital reserve funds approved in the July 9, 2020 report to Council, with no net impact to the total capital project or Housing Master Plan envelope.

CONCLUSION

This report provides Regional Council with an update on how the emergency COVID-19 funds received from the federal and provincial governments were spent up to March 31, 2021. It also summarizes the planned uses for the additional allocations received in 2021.

The funds have assisted vulnerable Peel residents throughout the pandemic. However, because these funds are temporary, staff has begun to plan for the transition back to pre-COVID-19 service levels for the homeless and vulnerable clients, beginning in the fall of 2021. At the same time, and in order to sustain and build on the gains achieved, a review of service levels is underway for most housing and homelessness programs. Staff will return to Regional Council in the fall of 2021 with the results of this review.

APPENDICES

Appendix I - Reaching Home COVID-19 Funding Summary

Appendix II - Social Services Fund Funding Summary

Appendix III - COVID-19 Community fund Funded Agencies May 2020 – March 31, 2021

For further information regarding this report, please contact Aileen Baird, Director, Housing Services, Ext. #1898, aileen.baird@peelregion.ca

Authored By: Laura Tribble, Advisor, Housing Services

Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:

Department Commissioner, Division Director and Financial Support Unit.