
REPORT TITLE: **Supporting the Region of Peel’s Community Agencies During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

FROM: Janice Sheehy, Commissioner of Human Services
Cathy Granger, Acting Commissioner of Health Services

RECOMMENDATION

That the Commissioner of Human Services, Commissioner of Health Services, Director of Community Partnerships and/or Director of Seniors Services Development be granted authority to award emergency funding to Community Agencies, from the Community Investment Program, as outlined in the report from the Commissioner of Human Services and Acting Commissioner of Health Services, titled “Supporting the Region of Peel’s Community Agencies During the COVID-19 Pandemic”;

And further, that the Community Investment Program be increased by \$1,000,000 from existing working fund reserves to support emergency grant payments.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- As of January 2020, the first case of COVID-19 appeared in Ontario and the numbers in the Region of Peel and the Province have continued to rise.
 - In order to address the shortfall of services that will result from the COVID-19 pandemic, community agencies require emergency funding and supports to provide essential services to vulnerable residents during this time.
 - A 2020 COVID-19 Regional Community Response Table has been established to identify and support vulnerable and at-risk populations in Peel Region during this pandemic.
 - Peel’s not-for-profit and community sector have been convened to support coordination, information sharing, problem solving communiques, and collaboration to respond to the emerging needs of residents during COVID-19.
 - The \$1,000,000 of emergency funding will provide one-time grants to Peel Community Agencies for immediate needs to assist those who support the most vulnerable during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - Decision making criteria similar to what is normally used for the Community Investment Program is being created to assess emergency funding requests.
 - Staff are recommending that Regional Council grant the Commissioner of Human Services, Commissioner of Health Services, Director of Community Partnerships and/or Director of Seniors Services Development the authority to provide one-time grants from \$1,000,000 in emergency funding.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

Community Organization's Response to COVID-19

On March 17, 2020, the Province of Ontario declared a state of emergency to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. In support of the Province's efforts to contain the virus, the Region of Peel declared a state of emergency on March 18, 2020. As a result, demand for social services has surged putting a strain on the not-for-profit sector in Peel Region.

Community agencies are working hard to address the shortfall of services that will occur during this pandemic; however, they are facing significant, negative economic consequences. The resulting challenges include financial, staffing and client delivery disruptions, which could result in closures of programs and services.

A 2020 COVID-19 Regional Community Response Table has been established to identify and support vulnerable and at-risk populations in Peel Region.

Emergency Funding Through the Community Investment Program

The Community Investment Program provides funding to the not-for-profit sector to strengthen their organizational capacity and Peel's overall human services system to address social challenges such as the one we are currently facing.

The Community Investment Program has a 2020 base budget of \$6,800,000. The additional \$1,000,000 would be used to provide one-time grants to Peel Community Agencies for immediate needs. A one-time grant will be available for any not-for-profit or community agency that serves vulnerable residents by providing essential services in the Region of Peel. The funding will be used towards expenses directly related to providing administration, programs and services. Decision making criteria similar to what is normally used for the Community Investment Program is being created to assess emergency funding requests.

In recognition of the strain on the non-for-profit sector, the Provincial government has announced financial assistance. A news release was issued from the Ontario government on March 23, 2020 committing \$200M to:

“support municipalities and organizations that administer social services with funding to support them in their response to COVID-19. The funding will help municipalities and social service providers such as shelters, food banks, emergency services, charities and non-profits continue to deliver their critical services, hire additional staff, and find ways to promote social distancing and self-isolation to keep clients safe and healthy. Ontario's municipal service managers will determine local needs and distribute the funding, ensuring clients are receiving the support they need.”

At the time of writing this report, program details are not yet available.

Due to the urgent nature of the situation and the increased need for support from community agencies, staff are recommending that an accelerated approval process be established through this report to grant the Commissioner of Human Services, Commissioner of Health Services, Director of Community Partnerships and/or Director of Seniors Services Development the authority to provide community agencies in the Region of Peel with

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emergency funding based on similar Community Investment Program decision making criteria.

Staff will return to Regional Council with a report that provides an outline of the process that was used to determine eligibility, a listing of community agencies that have received funding, and the purpose for which the funds were used.

This situation is unprecedented, and at the time of writing this report, requests from the community were being reviewed and analyzed. If the budget allocation of \$1,000,000 proves insufficient, staff will return with a future report seeking additional funding.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

Peel's not-for-profit sector is an integral part of the human services system and supports the needs of residents. If the emergency funding of \$1,000,000 is not provided to community agencies, they will not be able to provide the essential services that vulnerable residents in Peel rely on. These services fall into the priority areas of food security, early years and child development, healthcare, housing and homelessness, youth, seniors and emergency financial supports. Without emergency funding, community agencies will not be able to maintain operations causing programs to be discontinued and staff to be laid off.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Community Investment Program will be increased by \$1,000,000 from existing working fund reserves to support emergency grant payments to Peel Community agencies. If the \$1,000,000 funding allocation proves insufficient, staff will return to Council with additional recommendations.

Should these expenses qualify for Federal or Provincial government COVID-19 funding, such expenses would be submitted for potential reimbursement. Community agencies will be encouraged to seek Federal and/or Provincial funding if it becomes available but in the interim, the process outlined in this report will be used.

CONCLUSION

This is an unprecedented time in our history therefore, it is critical that Peel Region financially assists our community agencies in order to further support our vulnerable residents. Council's approval to grant the Commissioner of Human Services, Commissioner of Health Services, Director of Community Partnerships and/or Director of Seniors Services Development the authority to give community agencies emergency funding is an important step toward addressing the shortfall of services that vulnerable residents of Peel are experiencing as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For further information regarding this report, please contact Sonia Pace, Director, Community Partnerships, 416-844-4411, sonia.pace@peelregion.ca or Donna Kern, Director, Seniors Services Development, 416-278-2870, donna.kern@peelregion.ca

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Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:

Department Commissioners and Division Directors.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Polsinelli". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'N' and 'P'.

N. Polsinelli, Interim Chief Administrative Officer