

Appendix I Improving Housing Outcomes - Advocacy in a Time of Pandemic

Appendix 1 – Service Manager Supports to Improve Housing Affordability Outcomes in Peel

This appendix provides details for Section 2.0 of the accompanying report. It identifies additional supports required by the Region of Peel, in its role as service manager for community housing, to improve housing affordability outcomes in Peel, and, to mitigate and manage the negative impacts of the COVID-19 crisis.

These Council endorsed positions will be used in all advocacy activities for housing and homelessness services.

a) Enhanced Operational Funding

Enhanced contributory operational funding by the federal and provincial governments is required for:

- Increasing supportive housing supply in order to deliver the nearly 230 units identified in the Housing Master Plan, and to fully realize prevention of homelessness through the full implementation of *Housing First* within Peel;
- Protecting and enhancing the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, Reaching Home, and other homelessness-to-housing programs, which will allow the Region to continue placing clients directly into housing through a *Housing First* approach, accepted as a best and most cost-effective practice;
- Preventing the loss of existing affordable housing units by federal and provincial providers in the community;
- Subsidies for Rent Geared to Income units;
- Continued operations beyond 2022 of the “made in Peel Region” housing for survivors of human sex trafficking;
- Maintaining active capacity to address public health threats;
- Enhancing Regional programs, such as the housing stability fund, rent supplements, second unit renovations, development incentives, landlord engagement programming and supports, and staff resources, to continue helping Peel residents to get and keep affordable housing;
- Ensuring funding for case managers, mental health and primary care supports for clients, especially those recently housed, to ensure housing stability;
- Financially supporting service managers to offer housing allowances of greater value for social assistance recipients;
- Enabling service managers to utilize maximum rent allowance funded by the province for social assistance recipients towards client housing costs, and;
- Increasing the amount of financial support received by social assistance recipients, including raising the shelter component of support, to enable service managers to better house clients.

The Region has generally contributed approximately 73 per cent of operational expenditures.

b) Enhanced Capital Funding

Enhanced contributory capital funding by the federal and provincial governments is required for:

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- Full implementation of the Housing Master Plan to create an estimated 5,600 new shelter beds, and, affordable supportive and rental housing units on Regional and Peel Housing Corporation lands. To date, only the first two phases of the master plan are fully funded through to development completion;
- Increasing state of good repair across community social housing providers, including Peel Living, and private landlords working with the Region, in order to improve living conditions for over 17,000 households;
- Establishing a substantial supportive housing portfolio to ensure *Housing First* for all clients and ensuring functional zero homelessness;
- Creating additional built capacity to address public health threats, and;
- Supporting the adaptation of all units in the community housing system to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis which will increase adverse risks clients face from extreme weather, e.g. coping with extreme heat and other health-related impacts, preventing flooding impacting living conditions in dwellings, and, minimizing greenhouse gas emission footprints.

The Region has generally contributed approximately 71 per cent of capital expenditures.

c) Coping with COVID-19

Enhanced supportive actions, including contributory funding, is required to address the impacts of COVID-19 which is known to be impacting racialized and vulnerable people disproportionately:

- Providing funding to ensure homeless households that have been permanently housed to support social distancing during the COVID-19 crisis remain stably housed and are not moved back into the shelter system at the end of the pandemic;
- Expanding infection testing to cover all workers, clients, and families on an on-demand basis to monitor infections and respond rapidly;
- Designating shelters, drop-ins, warming, and cooling centres as essential services and immediately prioritizing access to personal protective equipment for service providers working in these facilities.
- Supporting essential services in providing critical health interventions to highly marginalized populations;
- Implementing recommendations by the Canadian Network for the Health and Housing of the Homeless including immediately striking a task force on COVID-19 and Homelessness and implementing its guidance for the homelessness services sector;
- Ensuring adequate personal protective equipment for client-facing workers within the Region and community providers to maintain operations while minimizing risks to workers, clients, and their families;
- Renovating existing Regional and community provider facilities for long-term living needs that assures compatibility with the requirements of physical distancing, isolation, and recovery;
- Securing new affordable housing supply for long-term living needs that assures compatibility with the requirements of physical distancing, isolation, and recovery;
- Supporting client households to ensure their living spaces are appropriate to support physical distancing, isolation, and recovery, in the event of infection or exposure to infection (e.g. sufficient bedrooms and bathrooms to follow best practices, and temperature controls including cooling);

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- Expanding assistance to vulnerable client households, for instance, families with young children, to cope with the economic, social, physical and educational impacts of physical distancing, isolation, and recovery in order to prevent further risk of multi-generational poverty;
- Preventing further homelessness and housing precariousness by expanding the Housing Stability Fund and Rent Supplement program;
- Preventing loss of affordable housing supply by providing supports to community providers and private landlords to remain in operation and/or bring more supply into the community housing sector, and;
- Addressing financial and social vulnerabilities of Peel residents urgently to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 through broad-based income supports and rental relief.

With approximately 17,000 households in the community housing sector, and a rent of 80 per cent average market rate, monthly rental revenue in the community housing sector is estimated at around \$20M. In addition to ongoing supports from the Region, these monthly revenues could be at risk to community providers over the duration of the pandemic.

d) Legislative and Regulatory Changes

Legislative and regulatory changes, and practice standard changes, are required to better enable the Region to realize improved housing affordability outcomes, including:

- Eliminating clawbacks for benefits, including allowing Regional benefit programs to be stacked with federal and provincial benefits, such as the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit, to result in better housing affordability outcomes for residents;
- Amending the *Housing Services Act* and associated regulations to reflect the many ways that the Region supports clients, for instance, recognizing that the Region supports more than 11,500 households through a combination of programs, including rent supplements, far in excess of the mandated and narrowly-defined provincial service level requirement of 8,424 units and making a shift away from the chronological to a needs-based approach when allocating units or subsidies;
- Enabling Service Managers to use the maximum shelter allowance from social assistance recipients towards housing costs;
- Increasing the monetary value of social assistance for clients, including shelter allowances;
- Allowing unused funding achieved through efficiencies to be kept by the Service Manager and directed to other regional housing priorities;
- Supporting a shift towards needs-based, instead of chronological-based, approaches to providing services and supports to clients;
- Moving away from published Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation average market rents, as they do not often reflect prices encountered by the Region in supporting clients, and consider instead moving towards a benchmark leveraging additional data sources such as the Toronto Real Estate Board's quarterly rental reports, and;
- Ensuring that municipal development controls accommodate special needs and innovative housing models.