
REPORT TITLE: Canada HomeShare: A Pilot Program in Peel Region

FROM: Janice Sheehy, Commissioner of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION

That the Region of Peel provide support for the expansion of the Canada HomeShare Pilot program in Peel as described in the report from the Commissioner of Human Services, listed on the June 24, 2021 Regional Council agenda, titled “Canada HomeShare: A Pilot Program in Peel Region”;

And further, that the Director of Housing Services be authorized to execute a funding agreement to provide a one-time grant to a maximum of \$20,000 to the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly to support the implementation and administration of the Canada HomeShare Pilot in Peel to be funded within the existing Housing Support operating budget with no net impact.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Through the Region of Peel’s Seniors Housing Solutions Lab, as reported to Regional Council on July 9, 2020, staff engaged with Canada HomeShare and became aware of the opportunity for Peel to be included in the next phase of the Program.
 - The Canada HomeShare Program matches older adults (55+) who would benefit from companionship, receiving rental income and support around the house, with a university or college student seeking affordable housing.
 - The Canada HomeShare Program supports both the Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan and is in alignment with the Region of Peel’s Seniors Term of Council Priority to “Enhance Seniors’ Supports and Services”. It is an opportunity for the Region to support the timely creation of affordable housing for post-secondary students, as well as aging-in-place and greater income security for older adults.
 - The Canada HomeShare Program is run by the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly.
 - To support the expansion of the Canada HomeShare pilot program into Peel, staff recommend a one-time grant be issued to a maximum of \$20,000 to the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly.
 - Funding is available within the existing Housing Support operating budget with no net impact.
 - The target program implementation date in Peel is September 2021, pending any COVID-19 considerations. If implementation is delayed, the program will be implemented in January 2022.
 - The length of the pilot is dependent on the ability to achieve 20 matches.
 - Staff will return to Regional Council with the outcomes of the pilot once complete.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

The population of seniors in the Region of Peel is growing and the need for suitable and affordable housing solutions is crucial. Between 2001 and 2016, the Region of Peel's senior population increased by 124.4 per cent. It is expected that by 2041, one in five residents in Peel will be over the age of 65.

The Region's Solutions Lab, funded by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, launched in March 2020, aims to create new innovative housing solutions for seniors who live in both urban and rural settings. The Solutions Lab initiative is a component of the Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan's Private Stock Strategy. The Solutions Lab will conclude in late 2021, at which time staff will bring a report to Regional Council with outcomes and full recommendations.

Throughout the lab, staff has engaged with stakeholders to identify and understand emerging innovative seniors' housing programs and housing models. Through key informant interviews staff heard about the benefits a home sharing program could bring to the Region of Peel. This was corroborated by the seniors participating in the Solutions Lab who identified the importance of home sharing as one way to address their housing needs. This led staff to engage with Canada HomeShare and the Cities of Brampton, Mississauga and the Town of Caledon to understand the success of the program to date, how the program is run, and how this program might be expanded into the Region of Peel.

2. Canada HomeShare

Canada HomeShare is a program run by the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly. The program matches older adults (55+) who would benefit from companionship, receiving rental income, and help around the house with a university or college student seeking affordable housing. In exchange for a rental fee of \$400-\$600 per month, the student provides up to seven hours per week of companionship and assistance with completing light household tasks, such as preparing and sharing meals, tidying up, carrying groceries, or walking a pet.

The Canada HomeShare program is facilitated by trained social workers. Social workers match participants based on a variety of preferences and attributes, conduct Vulnerable Sector Screenings, facilitate initial meetings between participants, conduct safety checks on all homes, and provide ongoing support in the form of regular follow-ups, mediation, and conflict resolution services.

a) Toronto HomeShare

Canada HomeShare began as a pilot project in the City of Toronto in 2018. The National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly implemented the pilot in the City of Toronto. Due to the success of the program, it was extended, and the City of Toronto continued to fund the program. To date, the program in the City of Toronto has successfully created 200 matches.

3. Pilot Program in the Region of Peel

Due to the success of the pilot program in the City of Toronto, the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly received a private donation to support the expansion of the program across Canada. Beginning in March 2021, the model is being rolled out in various cities and has a mandate to create 600 matches throughout the country. Each municipality is contributing funds to participate. Staff recommend that the Region of Peel support the program expansion into Peel at this time by providing one-time funding up to a maximum of \$20,000 to the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly. The funding will be used for costs associated with program administration in Peel Region including the cost of program staff.

Canada HomeShare/National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly staff have indicated that the planning phase of the expansion will begin in June 2021. The target program implementation date in Peel is September 2021, pending any COVID-19 considerations. If implementation is delayed, the program will be implemented in January 2022. The goal for each pilot site is to achieve 10 matches (i.e. 10 older adults matched with 10 students), however given Peel's population size, the program's aim is to achieve 20 matches.

Staff has engaged with program stakeholders including representatives from the City of Brampton, the City of Mississauga and the Town of Caledon, as well as post-secondary institutions in the Region of Peel, including Sheridan College, Ryerson University, and the University of Toronto Mississauga. All stakeholders have expressed their support for the implementation of the pilot in Peel. To assist in program implementation, stakeholders will provide information about the program using various communication channels, e.g. social media and websites.

A local advisory committee will be created for each pilot site involved in the expansion to provide guidance and insights into each site's unique older adult and student housing needs. Staff from the Region of Peel will sit on the advisory committee and assist with recruitment of local stakeholders including representatives from community agencies, post-secondary institutions, the City of Mississauga, the City of Brampton and the Town of Caledon, and other representatives deemed appropriate.

Canada HomeShare/National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly staff will collect baseline survey data on each match and will provide continuous support to the matched clients throughout the duration of the living arrangement. After four months (i.e. one semester), Canada HomeShare/National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly staff will issue a follow-up survey to participants and evaluate the outcomes of the program.

Staff will return to Regional Council with the outcomes of the program once the pilot is complete.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

The Canada HomeShare program is an innovative seniors housing option that supports older adult housing opportunities in the Region of Peel. It is a very cost-effective way to utilize existing housing stock in Peel and assists older adults who may be considered "over housed". The Canada HomeShare program also allows older adults to age-in-place by providing them with home maintenance assistance, companionship and additional income.

Appendix I - Canada HomeShare Update

The Canada HomeShare program also addresses outcomes outlined in the Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan and is in alignment with the Seniors Term of Council Priority to “Enhance Seniors’ Supports and Services”.

The Canada HomeShare program will be implemented and administered in Peel by the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly. The Region of Peel’s role is to fund the costs of program administration. As a funder, the risk to the Region is low should any difficulties arise in relation to any homeshare placements. In keeping its role limited strictly to being a funder of this initiative, the Region’s potential liability related to the housing relationship between senior and student is minimized. There is no contractual relationship between the Region and either party involved in the living arrangement which reduces the ability of either to take legal action against the Region.

Canada HomeShare/National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly staff provide support to each homeshare placement to address the safety of both the older adult and student. Support is provided by dedicated social workers who create matches based on a variety of preferences and attributes, conduct Vulnerable Sector Screenings, facilitate initial meetings between participants, conduct safety checks on all homes, and provide ongoing support in the form of regular follow-ups, mediation, and conflict resolution services. Should any challenges arise during a home sharing placement, staff has risk mitigation measures in place to maintain the safety of the older adult and student, such as a budget to move the student to a new location, conflict resolution services, and ongoing follow-up support. If necessary, the homeshare placement can be terminated and the student relocated.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Staff is recommending that a one-time grant be issued to a maximum of \$20,000 to the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly to support the expansion of the Canada HomeShare program in the Region of Peel, to be funded within the approved 2022 Housing Support operating budget with no net impact.

CONCLUSION

Canada HomeShare is a program run by the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly. The program matches older adults who would benefit from companionship, receiving rental income, and help around the house with a university or college student seeking affordable housing.

Staff recommend that the Region of Peel support the program expansion by providing one-time funding to a maximum of \$20,000 to the National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly.

Upon Council approval, staff will continue to liaise with Canada HomeShare/ National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly staff and work with local municipal and post-secondary stakeholders to support the pilot program.

Staff will return to Regional Council with the outcomes of the pilot once complete.

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

Appendix I - Canada HomeShare Update

Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:

Department Commissioner, Division Director, Financial Support Unit and Legal Services.