
REPORT TITLE: **Update on COVID-19 Funding for Human Services**

FROM: Janice Sheehy, Commissioner of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION

That the 2020 Housing Support gross revenues and expenditures be increased by \$1,387,165 as a result of additional federal Reaching Home funding;

And further, that the 2020 Housing Support gross revenues and expenditures be increased by \$9,747,382 as a result of additional Social Services Relief Fund Phase Two funding;

And further, that the 2020 Early Years and Child Care gross revenues and expenditures be increased by \$17,841,056 as a result of Safe Restart Funding.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The Region of Peel has received \$22.9 million in total from the federal Reaching Home and provincial Social Services Relief Fund to support the homeless and other vulnerable groups during the pandemic.
- This emergency funding has allowed and will continue to allow the Region, together with local municipal and community partners to support vulnerable residents in Peel, by meeting basic needs and ensuring access to essential services and supports.
- To date over 144,000 residents have benefitted from these funds.
- These funds have also been used to implement measures that have prevented the spread of COVID-19 amongst the homeless population in Peel.
- Peel has also received \$17.8 million in federal Safe Restart Funding to help the early years and child-care sector adapt to the COVID-19 environment.
- The Safe Restart funding must be spent by child care providers between September and December 2020 and can only be used on specific reopening expenses. It cannot be used to offset financial pressures in 2021 such as the administrative cost download.
- Staff will keep Regional Council informed on how these funds are utilized through the Chief Financial Officer's updates on the management of the financial impacts of COVID-19 and through the regular triannual reporting process.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

On April 23, 2020 Regional Council was advised that the Region of Peel had received \$5.8 million from the federal government's Reaching Home program and \$5.9 million from the provincial government's Social Services Relief Fund. COVID-19 emergency funds were

Update on COVID-19 Funding for Human Services

provided to all Service Managers in Ontario to support the homeless and other vulnerable populations during the pandemic.

On July 23, 2020, Regional Council was advised that the Region of Peel had received an additional \$1,387,165 from the federal government's Reaching Home Program. On August 13, 2020 Regional Council was informed via a memorandum from the Chief Financial Officer that an initial allocation of \$9,747,382 had been received under Phase 2 of the Social Services Relief Fund. In addition, on August 14, 2020 the Region was provided with details of the federal Safe Restart Funding, including an allocation of \$17,841,056 for the Early Years and Child Care sector.

This report provides an update on how these funds have been committed and/or spent to date and the planned response moving forward, including any anticipated Regional financial impacts.

2. Reaching Home and Social Services Relief COVID-19 Funding

As previously reported to Council in April 2020, Reaching Home is a federally funded, community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness across Canada. The special directives for the emergency fund indicate that the funding is to continue to focus on programs that serve the homeless or those at imminent risk of homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. The provincial Social Services Relief Fund was developed to help communities respond to the increased and changing demands for services to the vulnerable, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Social Services Relief Fund Phase 2 includes an operating component and two new capital components. The objectives of the funding are to:

- Mitigate ongoing risk for vulnerable people, especially in congregate settings;
- Encourage long-term housing-based solutions to homelessness post-COVID-19; and
- Enhance rent assistance provided to households in rent arrears due to COVID-19.

As a result of this funding, over 66 agencies have been able to remain open and adapt their services to assist over 144,000 residents. In addition, these funds have been used to implement measures that have prevented the spread of the virus amongst the homeless and other vulnerable populations in Peel. Through these efforts, the number of clients in the isolation and recovery programs have remained relatively low. As of August 31, 2020, the isolation program has cared for 253 clients and the recovery program has served 18 COVID-19 positive homeless and other vulnerable clients.

a) Reaching Home

As of the end of August 2020, the initial \$5.8 million Reaching Home allocation has been fully committed, with \$2.4 million spent to date.

On July 23, 2020, Regional Council was advised of an additional allocation of \$1,387,165 from the federal government's Reaching Home Program. The funding will be used to continue to care for Peel's vulnerable population, during COVID-19 including the isolation and recovery programs, physical distancing of shelter clients in hotels, personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies.

Update on COVID-19 Funding for Human Services

The following allocation of funds has been proposed:

Region-Led COVID-19 Response	Description	Phase I		Phase II
		Amount Spent as of August 31, 2020	Total committed	Total planned
Isolation and Recovery Programs	The isolation program serves homeless clients who are suspected of contracting the virus and awaiting test results. The Recovery program serves homeless clients who have tested positive for COVID-19.	\$1.0 million	\$2.5 million	\$0.6 million
Hotels	To prevent/slow the spread of the virus within the shelter system, hotels are used to house approximately 50% of shelter clients. As of the end of August 2020, 225 homeless clients were housed in hotels. This allows physical distancing to be practiced within the shelter system.	\$0.7 million	\$2.0 million	\$0.6 million
Portable Washrooms and Showers, PPE, Cleaning	Funds to rent portable washroom and shower units, personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies for emergency, transitional, supportive and community housing providers.	\$0.4 million	\$1.0 million	\$0.2 million
	Subtotal Region-Led COVID-19 Response	\$2.1 million	\$5.5 million	\$1.4 million
Community Supports	Grants were provided to 20 community agencies in Peel. Details can be found in Appendix I.	\$0.3 million	\$0.3 million	n/a
	TOTAL	\$2.4 million	\$5.8 million	\$1.4 million

b) Social Services Relief Fund

As of the end of August 2020, the \$5.9 million Social Services Relief Fund allocation has been fully committed, with \$3.5 million spent.

On August 13, 2020 Council was informed that the Region of Peel had received an initial allocation of \$9,747,382 under Phase 2 of the Social Services Relief Fund. In order to access these funds, a business case must be submitted to and approved by the province.

Update on COVID-19 Funding for Human Services

The following allocation of funds has been proposed:

Region-Led COVID Response	Description	Phase I		Phase II
		Amount Spent as of August 31, 2020	Total committed	Total planned
Hotels	To prevent/slow the spread of the virus within the shelter system, hotels are used to house approximately 50% of shelter clients. This allows physical distancing to be practiced within the shelter system.	\$1.0 million	\$1.5 million	\$1.5 million
Housing Provider Supports	Funds committed to date have provided supports to community housing providers for additional cleaning and personal protective equipment.	n/a	\$0.7 million	n/a
Rent and/or Utility Arrears	Increase the Housing Stability Fund to support residents who have rental and/or utility arrears as a result of COVID-19 and may be at risk of eviction.	n/a	n/a	\$1 million
Additional services for homeless	Rental space and operating funds to rent space and temporarily operate new drop-in and warming/cooling centres for the street homeless in downtown Brampton and in the area of Dundas and Hurontario in Mississauga.	n/a	n/a	\$1.2 million
PPE and Cleaning Supplies	Funds to cover the costs of food, security, cleaning, personal protective equipment and staffing for the Region-led COVID-19 response not covered by Reaching Home funding.	n/a	n/a	\$0.5 million
Shelter repairs	Funds to install plexiglass and other safety measures within the shelter system to prevent the spread of the virus.	n/a	n/a	\$0.15 million
Shelter acquisition	Funds to support the purchase of a new shelter already approved by Regional Council.	n/a	n/a	\$4.6 million
	Subtotal Region-Led COVID-19 Response	\$1.0 million	\$2.2 million	\$9 million

Update on COVID-19 Funding for Human Services

Community Supports	Funds to date have been spent on grants to 66 community agencies in Peel. Approximately 144,000 residents of Peel have been supported by the funding provided to our community agency partners. These funds have enabled non-profit agencies in Peel to safely deliver their services during the pandemic. The funds have been used for: - Food Security (food and gift certificates) - Transportation - Technology software - Virtual mental health programming - Staffing - Supports to isolated seniors - Supports to vulnerable and at-risk children and youth The proposed \$550,000 funding allocation will continue to be used to fund community agencies as they provide essential services. Details can be found in Appendix II.	\$2.5 million	\$3.7 million	\$0.55 million
Admin Funding	Program administration funding	\$0.09 million	\$0.18 million	\$0.2 million
	TOTAL	\$3.5 million	\$5.9 million	\$9.7 million

3. Safe Restart Funding for the Early Years and Child Care Sector

The Government of Canada has committed to providing new funding to help the early years and child care sector adapt to the COVID-19 environment and address the unique needs stemming from the pandemic. On August 14, 2020, the Region of Peel received a memorandum from the Ministry of Education indicating an allocation of \$17.8M in federal Safe Restart Funding.

The Safe Restart Funding supports a shared commitment by all levels of government to ensure that a safe and adequate supply of child-care is available to support the gradual return to work of parents as the economy reopens. This one-time funding will be issued by the Region, as service system manager, to child-care and EarlyON service providers to cover five expense categories:

- the costs of additional personal protective equipment;
- enhanced cleaning;
- additional staff to meet health and safety requirements;
- short term vacancies as operators return to full capacity; and,

Update on COVID-19 Funding for Human Services

- minor capital investments that may be required, in accordance with Ministry or local public health requirements.

The Region of Peel will distribute the federal Safe Restart Funding equitably across more than 150 licensed child-care agencies and seven EarlyON agencies. This will support approximately 46,000 licensed spaces in the early years and child care system in Peel.

Like other temporary COVID-19 funding, the Safe Restart Funding must be spent by providers during a specified period, in this case, September to December 2020. It may not be used by the Region for other purposes such as offsetting other costs or future funding cuts from the province, including the administrative cost download in 2021.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

COVID-19 funding from both the federal and provincial government has ensured that the homeless and other vulnerable groups within Peel received essential health and social services throughout the pandemic. The funding has also enabled the Region to work with local municipal and community partners to prevent the spread of the virus within the shelter system, while providing necessary supports and medical care to the homeless. The Region of Peel's COVID response has achieved positive outcomes and was profiled nationally as a "bright spot" in Canada and a leading practice by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness.

It is anticipated that the funding allocated to the Region of Peel will sustain supports to the homeless and other vulnerable populations to the end of this year. Should the pandemic continue into 2021 and/or should a second wave materialize, existing funds will be insufficient. To mitigate this risk, service models and levels are being reviewed and adjusted where it is feasible to do so. Advocacy to the province is occurring. Staff will continue to closely monitor spending and will keep Council informed of issues if and as they arise.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no net impact to the budget as a result of this report.

Staff will keep Council informed through the Chief Financial Officer's updates on the management of the financial impacts of COVID-19 and through the regular triannual reporting process.

CONCLUSION

The Region of Peel has received a total of \$22.9 million from the federal Reaching Home and provincial Social Services Relief Fund to support the homeless and other vulnerable groups during the pandemic. This funding has allowed and will continue to allow the Region, together with local municipal and community partners, to support vulnerable residents in Peel, by meeting basic needs and ensuring access to essential social services and supports.

In addition, to help the early years and child-care sector adapt to the COVID-19 environment and address the unique needs stemming from the pandemic, the Region of Peel received an allocation of \$17.8 million in federal Safe Restart Funding.

Staff will continue to closely monitor spending and will keep Council informed of issues if and as they arise.

Update on COVID-19 Funding for Human Services

APPENDICES

Appendix I – Reaching Home Funded Agencies

Appendix II – Social Services Relief Funded Agencies

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

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Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:

Department Commissioner, Division Director and Financial Support Unit.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.



N. Polsinelli, Interim Chief Administrative Officer