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**REPORT TITLE: Update on COVID-19 Funding for the Vulnerable**

**FROM: Janice Sheehy, Commissioner of Human Services**

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That the 2020 Housing Support gross revenues and expenditures be increased by \$5,891,606 as a result of additional federal Reaching Home funding.**

## **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Region of Peel (Region) has received \$28.9 million from the federal Reaching Home and provincial Social Services Relief Fund to support the homeless and other vulnerable groups during the pandemic.
  - This 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.
  - These funds have also prevented the spread of COVID-19 amongst the homeless population in Peel. As of October 31, 2020, 33 homeless and other vulnerable residents who tested positive for the virus were cared for in the recovery program.
  - Staff will keep Regional Council informed about the use of these funds through the Chief Financial Officer's updates on the management of the financial impacts of COVID-19 and through the regular triannual reporting process.
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## **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.

On July 23, 2020, Regional Council was advised that the Region of Peel had received an additional \$1.4 million 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 \$9.7 million had been received under Phase 2 of the Social Services Relief Fund.

On September 24, 2020 through a report titled "Update on COVID-19 Funding for Human Services" staff updated Council on how these funds had been committed and/or spent (Resolution 2020-749).

## Update on COVID-19 Funding for the Vulnerable

On October 22, 2020 Regional Council was advised that the Region of Peel had received a third allocation of Reaching Home emergency funds from the federal government, totalling \$5,891,606.

Finally, on November 26, 2020 Regional Council approved allocating up to \$400,000 of emergency COVID funding to address homelessness concerns.

All allocations received to date are listed in the table below.

| <b>Date Notified</b> | <b>Social Services Relief Fund<br/>(Provincial funding)</b> | <b>Reaching Home Funding<br/>(Federal funding)</b> |
|----------------------|---|--|
| April 2020           | \$5,988,400   | \$5,846,621  |
| July 2020            |   | \$1,387,165  |
| August 2020          | \$9,747,382   |  |
| October 2020         |   | \$5,891,606  |
| <b>Totals</b>        | <b>\$15,735,782</b>   | <b>\$13,125,392</b>                                |

This report provides an update on how all Reaching Home and Social Services Relief Funds have been committed and/or spent to date. This report also summarizes the planned uses for the third allocation of Reaching Home funding.

## 2. Reaching Home and Social Services Relief (SSRF) COVID-19 Funding

As previously reported to Council, 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 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.

### a) Reaching Home

As of the end of October 2020, the total \$13.1 million of Reaching Home COVID-19 emergency funding has been fully committed, with \$4.4 million spent.

The third allocation of emergency Reaching Home funds will be used to sustain the Region's COVID-19 response, including the isolation and recovery programs, physical distancing of shelter clients in hotels, personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies. Two new programs, as outlined in the November 26, 2020 Council report, will also be supported with this funding in response to the growing concerns with homelessness including an out of the cold program at St. Leonard's Place and enhanced access to primary health care for street homeless.

## Update on COVID-19 Funding for the Vulnerable

| Region-Led COVID-19 Response                      | Description   | Reaching Home Funding               |                                      |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|   |   | Amount Spent as of October 31, 2020 | Total Committed until March 31, 2021 |
| 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. As of October 31, 2020, 414 clients were cared for in the isolation program and 33 clients in the recovery program. | \$1.5 million                       | \$5.3 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 October 2020, 250 homeless clients were housed in hotels. This allows physical distancing to be practiced within the shelter system.                                     | \$1.4 million                       | \$4.9 million                        |
| Primary Pandemic Care Outreach - Medical Clinic   | Street primary care medical supports provided to homeless residents by medical doctor and registered nurses.  | n/a                                 | \$0.1 million                        |
| PPE, Cleaning, Security, Laundry services         | Funds were used to purchase/ fund personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, security personnel and laundry services for emergency, transitional, supportive and community housing providers.  | \$0.6 million                       | \$1.2 million                        |
|   | <b>Subtotal Region-Led COVID-19 Response</b>  | \$3.5 million                       | \$11.5 million                       |
|   |   |                                     |                                      |
| Community Supports                                | Grants were provided to 20 community agencies in Peel. Additional details can be found in Appendix I.   | \$0.9 million                       | \$1.4 million                        |
| St Leonard's Place Peel - Out of the Cold Program | Evening and overnight program that will serve up to 16 homeless clients with food, clothing, necessities while providing them with a safe place to sleep the night. Services also include access to showers and washrooms. Program will run from November 1, 2020 until March 31, 2021.                                     | n/a                                 | \$0.2 million                        |
| CIP Small Capital Agreements                      | Funding has been provided to 6 agencies resulting from their application to the Region's CIP Small Capital Grants proposal call. Funding has been approved in alignment with the funding directives to allow distribution of CIP Regional funds to additional items needed by community agencies.                           | n/a                                 | \$0.03 million                       |
|   | <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>\$4.4 million</b>                | <b>\$13.13 million</b>               |

## Update on COVID-19 Funding for the Vulnerable

### b) Social Services Relief Fund

As of the end of October 2020, the \$15.7 million SSRF allocation (Phases One and Two) has been fully committed, with \$5.9 million spent.

On September 24, 2020 Council was informed that the Region of Peel had received an initial allocation of \$9,747,382 under Phase 2 of the SSRF. Submission of the Region's subsequent business case to the province outlining how the Region intends to allocate these funds was approved on October 26, 2020.

Details showing how the SSRF funding (both Phase One and Phase Two) has been spent or has been committed are in the table below.

| Region-Led COVID Response               | Description  | Social Services Relief Fund         |                                      |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|   |  | Amount Spent as of October 31, 2020 | Total committed until March 31, 2021 |
| 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                       | \$2.4 million                        |
| Housing Provider Supports               | Supports to community housing providers for additional cleaning and personal protective equipment.   | \$0.6 million                       | \$0.6 million                        |
| Rent and/or Utility Arrears             | Funds to assist with rent arrears for clients who cannot pay their rent as a result of job loss due to COVID.  | n/a                                 | \$1.0 million                        |
| Additional services for homeless        | Rental space and operating funds to enhance drop-in and warming/cooling centres for the street homeless.   | n/a                                 | \$1.1 million                        |
| PPE and Cleaning Supplies               | Funds to cover the costs of food, security, cleaning, PPE and staffing for our Region-led COVID-19 response not covered by Reaching Home funding   | n/a                                 | \$0.5 million                        |
| Shelter capital acquisition and repairs | Funds to install plexiglass and other safety measures within the shelter system to prevent the spread of the virus and as well as funds to support the purchase of a new shelter.                            | n/a                                 | \$4.8 million                        |
|   | <b>Subtotal Region-Led COVID-19 Response</b>   | <b>\$1.6 million</b>                | <b>\$10.4 million</b>                |
| Community Supports                      | Funding enhancement for mobile street outreach team to provide necessities to street homeless clients and grants to 65 community agencies in Peel. Additional details can be found in Appendix II.           | \$4.2 million                       | \$4.7 million                        |
| Capital Renovations                     | Capital renovations for community organizations who serve the homeless.  | n/a                                 | \$0.1 million                        |

## Update on COVID-19 Funding for the Vulnerable

|                              |  |                      |                       |
|------------------------------|--|----------------------|-----------------------|
| CIP Small Capital Agreements | Funding has been provided to 10 agencies resulting from their application to the Region's CIP Small Capital Grants proposal call. Funding has been approved in alignment with the funding directives to allow distribution of CIP Regional funds to additional items needed by community agencies. | n/a                  | \$0.1 million         |
| Admin Funding                | Program administration funding   | \$0.1 million        | \$0.4 million         |
|                              | <b>TOTAL</b>   | <b>\$5.9 million</b> | <b>\$15.7 million</b> |

As part of the SSRF funded response, housing providers were offered additional funding to help offset operational costs. Forty-one housing providers received a total of \$638,192 to assist them with additional costs incurred as a result of the pandemic. This funding assisted housing providers with costs for increased cleaning, PPE, and equipment to work off-site. Housing providers were also offered an opportunity to apply for additional subsidy funding to support their operations, however no housing provider to date has requested financial assistance for this item.

### 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 our local municipal and community partners to prevent the spread of the virus within the shelter system, while providing needed supports and medical care to the homeless who were isolated awaiting test results or who tested positive for COVID-19.

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 the provincial and federal fiscal year, March 31, 2021. Without additional long term or sustained pandemic related funding, all services noted will end as of March 31, 2021. As a result of this expected end date to the emergency COVID-19 funding from the provincial and federal governments; a transition plan will be developed in early 2021 that will ensure a smooth transition of services and clients back to pre-COVID service levels.

Advocacy to the province and federal government for long term sustained funding for 2021 and beyond is occurring at both political and staff levels. Staff will continue to closely monitor spending and will keep Council informed of new funding allocations or 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 updated through the Chief Financial Officer's updates on the management of the financial impacts of COVID-19 and through the regular triannual reporting process.

## Update on COVID-19 Funding for the Vulnerable

### CONCLUSION

The Region of Peel has received a total of \$28.9 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. During the pandemic staff has also housed over 600 households into permanent housing to ease the pressures on our emergency shelter system; it should be noted however that this accomplishment is not a result of temporary pandemic funding.

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

### APPENDICES

Appendix I – Reaching Home Funded Agencies

Appendix II – Social Services Relief Fund Funded Agencies

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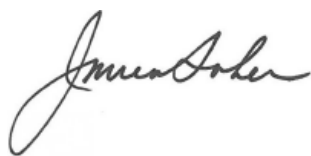
*For further information regarding this report, please contact Aileen Baird, Director, Housing Services, Ext. #1898, [aileen.baird@peelregion.ca](mailto:aileen.baird@peelregion.ca)*

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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.



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J. Baker, Chief Administrative Officer