

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Human Services

Homelessness Prevention Program Funding Investment Plan and Annual Update

RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That County Council receive Report No. HS 2023-09, entitled “Homelessness Prevention Program Funding Investment Plan and Annual Update”, as information.**

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Oxford County received an additional \$1,215,700 in funding under the Homelessness Prevention Program for 2023 – 2024 bringing the annual funding to \$2,992,000.
- The increased funding will allow new initiatives to be explored and implemented to support people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Oxford County.
- The majority of Homelessness Prevention Program funding is flowed out to external community partners who provide supports and services to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- The revised Homelessness Prevention Program framework requires collection of data elements for reporting that will provide valuable information about people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Oxford County and help track the impacts of programs and services.

Implementation Points

The revised reporting requirements under the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) are new to the County and to our community partners in receipt of funding through the HPP. This may be a challenge for some community partners who are not used to collecting certain data points. The County has created a simplified template to use for reporting purposes to reduce any administrative burden for community partners and to assist in the integrity of data collected.

Financial Impact

There will not be any impact to the 2023 budget as HPP funding is 100% Provincial funding. The 2023 budget has been updated to include the increase in funding announced on May 2,







2023 as per report [CS 2023-15](#) with offsetting transfers to invest in eligible homelessness initiatives in the community.

Communications

On March 24, 2023 Oxford County received their revised HPP allocation letter from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), however were under an embargo until an echo announcement was made for our County by the Province. On May 2, 2023 the Province announced the increased HPP allocation for Oxford County and a subsequent news release was issued by Oxford County.

On May 10, 2023 Corporate Services provided a report to County Council making them aware of the increased allocation and corresponding revision to the 2023 budget.

Strategic Plan (2020-2022)

					
<i>WORKS WELL TOGETHER</i>	<i>WELL CONNECTED</i>	<i>SHAPES THE FUTURE</i>	<i>INFORMS & ENGAGES</i>	<i>PERFORMS & DELIVERS</i>	<i>POSITIVE IMPACT</i>
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DISCUSSION

Background

The HPP is a provincially funded program that supports Ontario's 47 Service Managers to provide affordable housing and support services for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The objective of the program is to support Service Managers in preventing, addressing and reducing homelessness including chronic homelessness.

The HPP is a result of the consolidation of funding from three MMAH programs. It combines the former Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, the Home for Good Program and the Strong Communities Rent Supplement Program (SCRSP) into one program under a single policy and accountability framework.

The HPP is intended to be flexible and streamlined so that Service Managers can target funding where community need is greatest and can make the most impact on reducing and preventing homelessness. The overall vision of the HPP is to provide Service Managers with resources to establish a coordinated housing and homelessness system in order for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness have the housing and support services that they need to retain and/or obtain stable housing and achieve better outcomes.

Table 1 outlines the HPP allocations for Oxford County over the next three fiscal years. The 2022-2023 allocation for Oxford County is included as a baseline for funding. The current fiscal year and planned allocations for the following two fiscal years are based on a new funding

allocation model that responds to the recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario (OAGO) Value For Money Audit of Homelessness (2021) and feedback from consultations with Service Managers and sector partners. The new funding allocation model resulted in Oxford County receiving an additional \$1,215,700 starting in the 2023-2024 provincial fiscal year.

Table 1: HPP Allocations

Fiscal Year	HPP Allocation
2022 – 2023	\$1,706,300
2023 – 2024 (confirmed)	\$2,922,000
2024 – 2025 (planned)	\$2,922,000
2025 – 2026 (planned)	\$2,922,000

As a condition of receiving HPP funding, Service Managers must implement and maintain a By-Name List (BNL) in accordance with the approach outlined in the Ontario Services Manager By-Name List 2022 (BNL 2022) Guidelines by April 1, 2023. Oxford County is in compliance with this condition.

The BNL 2022 approach builds on previous BNL requirements and supports HPP outcomes of addressing and reducing homelessness, including chronic homelessness. The BNL 2022 includes a more extensive list of data points compared to previous BNL requirements. The expectation of BNL 2022 implementation is a better understanding of the needs of people experiencing homelessness to be able to better connect to services and supports.

Comments

The HPP framework prescribes service categories under which Service Managers are required to allocate funding and report on outputs. The service categories are Supportive Housing, Community and Outreach Support Services, Housing Assistance and Emergency Shelter Solutions. In addition, Service Managers are able to allocate a percentage of their annual allocation to administration costs. In 2022 – 2023 the allowable administration was 7.5% and in 2023 – 2024 the allowable administration is 5%. Historically Oxford County has taken minimal administration funding and allocated the funding to program delivery.

Service Categories:

Supportive Housing

- Refers to a combination of housing assistance with individualized, flexible, and ongoing support services (for example, mental health and addictions supports, assistance with daily living, and other services).

- For the purposes of HPP, this category includes transitional housing and residential services homes (i.e., former domiciliary hostels).

Community Outreach and Support Services

- Refers to services and supports, such as community outreach and food security programs, as well as case management and referrals for people on By-Name Lists.
- Also includes ongoing supports and services (such as counselling, medical care, or assistance with daily living) for people not receiving long-term housing assistance, which would be considered supportive housing under HPP.

Housing Assistance

- Refers to short-term/emergency assistance, non-financial housing assistance, and long-term housing assistance (such as rent supplements and housing allowances) for people not receiving ongoing support services, which would be considered supportive housing for the purposes of the HPP.
- Includes rent supplements under the former SCRSP program.

Emergency Shelter Solutions

- Refers to expenses directly related to operating and staffing emergency shelters.

2022 – 2023 HPP Update

In 2022-2023 the HPP allocation was used to support a number of community partners who support people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in our communities. Table 2 provides an overview of how the annual funding allocation was spent throughout the County by service category.

There was an increase of approximately \$100,000 in the funding allocated to the Housing Assistance category over 2021 that was used to provide financial assistance to individuals for rental and/or utility arrears to remain in their housing and last months rent deposit to secure suitable stable housing. In 2022 approximately 500 households were supported and it is anticipated this will be an area with increased demand in future years due to inflationary pressures on the cost of living. 20 households were supported with rent supplements in 2022 with HPP funding.

Emergency shelter solutions include The Inn in Woodstock, the Day Space in Woodstock and funding allocated to the Salvation Army to cover costs associated with providing hotel stays for individuals experiencing homelessness who do not have access to stay at The Inn in Woodstock. In 2022, the Salvation Army Tillsong reported 140 hotel night stays. Minimal hotel stays were reported from Salvation Army Woodstock and Ingersoll for 2022. The Salvation Army had a system in place to support those experiencing homelessness who were not able to attend the Inn in Woodstock. Throughout the pandemic this system worked well and continues to be in place to provide support to the community.

Under the Supportive Housing category, funds were provided to our 5 supportive housing providers with costs associated with providing a variety of services to individuals to improve their quality of life and maintain stable housing. This includes 51 individuals in County supported Housing with Related Supports and up to 130 units located at Indwell properties. In addition, under this category funds are provided to transitional housing in the County being Huron House in Woodstock that offers 14 beds, and the new transition house that recently opened in Tillsonburg that offers housing to 7 individuals.

The 2022 budget included a commitment of \$180,000 from the Affordable Housing Reserve to be used to establish a 24/7 Emergency Shelter in Woodstock. This amount is not reflected in Table 2 below under Emergency Shelter Solutions.

Table 2: 2022 – 2023 HPP Expenditures by Category

HPP Service Categories	Financial Expenditures (unaudited)
Supportive Housing	\$ 601,155
Community Outreach and Support Services	137,820
Housing Assistance	415,401
Emergency Shelter Solutions	510,000
Administration	41,924
Total	\$ 1,706,300

2022-2023 was a transition year for the HPP as Service Managers adjusted to the revised program guidelines and reporting requirements. There was not a lot of time to plan funding allocations for community partners and a decision was made to continue with the prior year's funding initiatives in order to provide sufficient time to adjust to the revised program requirements.

2022-2023 Social Services Relief Fund Update

In 2022 – 2023 Oxford County received \$725,000 in Phase 5 of the Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) that was used to offset costs pertaining to housing and homelessness solutions. SSRF was introduced by MMAH in 2020 to provide Service Managers with additional support during the pandemic to address housing, homelessness and COVID response measures. The SSRF Phase 5 funding was allocated through an Expression of Interest call to community partners.

Funding was flowed to 15 partners and some of the initiatives included:

- Additional Staffing for outreach and system navigator positions
- Capital projects for minor renovations and retrofits

- Food security
- Security
- Housing stability supports
- Emergency Shelter supports.

SSRF Phase 5 was the final round for SSRF for Service Managers and was spent by December 2022 as required under the Program guidelines. This was one time funding with no commitment for ongoing funding support.

2023 – 2024 HPP Investment Plan Overview

The HPP framework requires Service Managers to complete an Investment Plan and submit to the MMAH by April 15th each year. The Investment Plan outlines the planned commitments for the funding for the fiscal year by service category. The HPP guidelines and reporting requirements were revised in 2022, and beginning in the 2023 – 2024 fiscal year, Service Managers are required to report on the funding spent as well as the number of unique individuals served with the funding. Adjustments to which category a community partner receiving HPP funding would fall under for reporting purposes were made based on definitions provided by MMAH in the HPP Guidelines.

Table 3 outlines the planned commitments for the 2023 – 2024 fiscal year for HPP that were submitted in the Investment Plan.

Table 3: 2023 – 2024 HPP Planned Allocations by Category

HPP Service Categories	Financial Expenditures (unaudited)
Supportive Housing	\$ 1,125,750
Community Outreach and Support Services	506,150
Housing Assistance	624,000
Emergency Shelter Solutions	520,000
Administration	146,100
Total	\$2,922,000

The increased allocation of the HPP has allowed Oxford County to explore new initiatives with Community Partners to support those at risk of or experiencing homelessness. New initiatives being explored are:

1. The creation of a new position within Human Services called Community Outreach Navigator. This position would be temporary full-time as it is fully funded using HPP

funding. The position would work with those at risk of or experiencing homelessness; work closely with our community partners around housing stability; support BNL initiatives; and attend to encampments, as required.

2. Funding the Salvation Army Tillsonburg for the creation of an Outreach position that would be focussed on providing supports to those at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Tillsonburg. The position is funded for 12 months with the potential for extension.
3. Oxford County works closely with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) and we are in discussions to enter into a new agreement that builds on the existing partnership to provide supportive housing within Oxford County housing.
4. Expansion of The Inn Overnight Shelter to include a female only space. This would include some minor renovations as well as purchase of supplies and equipment.

In addition to the new initiatives, HPP funding has been allocated to support rent and utility arrears for residents, food banks, rent supplement, supportive housing and BNL activities.

The Investment Plan includes an allocation of 5% to be applied to administration costs. This can be changed over the course of the year and be allocated to program costs, however in order to use any of our allocation for administration costs it needs to be declared in the Investment Plan.

HPP funding for 2023 – 2024 is being provided to a number of our community partners who work to support people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. These community partners include, but are not limited to, CMHA, all three Salvation Army locations, Operation Sharing, Indwell, United Way, Oxford County Community Health Centre and supportive housing providers.

2023 – 2024 Reporting Requirements

Service Managers are required to submit an Investment Plan by April 15th each year, and submit quarterly reports and annual reports that must be done through the Government's Transfer Payment Ontario system using templates provided by the Province.

The Province released a performance Indicator guide to Service Managers that outlines the performance indicators developed to monitor and track progress on the achievement of HPP outcomes including measuring a reduction in homelessness and chronic homelessness. For each performance indicator, data elements will be reported annually on unique households assisted, BNL data and breakdowns of provincial priority groups (chronic homelessness, Youth, Indigenous and Transitions from Provincial Institutions) as recommended by the Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness (2015) and recommended by the Auditor General in December 2021.

The HPP annual report is submitted to the Province by the end of June each year. Staff will bring a report to County Council annually that aligns with reporting to the Province on progress made towards the goals of reducing homelessness and supporting housing stability. The data collected through the performance indicators will help inform gaps in services and supports in Oxford County for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness that can be used for advocacy efforts with the Province.

The province is interested in Service Managers using the HPP to support cost avoidance initiatives in establishing a system approach to preventing, addressing and reducing homelessness. The reporting requirements under the new framework will allow for valuable information to be collected to inform and understand the needs of people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. In addition, having comprehensive and up to date information through our BNL activities will allow data collection over the long term to help track program impacts, influence policy development and inform advocacy efforts.

Conclusions

The additional \$1,215,700 in HPP funding for Oxford County is welcomed, however, the annual allocation for Oxford County is not sufficient to meet all of the needs for our communities. The pandemic highlighted the number of individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness and 3 years later communities continue to experience challenges in providing supports and services. Approximately 40% of our annual HPP allocation is dedicated to supportive housing to support people in maintaining their housing and diverting them from homelessness, however, this will not be sufficient to meet the needs of all residents needing supportive housing. Lack of financial and human resources continue to limit the capacity of community partners.

The reporting requirements under the new framework will allow for valuable information to be collected on to inform and understand the needs of people at risk of or experiencing homelessness. The revised reporting requirements add a significant administrative burden for Service Managers on the reporting and data collection for the HPP despite the province's commitment to reduce administrative burden.

Historically Oxford County has not allocated administration funding to offset staff costs for the delivery of programs in Human Services. However, with the increased resources required to complete budget and reporting requirements of the HPP, this will need to be reviewed over the current fiscal year.

SIGNATURES

Departmental Approval:

Original signed by

Kelly Black
Director of Human Services

Approved for submission:

Original signed by

Benjamin R. Addley
Chief Administrative Officer