

## REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

# Funding for Transitional/Supportive Housing Projects

**To:** Warden and Members of County Council

**From:** Director of Human Services

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. That County Council authorize the allocation of up to \$1.15 million in development and \$500,000 in annual operating (totaling \$1.65 million) from the Human Services Budget, through New Initiative 2024-10 – Homelessness Response Strategy, to support the creation of up to 20 Transitional/Supportive housing beds, across three projects, as follows:
  - a. Up to \$150,000 in development and up to \$190,000 in annual operating, to support a five-bed transitional home at 141 King Solomon Street, Ingersoll, owned and operated by CMHA Thames Valley Addiction & Mental Health Services (CMHA);
  - b. Up to \$500,000 in development and up to \$160,000 in annual operating, to support a five-bed transitional home at a future location in Ingersoll, owned and operated by United Way Oxford/Oxford County Community Health Centre (OCCHC), subject to acquiring an appropriately zoned property by February 28, 2025;
  - c. Up to \$500,000 in development and up to \$150,000 in annual operating, to support a ten-bed transitional home at a future location in Woodstock, owned and operated by Assisted Living Care Homes (100045179 Ontario Inc.), subject to acquiring an appropriately zoned property by February 28, 2025.
2. And further, that County Council authorize the Chief Administrative Officer and the Director of Human Services to execute Municipal Housing Facilities Agreements and all other necessary documents related to the proposed housing projects owned and operated by CMHA, United Way Oxford/OCCHC and Assisted Living Care Homes;
3. And further, that County Council authorize the allocation of up to \$60,000 from the Human Services Budget, through New Initiative 2024-10 – Homelessness Response Strategy, for legal services related to the proposed projects contained in this report.

## **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

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- County Council approved New Initiative (NI) 2024-10 – Homelessness Response Strategy, as part of the 2024 Human Services Business Plan and Budget, including up to \$2.6 million in both development and operating funding (\$2.1 million in development and \$500,000 in base operating), to support the creation of low barrier supportive/transitional housing for individuals on the County’s By-Name List (BNL).
- In support of the NI, staff issued an RFP to solicit prospective proponents to own and operate congregate transitional/supportive housing projects within the County.
- In response to the RFP a total of three suitable submissions were received, as presented in Report HS 2024-08 for Council’s consideration.

## **IMPLEMENTATION POINTS**

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Upon Council’s approval, staff will execute Municipal Housing Facilities Agreements and Operating Agreements, including required securities, for each project. It should be noted that securities will be registered for the United Way Oxford/OCCHC and Assisted Living Care Homes projects once appropriate properties have been acquired by each proponent. Operating funding will also be subject to annual reporting, to ensure outcomes are achieved.

### **Financial Impact**

Staff are seeking Council’s approval to allocate up to \$1.15 million in development and \$500,000 in annual operating (totaling \$1.65 million) from the Human Services Budget, as previously approved by Council in the 2024 Human Services Business Plan and Budget through NI 2024-10 – Homelessness Response Strategy, to support the creation of three transitional/supportive housing projects. For Council’s information, the municipal development funds will be secured on title as a charge, and operating funds will be disbursed annually according to the agreement terms for each prospective project.

In addition, Staff are also proposing to allocate up to \$60,000 from NI 2024-10 development allocation of \$2.1 million, to support legal costs associated with each project.

Following approval of the noted projects, a total of \$890,000 in development will remain in the NI to support additional supportive/transitional housing opportunities (through a subsequent RFP), or other homelessness prevention initiatives as determined through the County’s Homelessness Response Strategy that is currently underway. It should be noted that the NI also included an additional \$200,000 in one-time operating funding (above the \$500,000 in base operating that was included in the RFP) that is intended to be allocated towards emergency shelter needs following completion of the County’s Homelessness Response Strategy.

The following table provides a summary of the development and operating funds that are proposed to be allocated to each project.

Table 1: Project Funding Summary

<b>Project / Proponent</b>	<b>Proposed Development Funding</b>	<b>Proposed Annual Operating Funding</b>
141 King Solomon Street, Ingersoll - CMHA Thames Valley Addiction & Mental Health Services	Up to \$150,000 (renovations)	Up to \$190,000
Future Location, Ingersoll - United Way Oxford/OCCHC	Up to \$500,000 (property purchase)	Up to \$160,000
Future Location, Woodstock - Assisted Living Care Homes (100045179 Ontario Inc.)	Up to \$500,000 (property purchase)	Up to \$150,000
<b>Total</b>	Up to \$1.15 million	Up to \$500,000 annually (10 years)

## Communications

Staff requested feedback from the Town of Ingersoll regarding the location that is currently owned by CMHA, particularly with respect to potential zoning/building implications. Staff have also been in discussions with the City of Woodstock regarding the RFP process and will continue to collaborate with Area Municipal Staff to ensure the future locations of the Assisted Living Care Homes and United Way Oxford/OCCHC projects are appropriate and in keeping with building/zoning requirements, as well as the needs of each program.




## 2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

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Oxford County Council approved the [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#) on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council's vision of "Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future." These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendations in this report supports the following strategic goals.

Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3
		
<b>Promoting community vitality</b>	<b>Enhancing environmental sustainability</b>	<b>Fostering progressive government</b>
<p>Goal 1.1 – 100% Housed Goal 1.3 – Community health, safety and well-being</p>		<p>Goal 3.2 – Collaborate with our partners and communities</p>

See: [Oxford County 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

## DISCUSSION

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### Background

Transitional/supportive housing is generally understood as a temporary housing model, with accommodations and supports that are meant to bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing. This form of housing is necessary to support the transition of individuals who are experiencing, or at risk of homelessness, to more permanent housing options, by offering structure, support, supervision, life skills, and in some cases, education and training. The initial step to housing stability is assisting individuals with obtaining and maintaining a home, in a way that considers unique needs.

In support of this critical need, County Council approved New Initiative (NI) 2024-10 – Homelessness Response Strategy, as part of the 2024 Human Services Business Plan and Budget. The NI includes up to \$2.6 million in both development and operating funding (\$2.1 million in development and \$500,000 in base operating), to support the creation of low barrier supportive/transitional housing, with adequate supports for individuals on the County’s BNL. The County’s BNL works to match individuals who are experiencing homelessness with appropriate supports and services, at the right time. With greater availability of transitional/supportive housing units, staff will be able to divert a greater number of individuals to more appropriate low barrier housing, thereby reducing homelessness overtime. For Council’s information, a total of 67 individuals have been housed from the BNL since implementation in July 2022.

In support of the NI, staff issued an RFP to solicit prospective proponents to own and operate congregate transitional/supportive housing projects within the County. The RFP was issued on March 22, 2024, and included a development allocation of up to \$500,000 per project, along with associated operating funding for a 10-year period, in line with the supports that are proposed. While a total of six submissions were received in response to the RFP, three proposals were in keeping with RFP requirements.

## **Comments**

### **RFP Parameters**

The RFP was issued in accordance with the Housing First Policy, and included the following general eligibility criteria:

- The proponent has relevant experience and background delivering housing and support services to vulnerable individuals with complex needs and a history of homelessness.
- The project will remain as transitional/supportive housing for a minimum of 10 years (subject to continued operating funding).
- The project targets individuals from the County BNL, with an appropriate level of supports that reflect a housing first and harm reduction approach.
- The proponent is requesting an appropriate amount of operating funds in relation to the support services being offered.
- The project will be located on a property that is appropriately zoned to accommodate the use.

### **Proposal Review**

The following table provides a summary of the significant details that were provided in each of the three proposals that were received and recommended for approval.

**Table 2: Proposed Project Summaries**

<b>Project / Proponent</b>	<b>Number of Beds</b>	<b>Target Acuity</b>	<b>Development Details</b>	<b>Operating Details (Annual)</b>	<b>Type of Supports</b>
141 King Solomon Street, Ingersoll - CMHA Thames Valley Addiction & Mental Health Services	Up to 5	Low-Mid Acuity	\$150,000 - renovations	\$190,000 Staff – 2 FTE and property expenses	- Mental health and addiction recovery - Housing Stability - Employment and income - Life skills
Future Location, Ingersoll - United Way Oxford /OCCHC	Up to 5	Low Acuity	\$500,000 - property purchase	\$160,000 Staff – 2 FTE and property expenses	- Housing stability - Employment and income - Life skills - Clinical group programming
Future Location, Woodstock – Assisted Living Care Homes	Up to 10	Mid-High Acuity	\$500,000 - property purchase	\$150,000 Staff – 1 FTE and 2 PT & property expenses	- 24/7 onsite support - Mental health recovery - Employment and income - Life skills

The proposals were reviewed by staff with consideration for community need, support services, experience/qualifications, among other factors. In light of the scoring criteria, staff are recommending that funding be allocated to each of the projects provided in Table 2. Additional details for each proposal are provided below.

**CMHA Project**

Project Overview / Proponent Experience

CMHA has owned and operated the home located at 141 King Solomon Street, Ingersoll, since 1994. The release of RFP 2024-03 presented a new opportunity to utilize the home for purpose beyond a single household. In light of this, CMHA has submitted a proposal to implement a five-bed transitional home at this location, providing support to clients from the County’s BNL. The intent of this program is to provide individuals with the appropriate level of support to assist in transitioning into more stable housing.

It should be noted that the home is currently tenanted. That said, CMHA has already been in conversations with the existing family about relocating to a more appropriate location as the household is currently not in need of the level of supports that CMHA provides at this location. Staff will continue to work with CMHA to ensure the family is relocated to an appropriate location, prior to initiating the proposed project.

With respect to experience, CMHA has demonstrated a commitment to transitional and supportive housing, providing critical assistance to individuals navigating the complexities of addiction and mental health challenges for decades. With a focus on fostering independence and stability, CMHA currently operates approximately 1,000 supportive housing units throughout the Oxford, Elgin, Middlesex, and London areas. Their supportive housing initiatives offer a continuum of care, ensuring individuals have access to ongoing assistance and resources as they progress towards housing stability.

### Operating Funds

CHMA is proposing a total of two full-time Housing Support Workers, or more commonly referred to as Addiction Mental Health Workers, to provide full day support services to each tenant. On call staff support will be provided overnight and on weekends. The Housing Support Workers will be on site to provide support and interventions that promote healthy lifestyles, promote independent living skills, crisis management, problem solving strategies, and assistance to clients transitioning into more permanent accommodations.

This project will work in conjunction with other similar programs that are currently operated by CMHA. While there are some efficiencies in terms of staffing, particularly outside of regular daytime hours, this model is slightly more costly due to factors such as compensation, overall rental income (in line with the Ontario Works maximum shelter allowance of \$390), and the overlapping of staff that is proposed. While this is the case, this model is in keeping with the operations and policies of CMHA and will provide an appropriate level of support for the funds requested.

### Development Funds

As CMHA already owns the property located at 141 King Solomon Street, Ingersoll, they have requested up to \$150,000 in development funding to support renovations to the existing home, including the creation of an additional bedroom, conversion of the existing garage to an office, general maintenance, and implementation of privacy measures.

Considering the significant operating funds that are necessary to support this home, the requested development funds are considered to be a minimal component of this project.

## **United Way Oxford/OCCHC Project**

### Project Overview / Proponent Experience

United Way, together with OCCHC, have submitted a joint proposal for a transitional home in the Town of Ingersoll with supports and accommodations for up to six individuals from the County BNL. This project will work in conjunction with the proponent's existing projects in Tillsonburg (Light House) and Woodstock (Huron House), which both offer transitional housing accommodations and related supports to individuals experiencing homelessness.

Overall, the proposed Ingersoll home will be similar to the existing transitional home in the Tillsonburg, providing a secondary level of support to individuals who are transitioning out of homelessness. The additional six beds will contribute to the proponents existing seven bed home

in Tillsonburg and 14 bed home in Woodstock, thereby providing a total of 27 low acuity beds, and a more fulsome continuum of support.

In terms of experience, the OCCHC is a not-for-profit charitable organization, which has been serving communities across the County since 2008, with a mandate of providing a range of healthcare and support services for those experiencing physical, mental, emotional, other challenges, including specific support to participants of transitional housing programs in both Woodstock and Tillsonburg. Furthermore, it is important to note that United Way and OCCHC recently partnered on the Light House in Tillsonburg, which offers a similar approach to that of the proposed Ingersoll home.

### Operating Funds

The proponents are proposing to create two full-time staff positions, being a Transitional Housing Worker and Community Case Manager, to operate the home and ensure an appropriate level of support is available. The Case Manager position will be split between the proposed Ingersoll home and Tillsonburg Light House, and is necessary to facilitate successful transitions, support integrations into the community, and provide ongoing supports following discharge from the program.

With respect to the annual operating funding that is being requested, most of the funds are proposed to cover staffing costs, with a minimal amount proposed to assist with ongoing property expenses such as insurance and utilities.

### Development Funding - Future Location

The proponents are proposing to purchase a property in Ingersoll that will appropriately accommodate the use. In accordance with the RFP, up to \$500,000 in development funds are proposed to support the purchase, with the proponent retaining financing to cover the outstanding amount.

While a property has not yet been acquired, staff are recommending that a deadline of February 28, 2025, be included to ensure an appropriate property is secured within a reasonable time period. Given the uncertainty around purchasing a property prior to Council's approval of the required funds, staff are supportive of this approach. If the proponents are not able to purchase an appropriate property within the allocated timeframe, the funds will be retained and offered through a subsequent RFP process.

## **Assisted Living Care Homes**

### Project Overview / Proponent Experience

The proponent has submitted a proposal for a future transitional home in the City of Woodstock with supports and accommodations for up ten mid-high acuity individuals from the County BNL. This home will provide 24/7 support and supervision for up to ten individuals and will be an extension of the proponents existing two transitional homes in the Town of Tillsonburg.



For Council's information, the proponent currently owns and operates two transitional homes in Tillsonburg, as well as one in Elgin County, with similar models to the project that is proposed in Woodstock. Based on the experience of the current owners, this project will provide a unique combination of both medical and social supports to meet the needs of mid-high acuity clients.

### Operating Funding

The proponent is proposing one full-time and two part-time Transitional Housing Workers, who will work in tandem to provide 24/7 support and supervision for each client. The Housing Workers will provide a variety of medical and social support services to enhance the overall wellbeing of clients, with a goal of fostering independent living. Most of the requested annual operating funding will be used to cover staffing costs, with a minimal amount proposed to assist with ongoing property expenses such as insurance and utilities.

This model provides several efficiencies considering the connection to the existing homes that are currently operated by the proponent, and partially funded through the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP). In addition, as the organization is relatively small, there are some efficiencies with respect to compensation.

It should be noted that this project will mimic the former Domiciliary Hostel model that was previously subsidized by the province, whereby the total rent that is collected from each tenant is greater than the Ontario Works or ODSP maximum shelter allowance of \$390 and \$522 per month for a single person. The target tenants will be those in receipt of ODSP from the BNL and a percentage of the ODSP income is allocated to rent, while allowing remaining funds for miscellaneous expenses. This increased rental revenue provides greater financial stability, thereby offsetting operational costs for the project.

### Development Funding - Future Location

Similar to the United Way/OCCHC project, the proponents are proposing to purchase a property in Woodstock that will appropriately accommodate the use. In accordance with the RFP, up to \$500,000 in development funds are proposed to support the purchase, with the proponent retaining financing to cover the outstanding amount.

While a property has not yet been acquired, staff are recommending that a deadline of February 28, 2025, be included to ensure an appropriate property is secured within a reasonable time period. Given the uncertainty around purchasing a property prior to Council's approval of the required funds, staff are supportive of this approach. If the proponents are not able to purchase an appropriate property within the allocated timeframe, the funds will be retained and offered through a subsequent RFP process.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

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Transitional/supportive housing is costly from a financial and human resource perspective: However, the benefits of individuals being able to access supports along their journey in achieving housing stability is crucial to addressing homelessness. The proposed projects will support a more strategic approach to the County's homelessness response and will ensure resources and efforts are more efficiently aligned to promote a housing first approach, providing greater support opportunities for those individuals who are ready to transition out of homelessness.

## SIGNATURES

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### Report author:

Original signed by

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