

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Acting Director of Human Services

Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative and Social Services Relief Fund Update

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That County Council receive Report No. HS 2021-14, regarding financial supports to eligible Oxford service agencies and citizens funded through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative and the Social Services Relief Fund as information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The purpose of this report is to provide details with respect to the financial and in kind services provided to individuals and service agencies requiring assistance with housing and related operational costs in Oxford County. These two funding sources are provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The Community Prevention Initiative is ongoing annualized funding, while the Social Services Relief Fund is completed December 31, 2021.
- This report specifically aligns financial supports and services associated with the most vulnerable population and the housing and homelessness sector within the Housing Continuum.

Implementation Points

Staff will continue to financially support Oxford citizens and agencies with costs associated with housing and related life stabilization services.







Financial Impact

There is no financial impact associated with the approval of the recommendation in this report.

Communications

This report is meant to inform Council and the community about the financial supports provided through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) and the Social Services Relief Fund.

Strategic Plan (2020-2022)

					
WORKS WELL TOGETHER	WELL CONNECTED	SHAPES THE FUTURE	INFORMS & ENGAGES	PERFORMS & DELIVERS	POSITIVE IMPACT
1.i. 1.ii.		3.iii.	4.i.		

DISCUSSION

Background

The Human Services Department has been receiving money through the CHPI fund for several years. The CHPI program has two program outcomes:

- People who are homeless obtain and retain housing
- People at risk of homelessness remain housed

The CHPI fund may be used for:

- Paying rental arrears for a person who is facing eviction; or
- Paying utility arrears for persons who are facing disconnection of utilities; or
- Paying a utility connection fee for person's who are homeless or at risk of homelessness; or
- Providing a last month's rent deposit for person's rent deposit for persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The program is funded by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and is allocated in accordance with the following funded areas which include:

- Homelessness Prevention Relief Fund
- Emergency Shelter Solutions
- Housing with Related Supports
- Services and Supports

The CHPI fund allows for the operation of emergency housing such as shelter services at The Inn, The Salvation Army Emergency House and the motel program facilitated through the Human Services Department. It also provides subsidized housing with related supports for people who require assistance with the activities of daily living and supportive housing.

The services and supports provide funding which assists people with last month's rent, and provides assistance for people to maintain their housing through the payment of arrears as well as providing funds to prevent disconnections of utilities.

In light of the housing crisis with high market rents and low housing stock, the CHPI fund and rent supplement program has allowed the Department to support a variety of housing supports and options to those living in Oxford County with limited resources and income.

The Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) has been integral in supporting citizens and service agencies to combat the effects of COVID-19 throughout the last nineteen months. The Social Services Relief Fund was allocated under four phases.

The initial SSRF allocation was intended to support a range of vulnerable populations, including people living in community housing, supportive housing, people with low incomes, social assistance recipients, and others who require social services support as well as those experiencing homelessness.

SSRF Phase 2 built on this support and expanded the eligible uses of funding, with a focus on resiliency to future waves of COVID-19. It had the following objectives:

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

SSRF Phase 3 is to continue to help a diverse range of vulnerable people to meet their short-term critical needs, including people living in community housing, supportive housing, people with low incomes, social assistance recipients, or others who require social services support as well as those that are experiencing homelessness.

SSRF Phase 4, the final phase of SSRF funding will enable Service Managers to continue to support the vital services that were established to address the impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable people, while ensuring an orderly wind down of provincial supports as the SSRF comes to an end. This funding supports operating and capital expenses to mitigate the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the homelessness sector.

The SSRF has supported both capital projects and operational costs in Oxford County. It has helped to provide continuity of community supports and services for the most vulnerable community members. It has allowed the community including the housing and homelessness sector to support the transition to recovery post COVID-19.

A specific COVID-19 related item funded through the SSRF was the COVID-19 protocol for individuals who needed to be quarantined due to a positive Covid test. Many individuals were quarantined on the guidance of Public Health throughout the pandemic to stop the spread of the virus with hotel and basic food and necessities provided by the Salvation Army.

Rent supplements, which bridges the gap between market rent and the affordability for tenants, is a significant part of the SSRF program and has allowed many to maintain their housing in Oxford County.

The SSRF is similarly allocated as the CHPI fund with the following funded areas of Homelessness Prevention Relief Fund, Emergency Shelter Solutions, Housing with Related Supports and Services and Supports.

The total SSRF funding was \$6,027,603 with the following areas of services described below:

SSRF Phase	Funding Received	Allocation
Phase 1	\$1,700,400	Operational
Phase 2	\$1,222,834	Capital
Phase 3	\$1,461,769	Operational
Phase 4	\$1,642,600	Capital

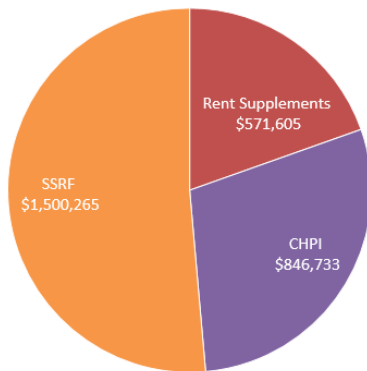
The total CHPI funding was \$1,562,380 with the following areas of service described below.

CHPI	Funding Received	Allocation
CHPI	\$1,388,277	Operational
Rent Supplements	\$174,103	Operational

As of October 26, 2021, the following is an allocation of operational funds used during the current calendar year:

Program	Funds used
Rent Supplements	\$571,605
CHPI – Consolidated Homelessness	\$283,027
CHPI-Energy Emergency Fund	\$31,219
CHPI-General	\$302,591
CHPI-Supportive Housing	\$229,896
SSRF Phase 1	\$962,686
SSRF Phase 3	\$537,579

*The remaining SSRF and CHPI funds are substantially committed.



Comments

The Human Services Department is primarily funded to provide the facilitation of Ontario Works assistance, child care subsidy, the EarlyON program and rent geared to income housing. There are a variety of funding pathways for each of these program streams with the housing component being funded primarily by the CHPI fund and most recently with some of the SSRF funds.

The CHPI and SSRF funds predominantly support the housing and related support services to the left side of the housing continuum.



The Human Services Department will continue to support individuals and organizations in Oxford County with both the maintenance of their current housing, supporting transitional and temporary housing with the end goal being sustainable long term housing.

This work is not done in isolation and requires a collaborative effort by community agencies to house as many people as possible in a variety of ways. The continued gap between available housing and affordability makes it challenging to move rapidly toward a one model that fits all. It is for that reason that there needs to be a multitude of options available to suit the person where they are at within the housing continuum.

Housing and homelessness continues to be challenging for all income levels across the community, but most hardly hit are those living in poverty with their only income source being Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). The shelter portion funded by Ontario Works for a single person is \$390.00 per month, total payment with basic needs is \$733.00.

The shelter portion of ODSP for a single person is \$497.00 per month, total payment with basic needs is \$1,169.00. With average market rents in Oxford County of \$728.00 for a bachelor unit, \$1,062.00 for a one-bedroom apartment and a vacancy rate well below 3%, it stands to reason a variety of housing options and community supports are necessary to try to assist as many people as possible.

In addition to rising costs associated with housing and basic needs, other factors are influencing stable housing including a significant number of private landlords selling their rental units. The sellers market contributes to this phenomenon and decreases the portfolio that has traditionally been available to many low income and vulnerable people. Housing can be challenging to find and maintain and often when that challenge is heightened with significant mental health and addiction struggles, the results are difficult to overcome.

It also needs to be noted that not every individual is at a place in their lives where they can be successfully and independently housed. It is for that reason that supports need to be organized and continued to assist until that time is right. It would also be negligent not to mention the ongoing supports required to help some individuals sustain the housing once secured. Quite often this becomes just as challenging to be sure someone is supported and has the appropriate life skills and partner agencies to help them keep the housing they need to have an improved quality of life.

Thankfully, the CHPI and SSRF has allowed the most vulnerable members of our community to be supported at a time when resources are slim.

Conclusions

Sustainable housing options continues to be a significant issue in the County and across the Country. This department continues to advocate to Provincial and Federal ministries to support significant housing that is bundled with the required professional monitoring and supports to allow each person to live their best life. In the meantime, Human Services will continue to push every dollar provided by the Provincial or Federal government through the CHPI and SSRF out the door to support as many people as possible directly or through agency support.

SIGNATURES

Departmental Approval:

Original signed by

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Approved for submission:

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