

--	--

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COUNCIL HOUSING LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE MEETING ON MAY 12, 2014
FROM:	SANDRA DATARS BERE, MANAGING DIRECTOR, HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES, AND DEARNESS HOME
SUBJECT:	FOLLOW-UP ON THE “HOUSING AMBASSADOR LEADERSHIP PROGRAM”

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Director of Municipal Housing and with the concurrence of the Managing Director, of Housing, Social Services, and Dearness Home, the following update on the *Ambassador Housing Leadership Program* **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER

At the April 11, 2013 meeting of Council Housing Leadership Committee (CHLC), Councillor J. Swan and Councillor S. White presented the *Ambassador Housing Leadership Program*. CHLC referred the presentation to the City Solicitor and the Civic Administration for review, with a report back at a future meeting; it being noted that the Committee also heard a presentation from the Director of Municipal Housing, with respect to a Housing Supplement Program.

BACKGROUND

The attached presentation to CHLC, prepared by Councillors J. Swan and S. White, reflects a conceptual framework for a program where individual municipal councillors would engage more actively as affordable housing champions throughout the City. Also presented was an overview of the Municipal Housing Supplement Program, by the Director of Municipal Housing.

Legal Considerations:

A review of the *Ambassador Housing Leadership Program* framework by the City Solicitor found no significant deviation from the existing role of Council members as champions for local affordable housing strategies, with the following noted cautions:

- There could exist perceptions of influence related to engagement with private landlords/developers on potential program participation; and
- The concept of a ward based targets may not match market needs, opportunities or capacities within the respective neighbourhoods.

The communication of local needs, opportunities, and strategies and the referral of residents and organizations to Civic Administration fall within existing practices of all municipal councillors. This similarly applies to actions engaging and championing affordable housing with local landlords, developers, and other stakeholders.

Program Considerations:

The need for affordable housing in London is defined within the Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan 2010-2024 and the appended London Community Housing Strategy, 2010. This was further defined within recent Housing Development Corporation reports, reflecting low vacancy rates in the below average market rent segment of the rental housing market.

--	--

Existing Private Sector Affordable Housing Programs:

The Municipal Housing Supplement program, established in June 2013, provides financial supplements to participating private sector landlords (within average market rents) to reduce eligible tenant rents to below average market rates. This results in an increased availability of affordable units from a segment of the market that would not be accessible to individuals and families with lower incomes.

The municipal supplement program currently supports over 60 individuals through agreements with private landlords. This program has been most successful in providing supplements to individuals with “housing first” supports administered through London CAREs. The on-going challenge of municipal supplements in London continues to be the low vacancy rate/lack of stock within the affordable rental market segment as well as the short-term nature of the program.

Discussions continue with private market landlords related to affordable housing programs such as Municipal Supplements as well as Ontario Renovates. Prior to consideration, units are reviewed to ensure their appropriateness (safety), and discussions occur with housing staff, landlords, and tenants to ensure all program elements are fully understood.

“Ambassador” Program Potential:

At its core, the *Ambassador Housing Leadership Program* represents:

- the need for a more comprehensive communication and public engagement strategy in affordable housing solutions, and
- the need for increased affordable housing within existing and growing private rental market in London.

The engagement of private landlords and rental housing developers is desirable in all neighbourhoods throughout London. Similar to London’s *Hire One* approach to attracting employment within existing workplaces, there may be value in exploring the increased participation of private market landlords in the provision of more affordable units as part of a collaborative response to London’s housing needs through the Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan.

The report back to Council Housing Leadership Committee on the potential implementation of a Housing Development Corporation will include a component focused on communication plans, including Council’s ongoing role as affordable housing champions throughout London.

Acknowledgements:

This report was prepared by Stephen Giustizia, Manager, Housing Services with input and concurrence from David Munteer, Solicitor.

RECOMMENDED BY:	CONCURRENCE BY:
Louise Stevens, Director, Municipal Housing	Sandra Datars Bere Managing Director, Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home

- C. David Munteer, Solicitor
Stephen Giustizia, Manager, Housing Services

Att. Presentation on *Ambassador Housing Leadership Program* from CHLC April 13, 2013.