

<b>TO:</b>	<b>CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON APRIL 28, 2020</b>
<b>FROM:</b>	<b>SANDRA DATARS BERE MANAGING DIRECTOR HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES AND DEARNESS HOME</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>HOMELESS PREVENTION COVID-19 RESPONSE AND FUNDING OVERVIEW</b>

**RECOMMENDATION**

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home, this report **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes.

**PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER**

- Municipal Council Approval of the Housing Stability Plan 2019 to 2024 as Required Under The Housing Services Act, 2011 (CPSC: December 3, 2019)
- Reaching Home, Canada's Homelessness Strategy Community Entity – Designated Communities Funding Agreement (CPSC: April 1, 2019)
- Community Homeless Prevention Initiative (CPSC: December 17, 2012)

**PURPOSE**

This informational report is intended to provide an overview of actions taken to support individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and those at risk of homelessness during and following the COVID-19 pandemic, and to provide an overview of additional funding to support the City of London response.

**BACKGROUND**

COVID-19 – Increased Risk for Homeless Individuals and Families

Due to a high risk of a COVID-19 outbreak in emergency shelters, the City of London Homeless Prevention team is working closely with emergency shelters and homeless serving organization to take immediate action to limit the spread of the virus amongst some of London's most vulnerable populations.

Employment and Social Development Canada identifies a number of factors for individuals and families experiencing homelessness that increase the risk of contracting COVID-19, including:

- People living unsheltered have limited ability to prevent infection. If they become ill, transience makes sustained contact for medical monitoring difficult.
- Many people experiencing homelessness have pre-existing health issues that create compromised immunity, and they may not seek or have access to health care.

The Government of Canada identify the following as COVID-19 Vulnerable Populations:

- Older adults (for London, in consultation with Middlesex London Health unit, this has been determined to be 55+);
- at risk due to underlying medical conditions (e.g. heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, cancer); and
- at risk due to a compromised immune system from a medical condition or treatment (e.g. chemotherapy).

The ESDC Canada Reaching Home Directives note that “the public health guidance to mitigate risks of infection, such as self-isolation and social distancing, assumes access to a private home. Inability to follow these guidelines represents a significant risk of community transmission. In addition, overcrowded drop-ins and shelter sites, congregate housing environments, and inadequate resources to maintain proper hygiene and infection control practices exacerbate vulnerability for people who work, volunteer, and reside in these settings. These risk factors underscore the need for communities to take active measures to limit the risk of contracting COVID-19 among people experiencing homelessness, and the staff and volunteers who work with this population.”

#### Canada’s COVID-19 Economic Response Plan

On March 18, 2020, the Prime Minister announced that the Government of Canada will be providing communities with an additional \$157.5 million, under the Reaching Home Program to support people experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 outbreak. As a Community Entity, the City of London will receive funding (pending Council approval) to support the COVID-19 response capacity and prevent the infection from spreading amongst those experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, homelessness.

A separate CSPC Report has been submitted to recommend approval to enter into a funding agreement with the Government of Canada under Canada’s COVID-19 Economic Response Plan to Support People Experiencing and At-Risk of Homelessness, for the period of April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, and to delegate authority to the Managing Director of Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home, or written designate, to enter into sub-project funding agreements with various service providers as needed.

**Under Canada’s COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, The City of London is eligible to receive \$2,423,102 in the 2020-21 fiscal year.**

#### Social Services Relief Funding (SSRF)

The Social Services Relief Fund is a new, \$200 million investment by the Ontario Government in fiscal 2020-21 to help protect the health and safety of the province’s most vulnerable people, through assistance to individuals and to frontline agencies. The SSRF was announced on March 23, 2020 and is a shared initiative between the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

Funding through the SSRF includes \$148 million for Service Managers. The investment is intended to allow communities to expand a wide range of services and supports for vulnerable populations, based on local need, to better respond to the pandemic.

**Under the SSRF, The City of London is eligible to receive \$3,475,300 in the 2020-21 fiscal year.**

## City of London, Homeless Prevention Response

The City of London Homeless Prevention team is working with community partners to prevent the spread of COVID-19, in accordance with guidance provided by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness and through the Reaching Home Directives provided by Employment and Social Development Canada.

City of London Homeless Prevention has taken the following actions to increase social distancing and reduce the risk of outbreak within emergency shelters by providing safe spaces for individuals and families to self-isolate and monitor. In the past month, the following spaces have been set-up at various locations throughout London and are currently operational:

- 1. Isolation Space** for COVID-19 probable and COVID-19 positive individuals. Maximum occupancy is 25 individuals.
- 2. Monitoring Space** for those who have been medically advised to self-isolate due to history of exposure to probable or confirmed COVID-19 due to close contact. This space opened Saturday April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and maximum occupancy is 29 individuals.
- 3. Physical Distancing Space** in local motels and hotels for vulnerable participants including those that are high-risk and over fifty-five years of age, those that have a cardiac or respiratory disease, those who are immunocompromised, and families. Maximum occupancy is 115 rooms.

In addition, Homeless Prevention is actively working with the local violence against women sector to increase shelter capacity and support for women fleeing violence. Additionally, City staff are working with Indigenous partners on operationalizing Indigenous culturally appropriate space for physical distancing and isolation.

The City of London Homeless Prevention team is working closely with community partners to coordinate staffing at each site, as well as provide food, sharps management, and safe transportation. In addition, cleaning and laundry services have been procured to maintain each space.

## Coordinated Informed Response

The Coordinated Informed Response team has also shifted operations to provide additional support where needed, including:

- Providing increased security in key areas.
- Placement of 26 comfort stations throughout the core area to supply washrooms and hand sanitizing stations for people who no longer have access to public facilities.
- Providing garbage containers for encampments in certain areas.
- Increased Outreach with added provisions including, providing wellness checks and engagements with unsheltered individuals.
- Delivering bagged and boxed meals to unsheltered individuals.
- Providing both verbal and written communication to educate individuals on COVID-19, safe distancing, self-isolating and shelter options.
- Connecting vulnerable unsheltered individuals with local resources, including physical distancing space.
- Continuing to refer individuals to resting spaces.
- Bylaw is continuing to work with outreach teams to locate and support unsheltered individuals.

## Planned Next Steps

Following the pandemic, Homeless Prevention will continue to support individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness to find, secure and maintain housing in accordance with the strategic initiatives outlined in London's Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan, Housing Stability for All: The Housing Stability Action Plan for the City of London (2019).

Support will be provided for those who have been temporarily housed in motels and isolation spaces throughout the pandemic, as well as those currently residing in emergency shelter. It is anticipated that additional support will be required to support individuals and families at risk of homelessness to maintain housing, through assistance with rental and utility arrears, provision of basic needs, housing stability support and case management.

## Planned Utilization of Funding from the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario associated with Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response

The estimated total cost of the Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response for the 2020-21 fiscal year is estimated at \$5,898,402, as outlined below:

<b>Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response:</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>
Isolation Space, Monitoring Space, Physical Distancing Space, Indigenous Culturally Appropriate Space	
Staffing (across all sites) – April to August	\$500,000
Motel and Hotel Rooms (across all sites) – April to August	\$1,550,000
Other Costs (across all sites): transportation, food, personal protective equipment, supplies, security, laundry and cleaning, additional shelter staffing, sharps management, etc.) – April to August	\$1,500,000
Coordinated Informed Response (security, supplies, comfort stations) – April to August	\$150,000
Supporting housing stability – August to March (rental and utility arrears, housing stability and case management support, basic needs, housing set-up, etc.)	\$2,198,402
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,898,402</b>

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The Homeless Prevention COVID-19 response is anticipated to be 100% funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of Ontario through the federal COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan and the SSRF, therefore there is no anticipated financial impact to the City of London.

Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan Funding Agreement is for the period April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. The total maximum amount of Canada's contribution towards the eligible expenditures in the funding agreement is \$2,423,102. This Funding Agreement has been provided to the Community and Protective Services Committee at the April 28, 2020 meeting, in a concurrent report.

The Ontario Social Services Relief Fund is also for the period of April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021, although expenses incurred as of March 1, 2020 are eligible. The total maximum amount of Ontario's contribution towards the eligible expenditures in the Community Homeless Prevention Initiative (CHPI) Guidelines is \$3,475,300. Fifty percent of this funding was received by the City of London on April 6, 2020. The Funding Agreement will be submitted for approval through Document Execution By-law A-1 during

