

Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

To: Chair and Members
Community and Protective Services Committee
From: Kevin Dickins, Acting Managing Director, Housing Social Services and Dearness Home
Subject: Proposed Implementation of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan
Date: March 30, 2021

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Acting Managing Director, Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home, that the following actions Be Taken with respect to the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan attached as Schedule 1:

- (a) To Endorse and Approve the proposed Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan for implementation in principle;
- (b) that Civic Administration Be Directed to undertake all administrative acts which are necessary to seek sources of funding from federal and provincial funding Partners to support the implementation of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan, including supporting the City of London in accessing new funding by becoming a designated Indigenous Community Entity for Indigenous homelessness under the Reaching Home federal funding program; subject to the approval of a) above;
- (c) that Civic Administration Be Directed to undertake all administrative acts which are necessary to return to the appropriate standing committee with a financial plan for any available municipal funding to support the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan; subject to the approval of a) and b) above, and
- (d) that Civic Administration Be Directed to undertake all administrative acts which are necessary to fulfill the submitted business case, including supporting Atlohsa Family Healing Services in acquiring an appropriate location for an Indigenous Housing Hub, with the advice and support of Realty Services, subject to the approval of a), b) and c) above.

Executive Summary

This report is seeking approval of the proposed Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan (attached to this report as Schedule 1), to undertake all administrative acts and resources necessary to implement the proposed plan. Under the leadership of Atlohsa Family Healing Services and through the Giwetashkad advisory circle, programs will be delivered to meet the needs of Indigenous individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan: The Giwetashkad plan in the Strategic Direction 1 includes a strategy to “Create an Indigenous Housing Hub, including emergency and resting space beds.” Securing a location and additional funding are required to implement this component of the plan, and this report seeks approval to provide administrative support to Atlohsa Family Healing Services to seek and secure these resource needs from all levels of government.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

2019-2023 Strategic Plan for the City of London

Municipal Council’s 2019-2023 Strategic Plan identifies “Strengthening our Community” and “Creating a Safe London for Women and Girls”. The recommendation in this report

will support Londoners in accessing the supports they need to be successful in achieving housing stability, and will help ensure safety for our community's most vulnerable populations.

Housing Stability for All: The Housing Stability Action Plan for the City of London (2019-2024)

London's Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan, Housing Stability for All: The Housing Stability Action Plan for the City of London (Housing Stability for All Plan), is the approved guiding document for homeless prevention and housing in the City of London, and was developed in consultation with Londoners. The Housing Stability for All plan aligns with and supports strategic initiatives and goals, including the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan.

The Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan, 2020

Atlohsa Family Healing Services, in collaboration with the Giwetashkad advisory circle has developed The Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan, which is supported by The City of London and will align with the Housing Stability Action Plan, 2019. The Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan represents culturally sensitive perspectives of community members with lived and/or living experience and sets out a vision of home as a place of safety and belonging for all peoples.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

Sole Source Award for the Implementation of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan (CPSC: March 2, 2021)

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Recommendations Update on City of London Efforts (SPPC: January 26, 2021)

Single Source Procurement of Resting Spaces (Single Source #SS20-29) and Programs (Single Source #SS20-37) for Indigenous Individuals Experiencing Homelessness (CPSC: December 15, 2020)

Municipal Council Approval of the Housing Stability Plan 2019 to 2024 as Required Under the Housing Services Act, 2011 (December 3, 2019)

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

2.1 Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan Implementation

The Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Plan supports access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples.

As the sole provider of Indigenous homelessness services in London, Atlohsa Family Healing Services led the development of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan in consultation with stakeholders, including individuals with lived experience of homelessness. The Giwetashkad Advisory Circle, an advisory group that includes key stakeholders, supported the development of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan. An advisory group representing key stakeholders will be in place to provide guidance and to monitor the progress of the plan implementation.

Approval of this report would endorse the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan, and approve that Civic Administration undertake all administrative acts and resources necessary to implement the proposed plan. Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan: The Giwetashkad plan in the Strategic Direction 1

includes a strategy to “Create an Indigenous Housing Hub, including emergency and resting space beds.” A location and additional funding are required to implement this component of the plan. Funding from all levels of government will be sought to support the plan’s implementation.

Programs will be aimed at reducing homelessness and creating housing stability for Indigenous individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness and will work within London’s Coordinated Access System.

2.2 Indigenous Housing Hub

The Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan details the development of an Indigenous Housing Hub. The Housing Hub will be an Indigenous-led physical space providing shelter, resting space, and housing supports for indigenous individuals and families in London. The Housing Hub will employ a low-barrier harm-reduction approach, utilizing Indigenous Housing First principles to support people in acquiring housing and achieving housing stability.

The Housing Hub will also work from a trauma-informed approach, recognizing the historical and ongoing trauma faced by London’s indigenous community members, and taking steps to support participants in healing from past traumatic experiences on their journey toward permanent housing.

Furthermore, the Housing Hub will be operated from an Indigenous cultural framework, utilizing an indigenous definition of homelessness and an Indigenous worldview. To date, this approach has assisted Atlohsa Family Healing Services in dissipating challenging behaviours and fostering a sense of mutual respect between staff and participants who face stigma, discrimination, and isolation. The Housing Hub will also offer traditional medicines to all participants, access to smudging and traditional healing foods with meals, and provide access to cultural teachings.

2.3 Definition of Indigenous Homelessness

While the City of London has, to date, largely supported individuals experiencing absolute homelessness, the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan operates using a focused definition of Indigenous Homelessness:

“Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships (Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness, 2012).”

The Housing Hub, and other strategies within the Giwetashkad Plan, seek to provide holistic supports to indigenous individuals and families based on this definition of Indigenous Homelessness.

2.4 Municipal Calls to Action

The following are the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action that were directed specifically to municipalities, followed by information about actions taken by the City of London in response.

Supporting the Giwetashkad plan aligns with the commitments and Calls to Action set out in the Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future Summary of the Final Report, of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report and are consistent with the City of London's continued commitment to work to support truth and reconciliation. As an Organization, the City of London has taken additional actions, not identified through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in which work is being done to build and strengthen relations with the urban Indigenous community, the surrounding First Nations communities and people in and around London. Principles that have guided this work include the following:

- Indigenous led
- Focused on education and learning
- Committed to decolonizing
- Offering culturally appropriate services
- Intersectional approach that acknowledges the ways in which people's lives are shaped by their multiple and overlapping identities and social locations, which, together, can produce a unique and distinct experience for that individual or group.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

There is currently no immediate financial impacts..

Conclusion

The City of London will undertake all necessary work to gather the required information to support the implementation of the Giwetashkad Indigenous Homelessness Strategic Plan, which will include providing administrative support to assist Atlohsa Family Services to acquire additional funding and real estate in order to implement an Indigenous Housing Hub.

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