

## Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

**To:** Chair and Members, Community and Protective Services Committee Meeting  
**From:** Kevin Dickins, Acting Managing Director, Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home  
**Subject:** Homeless Prevention Funding Received in 2020-21 and COVID-19 Response  
**Date:** April 20, 2021

## Recommendation

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

## Executive Summary

This informational report is intended to provide an overview of the following:

- Additional COVID-19 Homeless Prevention funding received in 2020-21 through the Ontario Social Services Relief Fund and Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan Federal Funding Agreement.
- How additional COVID-19 funding was used to support individuals and families in London who were/are experiencing homeless or at risk of homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Next steps in London's Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response, including additional 2021-2022 COVID-19 funding received through phase three of the Ontario Social Services Relief Fund.

## Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

### 2019 – 2023 Strategic Plan for the City of London

The Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response aligns with the following strategic areas of focus in the 2019-2023 City of London Strategic Plan

#### *Creating a Safe London For Women and Girls*

Maintaining or increasing the number of shelter beds available to abused women and their children, and to homeless women and girls is a strategy identified to create a safe London for women and girls. This strategy notes that full implementation of a Housing First policy is to be contingent on availability of immediate access to safe, affordable housing.

The Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response includes dedicated spaces and staffing support for women and children experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic. Programs supported through the COVID-19 response support women experiencing homelessness to obtain and retain permanent affordable housing.

#### *Strengthening Our Community*

The following strategies identified in the 2019-2023 City of London Strategic Plan support the Strengthening Our Community strategic area of focus through the Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response, including:

- Implementing coordinated access to mental health and addictions services and supports
- Create more purpose-built, sustainable, affordable housing stock in London

Housing Stability for All: The Housing Stability Action Plan for the City of London (2019)  
London's Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan, Housing Stability for All: The Housing Stability Action Plan for the City of London (2019), is the approved guiding document for homeless prevention and housing in the City of London, and was developed in consultation with Londoners.

Providing the right level of support at the right time to decrease the use of emergency services and creating an outreach system and rapid response to support individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness are strategic areas of focus within the 2019 – 2024 Housing Stability Action Plan. London needs to increase system capacity and availability of services across sectors to meet the housing stability needs of individuals and families in crisis, including housing individuals and families experiencing unsheltered homelessness.

## Analysis

### 1.0 Background Information

#### 1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response April to June Extension – Single Source Procurement - #SS21-15 (March 30, 2021)
- Procurement in Emergencies Update 3 – COVID-19 (CSC: March 29, 2021)
- 2020 Compliance Report in Accordance with the Procurement of Goods and Services Policy (CSC: March 29, 2021)
- Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response and Funding Overview (CPSC: April 28, 2020)
- Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan Funding Agreement (CPSC: April 28, 2020)
- Municipal Council Approval of the Housing Stability Plan 2019 to 2024 as Required Under The Housing Services Act, 2011 (CPSC: December 3, 2019)
- Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response (CPSC: October 6, 2020)

### 2.0 Discussion and Considerations

#### 2.1 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of one-time COVID-19 funding received from the Provincial and Federal governments expensed by City of London, Homeless Prevention in 2020-21 by City of London, Homeless Prevention.

#### 2.2 Background

##### City of London, Homeless Prevention Response

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. Since March 2020, the following spaces have been established at various locations throughout London through the use of local motels and hotels.

1. **Isolation Space** for COVID-19 positive individuals. Maximum occupancy is 26 individuals.
2. **Testing and Monitoring Space** for individuals who have screened positive for COVID-19, and individuals deemed close contact to individuals who are COVID-19 positive, and who are required to isolate. Maximum occupancy is 39 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. Physical distancing space is also being provided for women fleeing violence, as well as Indigenous culturally appropriate space. The maximum occupancy is 132 rooms.

The City of London Homeless Prevention team has worked closely with community partners to coordinate staffing at each site, as well as to provide for basic needs including food, cleaning and laundry, and safe transportation.

### 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 has been working closely with emergency shelters and homeless serving organizations to take immediate action to limit the spread of the virus amongst some of London's most vulnerable populations since March, 2020.

Employment and Social Development Canada identifies several 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 identifies 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 the following:

“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.”

## **2.3 Program Outcomes**

### Physical Distancing Space Wind Down

The aim of the Homeless Prevention team is to reduce the use of hotel and motel rooms in a wind down phase until June 30, 2021, by actively engaging individuals and ensuring they receive the COVID-19 vaccinations and are document ready to secure permanent housing. Where permanent housing cannot be achieved, transition to emergency shelter or other available transitional housing options will be implemented.

To date, the following data has been reported for all the locations used as part of the COVID-19 response:

<b>Indicator (March 2020 to March 2021)</b>	<b>Number of individuals/ households</b>
Number of families experiencing homelessness who were provided temporary shelter in hotels.	11
The number of individuals experiencing homelessness supported in hotels over the past year, including vulnerable individuals requiring social distance space, Isolation Space, Monitoring Space, Indigenous culturally appropriate space, and violence against women sector participants.	944
Individuals experiencing homelessness who were matched to a Housing First Program and provided with ongoing assistance to obtain permanent housing.	101
Individuals experiencing homelessness that secured permanent housing through the Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response while receiving temporary shelter in a hotel.	195
Individuals who were supported to become “paper ready” through the Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response in 2020. Paper readiness is ensuring that individuals have identification, source of income information, and any other documents required to obtain housing. Lack of paper-readiness has been identified as a critical barrier to obtaining housing.	935
Individuals housed directly from living unsheltered due to support provided through the Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response	58

### COVID-19 –Vaccine Roll-Out for High-Risk Congregate Living Settings

As determined by the Ministry of Health COVID-19 vaccination program, residents, primary essential caregivers, and staff of High-Risk Congregate Living Settings are now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine as part of phase two of Ontario’s COVID-19 vaccination program. Phase two of the vaccination program is expected to be completed by mid-May, with roll-out beginning April, 2021.

Given the transient nature of many of London’s homeless population, The Middlesex London Health Unit, City of London Homeless Prevention, and Community Partners have continued working closely to determine how many residents, staff, and essential caregivers (if applicable) will be attending the mass vaccination clinics, and how many residents will require on-site vaccination through mobile vaccination clinics.

## **3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations**

### **3.1 2020-21 COVID-19 Homeless Prevention Funding**

In the 2020-21 fiscal year, City of London, Homeless Prevention received additional funding to support vulnerable populations experiencing and at-risk of homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic through the Ontario Social Services Relief Fund, and through Canada’s COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, and other sources. The total amount of COVID-19 specific funding received in the 2020-21 fiscal year is outlined below.

<b>Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Specific Funding Received (2020-21)</b>	<b>City of London Allocation</b>
Ontario Social Services Relief Fund (Phase 1)	\$ 3,475,300
Ontario Social Services Relief Fund (Phase 2)	\$ 7,659,165
Ontario Mental Health & Addictions Funding	\$ 173,740
Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan Funding (Phase 1)	\$ 2,423,102
Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan Funding (Phase 2)	\$ 2,911,759
CMA Foundation Grant	\$ 50,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 16,693,066</b>

One-time COVID-19 funding received in 2020-21 to support the Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response has been used to support individuals and families experiencing and at-risk of homelessness throughout the pandemic. A summary of the total amount of Homeless Prevention COVID-19 funding spent in 2020-21 is provided below.

<b>Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Expense (2020-21)</b>	<b>Estimated Amount</b>
Emergency Shelter Solutions: <i>Creating a "safe bed" in a variety of settings including social distance space in local hotels and motels, emergency shelters, COVID-19 Isolation and Monitoring Spaces</i>	\$ 4,764,223
Rent Relief: <i>Financial assistance for households at risk of homelessness provided to retain housing and prevent homelessness, including emergency financial assistance for rental arrears through the Housing Stability Bank</i>	\$ 685,000
Staffing Support: <i>Support staff on site at all social distance space, Isolation and Monitoring Space, and mobile outreach staff supporting participants to connect with services and retain housing</i>	\$ 1,174,537
Other Services and Supports: <i>Various services and supports provided to assist vulnerable participants with immediate relief, provision of basic needs, and services related to supporting participants in local social distance space, Isolation and Monitoring Space; including food, biohazard cleaning, transportation, security, comfort stations, etc.</i>	\$ 1,422,529
Capital Investment in Housing: <i>61 new affordable housing units in London at 122 Baseline Road West approved and currently under construction</i>	\$ 5,478,477
Winter Response: <i>Support for unsheltered and marginalized individuals in London over the winter months. Provision of basic needs, life-saving measures, connection to local supports and services. Provision of 62 overnight spaces (beds) and 65 additional daytime spaces (beds)</i>	\$ 1,588,114
Extension of Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response from April 15, 2021 to June 30, 2021 (pending City Council approval)	\$ 1,198,764
Middlesex County	\$ 381,422
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>\$ 16,693,066</b>

The Extension of the Homeless Prevention COVID-19 Response from April 15, 2021 to June 30, 2021, estimated to cost \$1,401,000, where approximately \$1,198,764 will be funded by 2020-21 funding noted above, and the remainder funded by the Social Services Relief Fund Phase 3 (SSRF), pending City Council approval.

### **3.2 2021-22 COVID-19 Homeless Prevention Funding**

On March 10, 2021, The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing confirmed the City of London will receive an additional \$5,567,813 in funding through phase three of the Ontario Social Services Relief Fund in 2021. Funding is intended to mitigate the continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the homelessness sector.

## **Conclusion**

City of London, Homeless Prevention will be bringing a report forward in June, 2021 with a recommendation on how additional 2021 COVID-19 funding can support Londoners experiencing and at risk of homelessness during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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