

## Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

**To:** Chair and Members  
Community and Protective Services Committee  
**From:** Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social and Health  
Development  
**Subject:** Unity Project Relocation Capital Support Contract  
Amendment  
**Date:** March 21, 2023

## Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development, the following actions be taken with respect to a contract amendment for Housing Stability Services Programs for emergency sheltering.

- a) One-time contract amendment as per the Corporation of The City of London Procurement of Goods and Services Policy Section 20.3.e **BE APPROVED** at a total estimated cost of \$762,000 to support the Unity Project for the Relief of Homelessness, Temporary Hotel Accommodations, in the amount of \$62,000 and the Unity Project for the Relief of Homelessness, Existing Shelter Capital Retrofits, in the amount of \$700,000;
- b) That Civic Administration **BE AUTHORIZED** to undertake all administrative acts which are necessary in relation to this project, and;
- c) That the approval given herein **BE CONDITIONAL** upon the Corporation amending a Purchase of Service Agreement.

## Executive Summary

To ensure the continuity of service levels for Unity Project for the Relief of Homelessness (Unity Project) emergency shelter services in 2023, Housing Stability Services is seeking approval to provide additional one-time funding to support the ongoing operations and short-term capital needs of this organization. Unity Project has experienced ongoing impacts from the Covid-19 pandemic in which their service delivery model and location was altered to serve those most marginalized and are requesting additional one-time funding to support ongoing operations, as outlined below.

Unity Project is a people centred housing focussed shelter that meets people where they are, without judgement, offering safe, low barrier inclusive care that is violence and trauma informed and underpinned by a consistent harm reduction approach.

In order, to continue to provide current service levels for 2023 and beyond, Unity Project has indicated they require an additional \$62,000 in funding to support current hotel costs for one additional month (April 2023) as part of their existing service delivery model as that temporary location winds down. As of May 1<sup>st</sup>, the emergency shelter program will move back into their existing facility at 717 Dundas Street. Unity Project is also undertaking a capital retrofit project to increase the capacity of their existing facility to accommodate the amount of people they were able to provide services and supports for through their hotel response, which is estimated to cost an additional \$700,000.

Civic Administration recommends that funding to support this program be provided through a contract amendment to the existing Unity Project purchase of service (POS) agreement with The City of London. Pending approval, Housing Stability Services will amend Unity Projects funding agreement to provide this additional one-time funding.

## Linkages to the Corporate Strategic Plan

[2019-2023 Strategic Plan for the City of London](#)

The City of London identifies ‘Strengthening Our Community’ and ‘Building a Sustainable City’ as strategic areas of focus.

Londoners have access to the supports they need to be successful.

Londoners have access to the services and supports that promote well-being, health, and safety in their neighborhoods and across the city.

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.

## **Analysis**

### **1.0 Background Information**

#### **1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter**

- Housing Stability Services – Single Source Procurements (CPSC: May 31, 2022)
- Single Source Award Recommendation for Housing Stability Service Programs; Including Outreach, Emergency Shelter and Housing Stability Bank (CPSC: February 1, 2022)
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### **2.0 Discussion and Considerations**

#### Background

Unity Project has been operating emergency shelter, supportive housing and housing stability programming for individuals and families experiencing homelessness at its Dundas street facility since 2003. At the outset of the pandemic they shifted their emergency shelter operations to a hotel and leased the rear building on their property to London Cares for the operation of their resting space program.

Unity Project provides a number of services including short-term accommodation and basic needs, housing outcome focused emergency shelter, supportive housing, and housing stability programming that meets people where they are, without judgement, offering safe, low barrier inclusive care that is violence and trauma informed and underpinned by a consistent harm reduction approach.

Unity Project adapts Housing First principles to the emergency shelter context to help people to obtain and maintain housing and to achieve wellness and belonging in community. They help people to end their experience of homelessness and help the City of London advance the Housing Stability System.

Unity Project supports and services align with the Health and Homelessness Whole of Community System Response and is driven by a set of values and principles that honours individual experiences, provides a supportive system of mutual respect and care, ensures individual right of choice, promotes dignity, applies a harm reduction approach, is trauma and violence informed, implements shared practises in accountability and engagement, is informed by the social determinants of health and accounts for the voices of those with lived and living experience who use their services.

The configuration of Unity Project’s property – two buildings including a front and rear facility – allows for orienting its shelter entrance toward the rear of the property, providing privacy to its participants and sensitivity to neighbours and the streetscape. Unity Project’s 2011 award of Heritage Designation and their façade restoration of its Dundas

Street frontage, reflects a further indication of the organization's consideration of community.

In 2017, Unity Project developed an Emergency Shelter Housing First Toolkit to transform their operations to a model that helps residents secure and maintain stable housing. The organization states that its goal is "to make a stay at our shelter as comfortable, productive and as short as possible."

Unity Project currently receives funding to operate 40 emergency shelter rooms through their existing 2022/23 purchase of service agreement. In 2020, Unity Project was required to vacate their existing facility as it did not meet new COVID-19 guidelines for congregate living settings. Since April 2020, Unity Project has been operating the emergency shelter program out of a local hotel, at an additional cost. Funding for hotel rooms was provided through 2022/23 Ontario Social Services Relief Funding, which ends March 31, 2023 (see CPSC: May 31, 2022).

Prior to the pandemic, Unity Project operated 37 emergency shelter beds at 717 Dundas St. with a mix of 22 beds in dorm style rooms with 24-hour access rooms and 15 resting space style beds that were first come first serve every night in converted common spaces. Unity Project also offered drop-in services at this location providing basic needs, washroom access, crisis intervention and related supports. This configuration had the building overcrowded and staff managing too much activity throughout the day.

In the move to hotel operations and having to ensure adequate management of potential outbreaks of Covid, Unity Project identified that they could not return to the Dundas location and offer services in the same manner. Over the past two years, Unity Project have tried unsuccessfully to find other options for relocation as the hotel option was not sustainable. Every potential option considered would have required at minimum a million dollars in capital retrofits and renovations, plus an increase to annual operating expenses due to significant leasing costs. The search for property was aided by a local real estate firm.

While seeking options to continue to support individuals in an effective and safe manner, Unity Project learned of Pallet structures, which are purpose built for emergency shelter and transitional accommodation. Unity Project identified that their property on Dundas Street could be reconfigured, utilizing the outdoor and indoor space to provide rooms for 40 people. In this new configuration, Unity Project will not be providing first-come first-serve beds nor drop-in services. They will be instead focusing on 24-hour access for those 40 beds and prioritize housing-focused case management support to work with people from coordinated access intake to link to permanent housing. The indoor space would be renovated to use the current space more efficiently as double/triple occupancy rooms with an additional washroom added to the building.

The fenced parking lot that exists between the two buildings on site and the backyard would contain 13 Pallet structures to accommodate 26 people. The Pallet structures would be oriented away from street view to provide privacy for the residents and a buffer for the community. The Pallet structures will be connected to electricity with each unit having a heating/cooling unit, fire safety features, emergency call buttons, sleeping area and storage. With three staff on shift from morning to night, there will be adequate resources to manage both the indoor and outdoor space.

Unity Project has been active in a capital campaign to secure and build a new modernized facility. Until the capital campaign is complete, and a new facility is built, Unity Project will be returning temporarily to their existing facility and undertaking a capital retrofit project to ensure they can provide supports and services to meet their 2023-24 service levels. Funding for the capital retrofit will be subject to compliance with all applicable law.

Unity Project is experiencing a delay in moving out of the hotel facility and has requested \$62,000 in additional funding to support one additional month at the hotel until the program can return to their existing facility. Civic Administration recommends providing this additional one-time funding to support the ongoing operations of this emergency shelter program. As part of the transition back to the Dundas Street location, a number of

individuals in the current hotel are in the process of securing housing and it is anticipated by the time of the move at least 5 individuals will have moved into permanent housing.

### Procurement

Civic Administration recommends that the one-time contract amendment for The Unity Project be made under Section 20.3 e) of The Corporation of The City of London Procurement of Goods and Services Policy. As City Council must authorize contract amendments when:

- I. the total amended value of the contract will be greater than the administrative (Deputy City Manager) approval threshold; or
- II. the total amended value of the contract will exceed the Council approved source of financing by an amount greater than \$50,000 or 3% of contract value, whichever is greater, and there are funds available.

### **3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations**

The total cost to support Unity Project with one-time additional funding is estimated at \$762,000. Funding will be provided through Housing Stability Services existing 2022-23 one-time federal funding through the Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy funding.

The funding breakdown of this request is as follows:

| <b>Item:</b>   | <b>Forecasted Cost:</b> |
|--|-------------------------|
| Additional Hotel Rooms for April   | \$62,000                |
| Shelter Renovation   | \$197,000               |
| Purchase 13 pallet structures including planning, site installation and remediation work | \$503,000               |
| <b>Totals</b>  | <b>\$762,000</b>        |

### **Conclusion**

This report seeks Council approval for contract amendment in the total amount of \$762,000 for Unity Project for the Relief of Homelessness Temporary Hotel Accommodations and Unity Project for the Relief of Homelessness Capital Retrofits.

**PREPARED BY: Kate Green, Manager, Housing Stability Services**

**SUBMITTED BY: Craig Cooper, Director, Housing Stability Services**

**RECOMMENDED BY: Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development**