



**REPORT TO:** Co-Chairs and Members of  
Public Health and Social Services Committee

**SUBJECT:** Results of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy Request for  
Proposal # 2009-RFP-17

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

That this Committee recommends to Regional Council:

1. That as approved in COM 14-2009 Extension of Homelessness Partnership Strategy to 2011, contracts be executed that allocate Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program and Regional Council Youth without Secure Housing funds to the successful proponents of 2009-RFP-17; and
2. That this report be forwarded to local MPs, MPPs and the Minister of Community and Social Services.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- Community Services is responsible to coordinate and manage the system of homelessness prevention strategies funded by the federal government through the Homelessness Partnership Strategy (HPS) and the provincial government through the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program (CHPP).
- In Niagara, CHPP funding has remained with Canal View Homes, Project Share of Niagara Falls and Community Care of St. Catharines which were the agencies directly funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the Ministry of Housing before the devolution of programs and funding in 1999.
- Funding was allocated to Community Care of St. Catharines in 2001 to provide outreach services across the region through a tendering process after the Province announced the Homelessness Initiative Outreach Program in 2000.
- As part of the service system management responsibility, region-wide consultations occurred during the summer of 2006 which resulted in the Niagara Region Community Homelessness Prevention Plan.

- The plan outlined local needs including a need to coordinate other funding sources into the service delivery framework, reduce duplication in service delivery, rationalize services to more accurately reflect need and service requirements, provide role clarity between agencies and address the inequitable distribution of funding dollars and services in Niagara.
- To this end, COM 14-2009 outlined Community Services proposal to allocate the sum of federal, provincial and municipal funds through a Request for Proposals (RFP) that would respond to the priorities identified in the Niagara Region Community Homelessness Prevention Plan.
- A total of \$1,720,000 was available to fund homelessness prevention strategies. In order to allow agencies sufficient transition time, Community Services continued to flow funds to agencies with current contracts while the RFP process occurred. Contracts and funding will be from August 1, 2009 to March 31, 2011.
- The results of the call for proposals has resulted in a more equitable distribution of funding thereby enhancing access to homelessness prevention services across the Niagara region.
- Community Services worked with Niagara Regional Housing who provided \$240,675 in capital funding toward the Transitional Supported Housing projects.
- Many quality responses to the RFP could not be approved as the request from agencies totalled \$6.9 million and exceeded the available funding allocation by 306%.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications to the Community Services approved budget as homelessness funding for HPS and CHPP is provided 100% from Service Canada and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Through COM 17 – 2008, Regional Council committed annualized funding to support the Youth without Secure Housing project. The amount of funding allocated to homelessness prevention projects for August 1, 2009 to March 31, 2011 through Request For Proposal 2009-RFP-17 is \$1,720,000.

## **PURPOSE**

This report has been prepared to seek authorization from Regional Council as approved in COM 14-2009, for Community Services to execute contracts and allocate Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program and Regional Council Youth without Secure Housing funds to the successful proponents of 2009-RFP-17. This report has also been prepared to further inform local MPs, MPPs and the Minister of Community and Social Services of the continued pressure on homelessness prevention programs in Niagara.

## **BACKGROUND**

### Provincially Funded Homelessness Prevention Programs

In 1999, the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) and the Ministry of Housing announced the devolution of programs and funding to municipalities as a result of Local Services Realignment. Since that time, funding has remained with the agencies who received funding directly from the Province. These agencies are:

<b>Program</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Supports to Daily Living (SDL)	Canal View Homes (Welland)
Community Partners Program (CPP)	Community Care of St. Catharines & Thorold – Housing Help Centre
Community Partners Program (CPP)	Project S.H.A.R.E. (Niagara Falls) – Housing Help Centre

In 2000, the MCSS announced the Provincial Homelessness Initiative Fund (PHIF). This fund provided 100% provincial funding to municipalities to help people who were homeless find emergency accommodation and/or move from emergency accommodation into permanent housing. Through an RFP process, these funds were awarded to Community Care of St. Catharines-Thorold to deliver to Homelessness Initiative Outreach Program across all Niagara communities.

In 2006, the provincially funded homelessness prevention programs, SDL, CPP, and PHIF were consolidated into one program, the CHPP. Community Services total annual allocation for CHPP is \$495,782. Historically, 60% of these funds have been allocated without a tendering process and the last RFP for the remaining 40% of the funds occurred in 2001.

As part of the service system management responsibility, Community Services completed region-wide consultations during the summer of 2006 which resulted in the Niagara Region Community Homelessness Prevention Plan. The plan outlined local needs including a need to coordinate other funding sources into the service delivery framework, reduce duplication in service delivery, rationalize services to more accurately reflect need and service requirements, provide role clarity between agencies and address the inequitable distribution of funding dollars and services in Niagara.

In order to respond to the needs identified in the Community Plan, Community Services staff worked with historically funded agencies to advise them that a Call for Proposals would be issued and guide future investments of homelessness prevention funding.

### Federally Funded Homelessness Prevention Programs

Established in 1999, the Supporting Community Partnership Initiative (SCPI) greatly increased Niagara's capacity to respond to the needs of people who are homeless by building infrastructure and services. The initiative ended on March 31, 2007, however, Service Canada implemented the Homelessness Partnership Strategy (HPS) effective April 1, 2007. Community Services became the HPS Community Entity for Niagara

(COM 35 – 2007) in January 2008. Service Canada announced an extension of the HPS program funding to March 31, 2011. As a result of 2008-RFP-11, Community Services provided \$715,065 in funding From April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009 to nine agencies to provide supported transitional housing, prevention and outreach services. The successful proponents were:

<b>HPS Priority</b>	<b>% of Funding</b>	<b>Agency Name</b>
Supported Transitional Housing	52%	Bethlehem Projects Gateway Niagara Port Cares YWCA of Niagara
Prevention	27.4%	The HOPE Centre The RAFT Start Me Up Niagara
Outreach	20.6%	Community Care of St. Catharines & Thorold

As the Community Entity for the federally funded HPS and the Service Systems Manager for the provincially funded CHPP, Community Services is able to coordinate funding to support the system of homelessness services in Niagara to positively impact the lives of people who are homeless.

Niagara Region Funded Homelessness Prevention Programs

Research completed in Fort Erie established the parameters for a local response to youth who are homeless. Part of the response included establishing a “Youth without Secure Housing” Advisory Committee (YWSH) to oversee the implementation of the recommendations made in the completed research report. Community Services works with YWSH Advisory Committee to ensure that this initiative is linked with the broader Niagara Region Homelessness Services Community Plan. During the 2007 current budget process, Corporate Management Team (CMT) endorsed a proposal by Community Services requesting \$90,000 of the Council Business Plan budget allocation to fund projects aimed at reducing youth homelessness. Through COM 17-2008 Fort Erie Youth without Secure Housing, a budget allocation in the gross and net amount of \$90,000 was approved from the Council Business Plan budget allocation as submitted in the 2008 current budget.

The YWSH logic model identifies specific areas that need to be addressed in order to achieve the vision for the committee. The vision is that the youth in Fort Erie and Port Colborne are able to access services and supports within their own community in order for youth to give back to Fort Erie socially and economically. The RAFT was selected as the agent to deliver these services and since inception has served 25 youth in Fort Erie and 23 in Port Colborne. Through their efforts, 65% of the youth remained in school, 71% remained housed and 42% returned to the parental home.

## REPORT

Coordinating the funding received for homelessness prevention initiatives from all orders of government is an important element in maximizing Niagara's capacity to positively impact the lives of people who are homeless. The need for enhanced coordination and planning for homelessness prevention services was highlighted by stakeholders during the 2006 community engagement process which resulted in the the creation of the Niagara Region Community Homelessness Prevention Plan. As the Community Entity for federal homelessness funding, Community Services is well positioned to work with local agencies to support those most in need in Niagara. Community Services' coordination role is supported by the Niagara Homelessness Advisory Committee (NHAC) a committee that grew from recommendations put forward by the community in 2006.

In the Fall of 2008 and again in January 2009 NHAC endorsed Niagara's Homelessness Plan as well as the HPS Community Plan's priorities and objectives and made recommendations for investment as noted in the chart below.

Community Priority	Objective	% of allotment
Supported Transitional Housing	Increase the number of supported transitional units/beds in Niagara	59%
Prevention	Expand prevention services so that all Niagara residents have equal access to these services.	20%
Outreach	Expand outreach services so that all Niagara residents have equal access to these services.	16%
Data Collection	Implement HIFIS across the Niagara Region for all relevant agencies that provide homelessness services to those who are homeless or at-risk of becoming homeless.	5%

Service Canada requires local community mechanisms to plan, manage, and be accountable to the federal government for program deliverables. To meet this requirement in addition to the NHAC, a Community Advisory Board (CAB), comprised of four members of the NHAC and one community volunteer, was formed prior to issuing the RFP. The CAB has also provided feedback and recommendations related to the RFP process for the 2009-2011 funding period. The CAB came together to review RFP submissions and to make recommendations for funding.

In total, twenty-six proposals were received by Community Services from stakeholders requesting \$6,992,015 in funding. These requests exceeded the available allotment of \$1.7 million by 306%.

The CAB operated on a consensus basis when reviewing proposals and making funding recommendations. Proposals were evaluated against priorities identified in the community plan and the overall requests submitted by agencies. Although the NHAC

recommended that the majority of funding be directed to Supported Transitional Housing projects, the majority of requests for funding submitted by agencies focussed on the prevention priority<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, Community Services allocated the funds as follows:

Community Priority	Agency Name	% of allotment
Supported Transitional Housing	Boys and Girls Club CMHA Niagara Branch Port Cares YWCA of Niagara	39.4%
Prevention	Bethlehem Place Community Care St. Catharines & Thorold Grimsby Affordable Housing The Hope Centre Open Doors Concept Project Share The RAFT Start Me Up Niagara	52.8%
Outreach	Community Care St. Catharines & Thorold	3.9%
Data Collection	Latis Research Group	3.9%

The available funding was able to support many more services across the region as a result of the contribution for capital costs through Niagara Regional Housing. A total of \$235,675 was used from NRH's DOORs program to offset the renovation costs needed to launch the Supported Transitional Housing projects.

The following chart compares homelessness prevention funding distribution across the region before and after the recent RFP.

Before RFP		After RFP	
Community	% of Funding	Community	% of Funding
St. Catharines	54.8%	St. Catharines	27.9%
Niagara Falls	14.7%	Niagara Falls	22.3%
Welland	17.2%	Welland	22.7%
Port Colborne	7.1%	Port Colborne	12.9%
Fort Erie	3.6%	Fort Erie	3.6%
Grimsby	2.6%	Grimsby	11.6%

<sup>1</sup>

Priority	NHAC	Proposals
STH	59%	20.5%
Prevention	20%	60.3%
Outreach	16%	17.2%
Data	5%	2.0%

Many quality submissions could not be supported during the selection process. A total of five projects representing a funding shortfall of \$814,869 could not be supported because of the amount of funding available. The number of submissions and the total dollar value illustrates the depth of need and the willingness of agencies and local communities to act. Community Services staff continue to raise the funding shortfall and service pressures to both federal and provincial government staff.

As part of the ongoing commitment to increase Niagara's overall capacity to respond to the needs of people who are homeless, Community Services will work with unsuccessful proponents to provide feedback on the agency's proposal. As well, Community Services staff will work with each community agency to fulfill the responsibilities and requirements of the HPS and CHPP programs which include community planning, evaluation and reporting of outcomes.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

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Brian Hutchings  
Commissioner, Community Services

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Mike Trojan  
Chief Administrative Officer

*This report was prepared by Dave Pelette, Manager Housing, Hostels and Homelessness and Sarah Pennisi, Director Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities.*