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# Niagara Region

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

**SUBJECT:** Extension of Homelessness Partnership Strategy to 2011

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## RECOMMENDATION

That this Committee recommend to Regional Council that:

1. Community Services be authorized to submit an application to Service Canada to extend Community Entity status related to federal homelessness prevention initiatives to March 31, 2011; and
2. that the Regional Chair correspond with Service Canada urging for an increased allotment of Homelessness Partnership Strategy (HPS) funding for Niagara.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Since first established in 1999, the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) greatly increased Niagara's capacity to respond to the needs of people who are homeless by building infrastructure and services.
- Although, SCPI ended on March 31, 2007, Service Canada announced the new Homelessness Partnership Strategy (HPS) which came into effect 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 to March 31, 2011.
- Community Services is well positioned to continue it's role as Community Entity for Niagara and coordinate local, federal and provincial funding to support the Niagara homelessness prevention system.
- Niagara now requires additional funds to continue to respond to priorities identified by stakeholders.
- The HPS funding for Niagara represents approximately 15% of the total HPS funding available to the City of Hamilton.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications directly associated with this report. The total allotment available in 2009 and 2011 is 100% funded by the Homelessness Partnering

Strategy (HPS), from Service Canada and the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program (CHPP) from the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Through the approval of COM 17-2008 *Fort Erie Youth without Secure Housing*, Regional Council also committed annualized funding for homelessness prevention strategies for youth.

## **PURPOSE**

This report has been prepared to request Committee and Council authorization for Community Services to submit an application to extend the Community Entity status for Community Services regarding federal homelessness prevention initiatives and for correspondence to be sent to Service Canada urging that Niagara's HPS allotment be increased to better support local priorities.

## **BACKGROUND**

Established in 1999, the introduction of SCPI as part of a federal strategy to end homelessness has led to local investments in emergency shelters, as well as prevention and outreach programs that have strengthened the capacity of Niagara communities to address the needs of people who are homeless.

Federal funding is critical to enhance investments made by the provincial and local government to provide housing supports ranging from emergency hostels to social housing. Communities were pleased to see the \$2 billion investment noted in the recent federal budget toward social housing for low income seniors and people with disabilities. It is hoped that this announcement will respond to the 4,295 households currently waiting for rent geared to income housing in Niagara.

As the Community Entity for HPS – Service Canada funding 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.

Community Services received a total allocation of \$786,230 and administered an RFP process that awarded \$715,065 in HPS funding to eight community agencies to support nine homelessness prevention projects for fiscal year April 1, 2008 to March 31, 2009 (COM 24-2008). Recently, the HPS program was extended to continue to March 31, 2014 however funding has only been committed to March 31, 2011. This new allocation is \$952,940 for the period April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2011. In order to continue to administer the HPS funds as the Community Entity, Community Services must resubmit an application to Service Canada.

On February 12, 2009 at Regional Council's meeting, Councillor Puttick requested a report that outlines Niagara Region's funding deficit compared to a neighbouring community (Hamilton). Although much has been done, priorities identified by stakeholders through

the community consultation process remain unaddressed. Since 2007, Niagara has received approximately \$1.7 million in HPS funding. Although Hamilton's total population is only 15%<sup>1</sup> greater than Niagara's, Hamilton receives 85%<sup>2</sup> more HPS funding. The allocation for the City of Hamilton is based on the total population whereas Niagara's funding was based on the population of the St. Catharines Census Metropolitan Area (CMA)<sup>3</sup> only.

Community Services is responding to the gap in services and funding by continuing in the role of Community Entity and by completing a Request for Proposals (RFP) which incorporates municipal, federal and provincial funding. This strategy will further strengthen the system of supports for people who are homeless in Niagara.

In addition to strengthening planning and coordination, pooling all available funding provides Niagara with economies of scale that one funding source alone would not.

Total homelessness prevention funding which for 2009-2011 is as follows:

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Total available</b>	<b>% of Investment</b>
Service Canada	\$952,940	42%
Ministry of Community and Social Services	\$1,132,384	50%
Niagara Region	\$180,000	8%
Total	\$2,265,324	100%

With 12 municipalities and a mix of urban and rural homelessness, Niagara faces challenges that are unique and complex as it strives to reduce homelessness. Providing services over a large geographical area, the challenges with economies of scale in smaller communities, transportation issues, the lack of affordable housing and rent subsidies in all communities, as well as each community's desire to respond to homelessness that best fits local need, exacerbates the funding dilemma in Niagara.

The partnerships and cooperation between communities, service agencies and the three levels of government continues to be the strength of Niagara's system.

## REPORT

Coordinating the funding received for homelessness 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 services was highlighted by stakeholders during the 2006 community

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada 2006 census – Hamilton total pop 504,559, Niagara total pop 427,421

<sup>2</sup> Niagara receives \$1.7 million, Hamilton receives \$8.4 million

<sup>3</sup> Area consisting of one or more adjacent municipalities situated around a major urban core. To form a census metropolitan area, the urban core must have a population of at least 100,000. To form a census agglomeration, the urban core must have a population of at least 10,000

engagement process for 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 Community Priorities and Objectives found below.

Community Priority	Objective	% of allotment
Supported Transitional Housing	Increase the number of supported transitional units/beds in Niagara	61%
Prevention	Expand prevention services so that all Niagara residents have equal access to these services.	21%
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.	2%

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 three members of the NHAC and two community volunteers, was formed prior to last years RFP and is in place for the proposed 2009 RFP. The CAB came together to review RFP submissions and to make recommendations for funding. Community Services staff have met the CAB who have reviewed and again endorsed the HPS community priorities and objectives. The CAB has also provided feedback and recommendations related to the RFP process for the 2009-2011 funding period.

Continuing as the Community Entity would enhance Niagara's capacity to build a system of homelessness prevention services. An RFP utilizing available federal and provincial funding provides an opportunity to further align the system of support services with community priorities and objectives.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

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Brian Hutchings  
Commissioner, Community Services

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Mike Trojan  
Chief Administrative Officer

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