



CITY OF HAMILTON
HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITITES DEPARTMENT
Housing Services Division

TO:	Chair and Members Healthy & Safe Communities Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 17, 2018
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Rapid Re-Housing Program (Hotel) Housing Allowances (HSC18050) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Yolisa de Jager (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3863
SUBMITTED BY:	Vicki Woodcox Acting Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

That the General Manager of the Healthy and Safe Communities Department or his designate be authorized and directed to deliver and administer the Rapid Re-Housing Program (Hotel) Housing Allowances, in the amount of \$358,000, funded by the Housing Initiatives Capital Reserve Fund (#112239) in accordance with the existing Council Approved Housing Allowance Program (Report CES16028).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hamilton’s Emergency Shelter System has experienced significant occupancy pressures within the Family Shelter that provide supports to homeless families, as well as the provincially-funded Violence Against Women shelters. On many occasions, the demand for shelter space for families exceeds their current capacity so families are placed into hotels on a temporary basis until a shelter vacancy becomes available.

As a result, the usage of emergency hotel stays funded by the City of Hamilton through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) (Report HSC18030), have compounded over the past five years. Currently staff are forecasting a pressure in the hotel budget. Overall, there has been a 20% increase in the volume of hotel stays over the past five years, as well as a 10% increase in length of stay per household.

The Housing Services Division, in partnership with the Good Shepherd Centres, has designed a Rapid Re-Housing response to address increased hotel usage for homeless families accessing emergency hotel space. The Rapid Re-Housing model provides immediate housing assistance for up to six months, to expedite securing permanent

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OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

**SUBJECT: Rapid Re-Housing Program (Hotel) Housing Allowances (HSC18050)
(City Wide) - Page 2 of 4**

housing and moving families quickly out of the hotel/emergency shelter system. This Rapid Re-Housing response is administered by Good Shepherd Centres but involves a number of organizations providing shelter and supports to women and children. They include:

- Good Shepherd Women's Services (Martha House) and Family Centre
- Mission Services- Inasmuch House
- Interval House of Hamilton
- Native Women's Centre

The Housing Initiatives Capital Reserve Fund (# 112239) which currently has a balance of \$358,000 is proposed to be used in its entirety for the Rapid Re-Housing Program (Hotel) Housing Allowances. This one-time funding creates 120 Housing Allowances for a twelve-month period. These resources will assist the Rapid Re-Housing Program (Hotel) to expedite housing placements of families in hotels. Outcomes from the program will inform policy and program design considerations that will ultimately assist in reducing hotel costs and shelter occupancy pressures.

Access to the short-term Housing Allowances will provide a critical-timed financial intervention that removes barriers for families in securing and maintaining market rent units. This intervention will ensure that homeless families have and retain their housing and will formally exit the emergency shelter system.

Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial:

The Housing Initiatives Capital Reserve Fund (# 112239) currently has a balance of \$358,000. With the approval of this Program, the reserve will be depleted.

Staffing:

There are no staffing implications associated with Report HSC18050.

Legal:

There are no legal implications associated with Report HSC18050.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On July 8, 2016, Council approved the Hamilton Housing Allowance Program (Report CES16028). The Rapid Re-Housing (Hotel) Housing Allowances will adopt the same, approved distribution structure.

On June 14, 2017, Council approved the recommendation that the Rapid Rehousing Program for Women receive annualized funding (CES17030).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

The Rapid Re-Housing Program (Hotel) Housing Allowances satisfies Strategy 2.4 (Expand Portable and In-situ Rental Subsidy Programs) of the Housing & Homelessness Action Plan.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

As part of this recommendation and strategy to reduce hotel usage costs, the Housing Services Division consulted with Good Shepherd Centres, Interval House of Hamilton, Mission Services, Native Women's Centre and the Housing Help Centre.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Hamilton's Emergency Shelter system serving homeless families consists of the Good Shepherd Family Centre, and overflow beds services contracted with four Violence Against Women (VAW) Shelters: Good Shepherd Centres, Interval House of Hamilton, Mission Services and Native Women's Centre. This collection of shelters has experienced significant occupancy pressures, with facilities operating at and above full capacity annually.

Directly related to shelter system occupancy pressures, hotel costs have exponentially increased year over year. Overall, there has been a 20% annual increase in the volume of hotel stays, as well as a 10% increase of length of stay per household. In 2014, hotel costs totalled \$112,000, whereas in 2017, hotel costs totalled \$506,100. It is projected that the hotel costs will increase further in 2018. Approximately 50% of families accessing hotels are from the VAW Shelters.

Additionally, winter months predictably contribute to occupancy pressures throughout the emergency shelter system. Last winter, the City of Hamilton issued 5 cold alerts. It is reasonable to predict that 2018-2019 winter months will have similar fluctuation in temperatures and inclement weather.

As a risk mitigation strategy to reduce hotel costs and alleviate occupancy pressures over winter months, the Housing Services Division and Good Shepherd Centres have designed a Rapid Re-Housing response to address hotel pressures focusing on the housing needs of families placed in hotel.

Building on the Good Shepherd's existing relationships with local landlords, families working with the Rapid Re-Housing team will facilitate expedited access to vacant market

rent units across the city that match the families' budgets and specific needs. While families work to secure permanent housing, they will also be moved out of hotel into vacant emergency shelter spaces as they become available. The Rapid Re-Housing team will follow through on the families' housing plans during a shelter stay to ensure continuity of service and continued focus on securing permanent housing.

The 120 short-term housing allowances, at a cost of \$358,000, funded by the Housing Initiatives Capital Funds (#112239) will ensure that more households will have greater access to local, available market rent units. This short-term financial assistance provides families with an opportunity over twelve months to stabilize their housing and income sources.

The Rapid Re-Housing team will be equipped with housing allowances to shorten length of stays in both hotels and shelters and will assist in alleviating occupancy pressures across the emergency shelter system. Staff predict to see a decrease in hotel costs over the duration of the program. Staff also anticipate that housing allowances will provide financial stability to homeless families by remaining out of the emergency shelter system for a minimum period of twelve months following the initial intervention.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

None

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Healthy and Safe Communities

Hamilton is a safe and supportive city where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None