



**CITY OF HAMILTON**  
**HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT**  
**Housing Services Division**

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Healthy & Safe Communities Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	January 17, 2018
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Response to the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) Inquiries on Housing Issues (HSC19001) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Greg Witt (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4818 Kirstin Maxwell (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3846
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Paul Johnson General Manager Healthy and Safe Communities Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

**RECOMMENDATION**

- (a) That the General Manager of the Healthy and Safe Communities Department or designate be delegated the authority to expand the eligibility of the Emergency Home Repair Program to include accessibility modifications for low income homeowners as required in accordance with current community needs, current repair costs, and the funds available for the program; as outlined in the Program Guidelines attached as Appendix “A” to Report HSC19001;
- (b) That the City enter into Grant Agreements with the recipients of Emergency Home Repair Program in order to provide grant funds pursuant to the Program to a maximum amount of \$10,000.00 and that the General Manager of Healthy and Safe Communities be authorized and directed to execute said Agreements in content that is consistent with the Program and satisfactory to the General Manager and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor;
- (c) That the item respecting Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) Housing Issues, be identified as complete and removed from the Healthy and Safe Communities Committee’s Outstanding Business List.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

After reviewing the comments of the delegation from January 28, 2018 and consulting directly with the ACPD on September 11, 2018, staff resolved to make progress on concerns addressed by the committee related to limited accessible housing options upon discharge from a hospital facility. To address these concerns, Housing Services Division staff are recommending that the eligibility criteria for the existing Emergency Home Repair Program (ERP) is expanded to include low income homeowners who require financial support for accessibility modifications.

This Report acknowledges there are systemic challenges for people with disabilities in finding and maintain housing and that the appropriate solution to many of these challenges are better addressed through strategic planning and policy making. The 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan is at its 5-year mark and is undergoing a review. Broader housing challenges for persons with disabilities will be a component of this review.

Staff will continue to engage the ACPD on accessibility issues as part of the Housing and Homelessness Plan review.

### **Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable**

## **FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial:**

The expanded Hamilton Emergency Home Repair Program will provide up \$10,000 per approved family, to be funded from the Hamilton Emergency Home Repair Reserve (#102045) which has a current balance of \$127,611. Once these funds are exhausted, the expanded program will cease.

### **Staffing:**

There are no staffing implications associated with Report HS18049

### **Legal:**

If awarded funding for accessibility modifications through the Emergency Repair Program, the grant recipients would enter into a Grant Agreement with the City of Hamilton, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

On June 11, 2014, Council approved the following through Report CS11017(d):

- (c) That the balance of \$241,230 in the Hamilton Emergency Home Repair Reserve (#102045) be utilized for an emergency home repair program for homeowners receiving social assistance (Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program) to undertake emergency minor repairs of up to \$5,000 that could otherwise create a risk of homelessness.

On January 22, 2018, members of the ACPD appeared as a delegation to Emergency & Community Services (E&CS) Committee regarding Report CES14052(d), Co-ordinated Access System for Social Housing. Staff were directed to report back to the E&CS Committee on the following points raised by the delegation:

- (a) That ACPD be allowed to review the staff report and provide comment to the E&CS Committee prior to any action being taken by Committee or Council;
- (b) That the matter of persons who experience injury and hospitalization and have few or no accessible housing options upon discharge from a hospital or rehabilitation facility, should be addressed;
- (c) That solutions for persons with disabilities coming to study in post-secondary schools in Hamilton, who have limited to no accessible housing options, are needed; and,
- (d) That the City investigate the possibility of expanding accessible housing options for persons with disabilities in a way that makes economic growth and development the same for all persons regardless of ability.

On September 11, 2018, Housing Services Division staff met with the ACPD. Staff reviewed the contents of Report CES14052(d) and provided responses to the questions put forward in the delegation given by members of the ACPD. Staff also answered several questions about the housing market, progress on the Access to Housing Waitlist file and the 5-year update to Hamilton's 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.

Staff communicated to the ACPD that most of their concerns are systemic which would be better addressed through long term strategic planning and policy making; and therefore, staff committed to including the ACPD in future consultations in the development of the 5-year update to the Action Plan. In addition, staff committed to see if anything could be done within the existing budget and within existing programming to better address the more acute and current housing challenges facing people with disabilities in Hamilton.

Staff conducted a review of internal programming and identified the Emergency Home Repair Program (ERP) as an opportunity to address some of the challenges put forward by the ACPD. Staff has reviewed the capacity of the existing program and expanding the eligibility to include accessibility modifications for low income homeowners is aligned with the original purpose of the ERP.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS**

Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Strategies 4.1 and 4.8 are as follows:

4.1: Explore the potential for new funding programs and expand and promote more broadly existing programs for rehabilitating the housing stock...”

4.8: Expand assistance programs to facilitate modifications for persons with disabilities in private market housing (e.g. Ontario Renovates).

## **RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

ADPD representatives were appreciative of staff comments and suggested actions, and several of their suggested changes that were recommended for the social housing waitlist, as it relates to accessibility have been implemented by staff.

Staff also consulted with the Legal Services Division who provided advice on the revision of the Program Guidelines.

## **ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

The ACPD exists to identify and raise awareness about the barriers that impact the lives of persons with disabilities, and to make recommendations to Council on how to prevent and eliminate such barriers.

The Housing Services Division continues to work with the ACPD Working Group to develop the Guide for Finding Housing in Hamilton for People with Disabilities and continues to work with individual members of the ACPD on addressing housing issues for people with disabilities.

The following matters regarding the Social Housing Waitlist were discussed at the meetings and in conversation with ACPD members:

- Members wanted to ensure that as the new model for the Social Housing Waitlist evolves that they are consulted on a regular basis and have opportunity to provide

input to ensure that options for housing with accessibility are clearly understood by the applicant.

- Members raised three key questions regarding the Special Needs Form: the classification of accessible and barrier-free units, the accessibility of the form itself and related documents (e.g. font size), and the range of health care professionals approved to complete the form.
- Staff provided and discussed the Modified Unit Classifications Guide. This guide provides a detailed description of the specific classifications of modified/accessible units available within the social housing portfolio.
- Staff advised that upon request the Special Needs Form and any associated documents could be printed in 18pt font and that Access to Housing staff could assist in the completion of forms for individuals identifying a need for additional support. Staff further advised that although the Special Needs Form states it must be completed by a physician, when an applicant identifies this requirement as a barrier to completing the form, discretion can be used on a case-by-case basis to allow another professional (e.g. occupational therapist) to complete the form.

ACPD members expressed appreciation of this information and staff committed to consult with them on an ongoing basis on accessibility issues as it relates to the Social Housing Waitlist.

The committee also expressed a concern about the shortage of housing accessible for persons with disabilities and the need for accessibility modifications in both private market and social existing housing, and for barrier free units in newly developed housing. Many of the concerns raised, such as accessibility requirements for private market housing, are under provincial jurisdiction and outside of the City's authority to address. Staff committed to consult with the committee as part of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Five-Year Review.

Some persons who experience injury and hospitalization, when discharged from a hospital or rehabilitation facility, face challenges finding housing that physically meets their new accessibility needs which may require modifications made to their home. This is an issue, not only for the impacted patients themselves, but because such patients occupy 'alternative level of care' (ALC) beds for those who no longer require the intensity of resources or services provided by the hospital but are waiting to transition to appropriate housing.

Staff consulted extensively with many experts in the health care sector, all of whom said that the most significant challenge to rehousing someone following a hospital stay is the

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limited number of respite and long-term care beds and the lack of support personnel to provide in home health supports. The range of health care experts informed staff that the numbers of patients who are low income homeowners in need of financial support to make needed accessibility modifications to their homes is small; both a small relative number of patients requiring accessibility modifications, and a smaller number with a low income.

Staff are therefore recommending that the existing Emergency Repair Program (ERP) be expanded to include accessibility modifications for low income homeowners to address the need for financial support for accessibility modifications. This program is being funded through an older reserve fund and there is currently \$127,611 available. Recommended expansion to the ERP includes:

- Expanding the eligibility from being only homeowners on Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program to include all low-income homeowners (income below the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO)). This primarily has the effect of including seniors.
- Changing the \$5,000 maximum loan to a maximum of \$10,000.

The ERP would be administered in accordance with the ERP Guidelines.

The items relating to solutions for persons with disabilities coming to study in post-secondary schools in Hamilton, who have limited to no accessible housing options, and the City investigating the possibility of expanding accessible housing options for persons with disabilities in a way that makes economic growth and development the same for all persons regardless of ability are not within the City's authority to address in a meaningful way.

Though the accessible housing options could partially be addressed by the post-secondary institutions themselves by building student residences that meet the needs of students with disabilities, most of the housing referred to in the previous paragraph is within the private sector.

All newly built multi-residential buildings must comply with the Ontario Building Code which currently requires that 15% of all units and the common spaces of the buildings meet Building Code accessibility requirements. The City does not have the authority to require that private sector housing be accessible. That is a provincial responsibility addressed through the *Ontario Human Rights Code* (duty to accommodate renters with a disability), *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, and Ontario Building Code.

The Hamilton Seniors' Advisory Committee created the "Housing Options for Older Adults in Hamilton" guide and the ACPD created a "Guide to Finding Housing in Hamilton for People with Disabilities" (Report HSC18046). Both of these documents are helpful resources for those with a disability with specific housing needs.

When the City has some degree of authority in the development of new housing, such as through the administration of affordable housing development programs, a greater level of accessibility than that required by the Building Code is required and an even greater level of accessibility is encouraged through request for proposals scoring criteria. The Building Code currently requires 15% of all new units in multi-residential buildings to be accessible to a specific standard. For new development within the City's authority, the Housing Services Division typically requires 50% of those units be accessible to the higher standard of the City Barrier Free Design Guidelines. New federal affordable housing development programs require at least 20% of all units to be accessible to a standard higher than the Ontario Building Code.

A significant challenge to providing accessible housing in a general way is that accessibility needs are very individual. The physical environment that meets the needs of one person with a disability can be very different from that which will meet the needs of another. Public areas of multi-residential buildings must now under the Building Code be fully accessible to mobility devices. Accessibility within individual homes, including apartments, is more difficult. With the exception of mobility device accessibility, which can be challenging to retrofit in existing housing due to space needs and is therefore most easily addressed in new development, home modifications to meet the accessibility needs of a specific individual are the gold standard.

The comments above are broad in scope and cannot be addressed by any one action or response. Rather, they are complex issues that require multi-faceted and on-going actions to tackle effectively. To that end there will continue to be involvement with ACPD members as part of the review of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan. Further to this, they will continue to have a representative from the ACPD on the Housing and Homelessness Action Planning Group.

## **ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

None

## **ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN**

### **Community Engagement & Participation**

Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community.

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**Healthy and Safe Communities**

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

**Built Environment and Infrastructure**

Hamilton is supported by state of the art infrastructure, transportation options, buildings and public spaces that create a dynamic City.

**APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Appendix A to Report HSC18049: Emergency Home Repair Program Guidelines