




Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	July 11, 2019
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Establishing a Gender and Equity Lens on Housing Services (HSC19036) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Greg Tedesco (905) 546-2424 Ext. 7168 Yolisa de Jager (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3863
SUBMITTED BY:	Edward John Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

Emergency and Community Services Committee at its meeting on February 21, 2019 approved the motion regarding Establishing a Gender and Equity Lens on Housing Services which directed:

- (a) That staff be directed to develop and integrate a consistent gender & equity framework, inclusive of evaluative tools, to the City's Housing & Homelessness Strategy and service delivery;
- (b) That staff identify projects, both existing and new, which fit the GBA+ requirements of the National Housing Strategy Investment program, to ensure that the City of Hamilton is serving gendered and equity seeking populations adequately, and to increase Hamilton's opportunities to receive investment from the Federal Fund; and,
- (c) That staff report back to the Emergency & Community Services Committee on what the City of Hamilton has done to contribute to, inform, design, and coordinate housing solutions for women in Hamilton.

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INFORMATION

The Housing Services Division commits to utilizing and strengthening Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) principles already in practice within the Division to articulate and inform decisions on funding and service delivery. This includes recognizing and working to address disproportional structural barriers faced by individuals and groups, ensuring equity in policy, program and funding decisions, and engaging in meaningful consultation throughout these processes with those directly impacted. The work of the Housing Services Division in this area will continue to be strengthened and supported through the implementation of forthcoming corporate-wide and specific housing-focused EDI frameworks. In the interim, Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) provides structured processes in which to assess policy and planning priorities related to housing and homelessness so as to better understand and respond to the specific needs of a diversity of individuals and households.

There is recognition within the Housing Services Division that policy development and implementation related to housing and homelessness must consider the unique needs of diverse populations. There is also an acknowledgement that a person's experience of stable housing is impacted by intersecting aspects of their identities related to race, gender identity, and sexual orientation, which must be taken into account when assessing the experiences of housing instability and homelessness as well as our subsequent responses related to policy, planning, and funding allocation.

While acknowledging strength and resiliency of unique populations, there is also an awareness of unique and differing structural and institutional barriers that each group may experience linked to systemic discrimination and oppression. This may include experiences related to discrimination in employment, education or the housing market, limited access to social or health supports, and restricted access to various public and private settings. The responses of the Housing Services Division must not be a one-size-fits-all approach, and in utilizing a formalized EDI framework, housing models and accompanying person-centred support programs can be effectively adapted to meet the specific needs of the people they serve.

Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+):

GBA+ can be applied to a wide range of issues and is described by Status of Women Canada as an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The "plus" in GBA+ acknowledges that GBA goes beyond biological (assigned sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences. GBA+ also considers many other identity factors, like race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical ability.

A GBA+ framework assesses the potential impacts that public policy, programs and services may have on diverse populations who traditionally face barriers to full inclusion. This analysis contributes to ensuring that public policy decisions reflect and result in more equitable and inclusive impacts. Applying GBA+ to decisions involves seven steps: identify the issue; challenge the assumptions; gather the facts; provide options and make recommendations; monitor and evaluate; document; and communicate.

In the context of housing, GBA+ can assist in challenging and moving beyond assumptions that may lead to unintended and unequal impacts of policy, planning, and funding allocation. Existing GBA+ tools can provide an immediate resource to assess diversity and inclusion considerations and implications by exploring who may be impacted (i.e. considerations around gender, gender identity and expression, race, ability, sexual orientation, immigration status, socioeconomic status, etc.), how they are impacted and why. They also provide an ability to develop communication, consultation and engagement plans centred on those who are directly impacted.

Canada's National Housing Strategy:

Canada's National Housing Strategy (NHS) has committed to ensuring that at least 25% of investments will support projects that specifically target the unique needs of women and girls. The NHS has specifically committed to prioritizing populations facing distinct housing barriers, including 2SLGBTQ+ communities, women experiencing homelessness, women and children fleeing family violence, seniors, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, those dealing with mental health and addiction issues, veterans and young adults.

The \$13.2 B National Housing Co-Investment Fund, launched in May 2018, will help build 60,000 new units and repair or renew 240,000 units over 10 years. This includes 4,000 shelter spaces for survivors of family violence, which will help reduce wait times for beds, and help women who might otherwise access or return to unsafe housing options due to a lack of available supports.

The Co-Investment Fund is also encouraging partnerships between housing projects and support services to help those experiencing mental health or addiction challenges. Launched in November 2017, the initiative sets ambitious targets of removing 530,000 families from housing need, cutting chronic homelessness by 50%, renovating and modernizing 300,000 housing units and building 100,000 new units for families in need.

In addition, a redesigned federal homelessness program, called Reaching Home, launched in April 2019. Reaching Home supports the goals of the NHS, including equity considerations around improving services and supports to those who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. Core features of Reaching Home include implementation of Coordinated Access Systems, enhanced focus on evidence and

outcomes-based program interventions, as well as the recognition of Housing First as a foundational approach in community strategies.

Housing Services Division, Strategic Priorities and Investments:

Funding investments, as well as program and policy development within the Housing Services Division are informed through ongoing analysis and engagement using a person-centred approach. This includes applying a gender and equity analysis so as to meet identified outcomes aligned with Hamilton's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan, and Federal and Provincial direction for housing and homelessness initiatives.

Currently, there is no prescribed investment model that the City uses to allocate funding to specific population groups within the community. However, through consultation with existing tables and working groups and best practice identified by research provided by the Federal and Provincial governments, a gender and equity analysis is applied to ongoing policy and program development on homelessness in Hamilton. Recent examples in which the City has supported and prioritized equity, diversity, and inclusion through policy, planning and investments include:

- Council recommended that \$10 M (20%) of the \$50 M allocated through the Poverty Reduction Investment Fund be allocated to Indigenous-directed poverty reduction over the course of 10 years (\$1 M a year) since 2017. The funding is administered by the Hamilton Executive Directors Aboriginal Coalition to address disproportionate rates of poverty, housing insecurity and homelessness as outlined in Report CES16043.
- Canada's National Housing Strategy is grounded in and supportive of the Government's commitment to a Gender Based Analysis to ensure that programs will not negatively impact Canadians on gender and other identity factors. The Strategy will provide \$40 B in investment. At least 25% of the Strategy's investments will support projects that specifically target the unique needs of women. The City currently allocates 30% of funding to women's services specific to homelessness operating funding, greater than the allocation percentage of the Federal government. In assessing policy, program and funding decisions related to the unique needs of women through Reaching Home, there is recognition that we must also explicitly address the unique needs of trans women.
- The YWCA's development project of 35 new affordable housing units for women and their children and 15 for women with a developmental disability at 52 Ottawa Street North is being supported by the Housing Services Division. The Division recommended the project for \$5.25 M in Federal/Provincial funding, and the Poverty Reduction Fund has provided funds for development charges and other fees

(approximately \$1.15 M), while CMHC is providing approximately \$10 M in funding and financing to the project.

- Sacajawea is building 23 new affordable units for Indigenous residents at 18 West Ave. with the support and oversight of the Housing Services Division. \$1.92 M in Federal/Provincial funding and \$118,000 in municipal funds are allocated for development charges and other fees.
- From 2016-2018, Women's and Indigenous housing providers received the following amounts for capital repairs of their buildings: women only housing, \$283,800; Indigenous only housing, \$263,000.
- Over the last five years, the City has increased its investments in women's homelessness by 82%. In 2014/15 the City funded \$2.2 M in women specific services and by 2018/2019 the budget allocation increased to \$3.9 M.
- Approximately 64% of all new federal and provincial funding has been allocated to women-specific homelessness services; since 2014/2015 there was an increase of \$2.6 M (Homelessness Partnering Strategy/Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative/Home for Good) in homelessness funding and of that \$1.6 M was allocated to women-specific homelessness services.
- As Service Manager, the City of Hamilton funds Housing First and Rapid Rehousing supports for single women to be able to house up to 144 individuals per year.
- In 2018, the Housing Services Division distributed and assisted in the completion of over 600 applications for the provincial Housing Benefit for Survivors of Domestic Violence, working with the VAW shelters to ensure as many women as possible had information about and access to this program. 95% of applications went to women-led households.

Next Steps:

The Housing Services Division's commitment to implementing an EDI framework is guided by the City's process of developing a corporate framework and is supported through Outcome 5 in Hamilton's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan, which states that all people experience equity in housing and housing-related services. In order to effectively implement an EDI framework in the context of best practices in housing, the Housing Services Division will:

- Conduct an environmental scan of best practices for implementation of EDI frameworks within the housing sector;

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- Engage in a consultation process for the framework implementation that will actively seek out a diversity of perspectives within communities, including voices that are traditionally not heard from or consulted by the housing sector;
- Monitor implementation of the EDI framework in the Housing Services Division and engage in ongoing consultation with stakeholders to ensure effective outcomes and results are being achieved; and,
- Consult with Human Resources on ongoing matters pertaining to the implementation and monitoring of the EDI framework within the Housing Services Division, including adaptations or changes to internal processes or practices.

Through the rollout of Canada's NHS, the Housing Services Division is well positioned to build upon existing practices to formally integrate GBA+ to decision-making around evidence-based and outcomes-focused investments. Through this process, one key area in which GBA+ will be applied will be the homelessness funding call for applications (CFA).

All applicants seeking funding in the CFA will be required to outline EDI considerations regarding the potential implementation of any specific service or programming, including an assessment of potential impacts and outcomes for population(s) served. The upcoming CFA process will also support the inclusion of EDI and GBA+ considerations through the use of adapted assessment tools built into the CFA evaluation matrix (currently in development). Members of the Community Advisory Board responsible for recommending programs will also receive training relevant to EDI and GBA+ to ensure that equity remains a key principle actioned throughout the evaluation process.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None