



CITY OF HAMILTON
HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT
Housing Services Division

TO:	Expanding Housing and Support Services for Women and Transgender Community Sub-Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 4, 2020
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Women's Shelter and Support Investment Options (HSC20061) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City-Wide
PREPARED BY:	Yolisa de Jager (905) 546-2424 ext. 3863 Rob Mastroianni (905) 546-2424 ext. 8035 Nadia Zelisko (905) 546-2424 ext. 2548
SUBMITTED BY:	Edward John Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That annual funding up to \$950,000 from the Net Levy to support the operating costs of the Good Shepherd Centre's Emergency Shelter proposal and increase the investment in the Municipally-funded Portable Housing Benefit Program for women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary adults from Hamilton's By-Name List, be approved to be referred to the 2021 Operating Budget for consideration; and,
- (b) That, in the event the proposed Good Shepherd Emergency Shelter project does not proceed, annual funding of up to \$950,000 from the Net Levy to support the operating costs of Mission Services' Emergency Shelter proposal and increase the investment in the Municipally-funded Portable Housing Benefit Program for women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary adults from Hamilton's By-Name List, be approved to be referred to the 2021 Operating Budget for consideration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Homelessness is a gendered experience, impacting single women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary individuals differently than single men or families. The City of Hamilton's homeless-serving system is committed to gender-specific investments in low-barrier, housing focussed emergency shelter services that directly address the unique needs of women, transgender and non-binary individuals experiencing homelessness. Gender-based analysis of Hamilton's shelter system demonstrate that beds serving women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary adults remain full or over capacity since 2018.

In September 2020, Native Women's Centre closed Mountainview shelter, a 15-bed city-funded emergency shelter for women. The City expressed a desire to replace and potentially exceed these beds by initiating an RFP process in November 2020. The evaluation committee received three applications, two of which were viable projects.

Of the two viable projects, Good Shepherd Centre's shelter project was approved to proceed. This proposal is linked to two other proposals: Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) and Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS). If all three proposals are successful, the entirety of this project will result in: replacement of the original 15 beds, up to 25 net new emergency shelter beds, 20 net new Violence Against Women (VAW) shelter beds for single women, and a minimum of 65 Single Room Occupancy housing units. To accomplish the scope of the proposed emergency shelter project, additional levy funding to support the operating budget of up to \$950,000 would need to be approved.

Should this series of proposals fall through, it is recommended to proceed with a \$950,000 investment in the women's system by funding both a shelter project and increase the existing Municipally-funded Portable Housing Allowance program budget. The second viable project from the RFP process was submitted by Mission Services. This proposal is smaller in scale, replacing the 15-emergency shelter and requiring a levy top up of \$225,000 and one-time capital costs of \$413,700.

To more effectively address the occupancy pressures within the system, the recommended investment would supplement the City-funded women's emergency shelter system with the Municipally-funded Portable Housing Benefits budget targeted to women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary homeless individuals on Hamilton's By-name List.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 6

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: This recommendation seeks up to \$950,000 annual funding from the levy to be considered by Council through the 2021 Budget deliberations.

Staffing: N/A

Legal: N/A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On September 10, 2020, the Report HSC20037 Emergency Shelter Services for Single Homeless Women was presented to the Emergency and Community Services Committee outlining the closure of 15 shelter beds at Mountainview, Native Women's Centre, and the requirement to initiate a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to replace and enhance gender-specific emergency shelter beds.

On October 9, 2020, Housing Services Division initiated a Request for Information process, seeking specific information from the public on shelter service design to inform the RFP alongside the expertise of local partners and best practice for the delivery of low barrier, gender-specific shelter services for women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary adults experiencing homelessness.

From November 4-15, 2020, the City of Hamilton invited social service providers and community organizations to apply to receive funding to provide gender-specific emergency shelter services for women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary adults.

On November 10, 2020, staff made a presentation to the Expanding Housing and Support Services for Women, Non-Binary and Transgender Community Sub-Committee that included an assessment of needs and gaps as related to housing and support services for women, non-binary, and transgender community; a homelessness policy overview as it pertains to the mandate of the Sub-Committee; and, an overview of funding administered through Housing Services Division for housing and support services for women, non-binary, and transgender community from all levels of government.

At its November 10, 2020 meeting, the Expanding Housing and Support Services for Women, Non-Binary and Transgender Community Sub-Committee approved the following (Item 13.2):

“That staff be directed to report back to the Expanding Housing and Support Services for Women, Non-Binary and Transgender Community Sub-Committee, with options and alternatives related to additional capital and operating funds related to additional emergency shelter beds.”

On November 27, 2020, the General Manager of the Healthy and Safe Communities Department approved the recommendation of the RFP Evaluation Committee that the highest scoring proposal be pursued. The results of the Request for Proposals process

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will be provided to the Emergency and Community Services Committee on December 10, 2020.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

Emergency shelter services are funded by provincial Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative funding (CHPI.) CHPI has two key program outcomes:

1. People experiencing homelessness obtain and retain housing
2. People at risk of homelessness remain housed

The recommendation requests additional funding that would supplement existing CHPI budget allocations for emergency shelter services.

As indicated in Coming Together to End Homelessness: Hamilton's Systems Planning Framework (July 2019), emergency shelter services are a core component of Hamilton's homeless-serving system. In addition to CHPI funding, Federal Reaching Home homelessness funding is allocated to other interconnecting homelessness interventions within the system of care: prevention, outreach and housing with support programs. Federal directives require communities create a By-Name List of homeless individuals and households, develop and utilize Coordinated Access to make connections to housing and supports, and to report community-level outcomes towards ending chronic homelessness. Emergency shelters play a critical role in addressing immediate basic needs of homeless individuals and households as well as resolving persons' homelessness by supporting them to secure permanent housing.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

On October 9, 2020, the Housing Services Division initiated a Request for Information process, seeking specific information from the public on shelter service design. Areas of interest included:

- Gender-specific services for women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine, and non-binary homeless adults
- Low-barrier services
- Service Restrictions
- Harm Reduction
- Housing-Focused sheltering
- Role and Coordination within Hamilton's homeless-serving system
- Improved connection to housing/shelter bed turnover

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

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In the Coming Together to End Homelessness: Hamilton's Systems Planning Framework, emergency shelter interventions are identified as a critical component of the system of care. The role of the emergency shelter is to provide temporary accommodation and essential services for individuals experiencing homelessness to become housed. Shelter services that are both low-barrier and housing-focused ensure individuals experiencing the highest rates of vulnerability due to physical and mental health, risk of violence, and active substance use are effectively connected to housing options.

The Housing Services Division's presentation to the Sub-Committee on November 10, 2020 highlighted national trends indicating that shelter beds dedicated to women are significantly less when compared to beds that are co-ed or dedicated to men exclusively. Women and gender diverse peoples are also systematically under-represented in homelessness data due to inaccurate measures, or lack of gender-disaggregated data which, when combined with less shelter bed access, leads to an exacerbation of hidden homelessness for women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary individuals.

Analysis of Hamilton's emergency shelter data since 2018 indicate that women-specific shelters have been operating at or above full capacity. When bed capacity was expanded by the introduction of hotel spaces to address the COVID-19 pandemic, occupancy rates also rose, reflecting a larger need within Hamilton. Together, this data demonstrates a need to increase dedicated emergency shelter beds for women and trans-feminine, trans-masculine adults.

In order to support the highest number of individuals, data supports the fact that we need to concentrate efforts on decreasing lengths of stay by increasing outflow from emergency shelter into permanent housing options. This Report recommends increased investment in the Municipal Portable Housing Benefit program specifically for women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary adults on Hamilton's By-Name List.

Investing in portable housing benefits maximizes current investments in both emergency shelter beds and housing support programs. Portable housing benefits provide women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary individuals with increased flexibility and choice in market rent units, allowing for individuals to address their unique housing needs based on their circumstances. Paired with housing support programs, this approach expedites connection to permanent housing, resulting in decreased lengths of stay in emergency shelter.

The Women's Emergency Shelter Request for Proposals resulted in two proposals that passed evaluation minimum benchmarks. The General Manager of the Healthy and Safe Communities Department approved the highest scoring proposal, from Good Shepherd, to proceed. Good Shepherd Centre's proposal projects to enhance the

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women's emergency shelter system by creating up to 25 net new, private emergency shelter beds.

Good Shepherd's proposal requires up to \$950,000 in annualized operating funding in addition to the \$520,000 available through provincial CHPI funding to operate up to 25 net new, private emergency shelter beds. The proposal is dependent on a successful application to the federal Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) funded through Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC) to secure the shelter location. The new location would host up to a total of 65 shelter beds: Mary's Place 25-bed shelter relocated to the new site; the 15-shelter bed replacement; and up to an additional 25 net new shelter beds.

In addition to the shelter space, the building secured through RHI funding will create a minimum 65 new Single Room Occupancy housing units for women at the same location. The project provides an innovative and unique opportunity to address pressures in the women's system, combining a robust and comprehensive response to several local, provincial and federal priorities, not least women experiencing chronic homelessness and/or gender-based violence. If the Good Shepherd proposal along with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) funding is successful, the project would relocate the 25 beds at Mary's Place to the new location and allow for an expansion of Good Shepherd's Martha House Violence Against Women (VAW) shelter into the current Mary's Place, thereby increasing MCCSS-funded Martha House capacity by 25 beds. Combined, the Good Shepherd proposal results in 65 net new housing units for women and up to 50 net new shelter beds in the global women's shelter system (emergency shelter and VAW system).

The proposal from Mission Services passed the evaluation benchmark and provides 15 emergency shelter beds for women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine, and non-binary homeless adults. Although this option ensures current bed numbers remain constant by replacing the 15 beds lost with the closure of Mountainview Shelter, this does not enhance the overall women's system by adding net new beds. The Mission Services proposal exceeds the available CHPI operating dollars and would require an additional annual commitment of up to \$225,000 for operating costs and one-time infrastructure and start-up costs of \$413,700 for 15 beds.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

That up to \$950,000 be added to the City's annual Operating Budget to enhance the Municipal Portable Housing Benefit Program budget with specific housing benefit allocations for chronically homeless women, trans-feminine, trans-masculine and non-binary adults on Hamilton's By-name List supported by City-funded, gender-specific outflow housing programs: Rapid Rehousing, Intensive Case Management and Transitional Housing.

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ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

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

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None