

# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b> Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee	<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b> CITY WIDE
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b> October 19, 2011	
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b> Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) Update (CS11083) (City Wide)	
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b> Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community Services Department	<b>PREPARED BY:</b> Amanda DiFalco 905-546-2424 ext 3132
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

**Council Direction:**  
Not applicable

## Information:

### Background

The Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) is the federal government's primary program to address homelessness in Canada. The HPS program has been renewed for a period of three years (April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2014). Hamilton will receive \$12,684,762 over this period. HPS funding is used for the prevention and reduction of homelessness in Hamilton.

Service Canada requires that each Community Entity develop local priorities which will inform funding allocations.

Community Services staff used various methods to develop the new HPS priorities, including community consultations. A Community Consultation "Open House" was held on June 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

The following HPS priorities were developed through the review and analysis of various inputs, including the Community Consultation event. Priority setting rationale can be found in Appendix A to Report CS11083. These priorities were endorsed by the Housing and Homelessness Planning Group, and approved by the General Manager of

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the Community Services Department and are awaiting final approval by Service Canada.

Priority 1: Direct and Person Centered Housing Supports

Priority 2: Partnerships, joint planning, research and evaluation activities to promote solutions to end homelessness

Priority 3: Support the autonomous community planning around housing and homelessness in the Aboriginal community.

The HPS priorities were announced to the Community on August 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

### **Call for Applications**

A Call for Applications was released to the public on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011. The Call for Applications requested proponents to submit proposals for projects that reflect the HPS priorities indicated above. Successful projects will commence on or after April 1, 2012 and will be scheduled to terminate by March 31, 2014.

Some projects that are currently receiving funding from HPS may not be successful in the Call for Applications. Unsuccessful applicants will have at least three months notice so they can secure alternative funding sources or plan to reduce service and staff levels.

Staff have also conducted a recruitment process to form an HPS Funding Review Panel. This Review Panel will review proposals and provide funding recommendations to the City of Hamilton. The General Manager of Community Services will make the final funding decisions as authorized by Council in Report CS11016.

### **HPS Aboriginal Stream**

It should be noted that in Hamilton there is a second HPS program called the "Aboriginal Stream". This overview does not include this stream in its scope however it is an important component of our community's resources. The Social Planning and Research Council are the "Community Entity" for this stream of funding and the Hamilton Executive Director's Aboriginal Coalition are the "Community Advisory Board". The "Aboriginal Stream" functions under its own set of HPS priorities specific to the Aboriginal community.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix A to Report CS11083 - Homelessness Partnering Strategy: Priority Setting Rationale

## **HOMELESSNESS PARTNERING STRATEGY: PRIORITY SETTING RATIONALE**

### **The Purpose of this Rationale Document**

This document describes how Hamilton's 2011 – 2014 Homelessness Partnering Strategy funding priorities have been developed.

### **The 2012 – 2014 HPS Priorities for Hamilton**

The three priorities outlined for Hamilton's 2012 – 2014 allocation of Homelessness Partnering Strategy funding are:

1. *Direct and Person-Centred Housing Supports* – People are supported to find, attain and maintain safe, affordable and appropriate housing. These supports will be direct, person-centred and based on a housing first philosophy.
2. *Partnerships, joint planning, research and evaluation activities to promote solutions to end homelessness* – Key stakeholders are resourced to meaningfully plan, innovate, build collaborations and partnerships and evaluate to best meet the housing needs of people in Hamilton. This planning will be collaborative and capacity building.
3. *Aboriginal Community* – The Aboriginal community continues to be resourced to do autonomous community planning and service delivery.

### **Homelessness Partnering Strategy Background**

In November 2010, the Government of Canada announced that the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) will be funded from April 2011 – March 2014. In February 2011, the Housing and Homelessness Planning Group endorsed the plan to extend existing HPS service projects until March 31, 2012 while the community provided input on setting new HPS priorities for Hamilton. This priority setting is underway to inform a projected September 2011 Call for Applications.

### **Hamilton's 2012 – 2014 HPS Priority Setting Process**

The following process is for the development of the 2012 – 2014 HPS priorities:

- Ongoing: Collection and analysis of inputs (see below)
- June 2011: HPS specific community consultation event
- July 2011: Planning Group feedback sought
- July 2011: Consultation with the General Manager of Community Services
- August 2011: Present priorities to the broader community

## **HPS Priority Setting Inputs**

The Housing and Homelessness Division at the City of Hamilton considered a wide range of inputs in order to set the HPS priorities. Some of these inputs informed a broad analysis of the homelessness system in Hamilton. Others were collected and analyzed for the express purpose of setting HPS priorities. These inputs fall into four categories (please note, the examples are not exhaustive, for an exhaustive list of inputs, please ask City Staff):

<b>1. Ongoing Local Engagement</b> - <i>Stakeholders who participate in the housing and homelessness sectors are engaged on an ongoing basis to support local planning.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ The Housing and Homelessness Planning Group</li> <li>◦ The Hamilton Emergency Shelter Integration and Coordination Committee</li> <li>◦ Hamilton's Emergency Food System</li> <li>◦ Hamilton Funder's Network</li> <li>◦ Other City Divisions, Provincial Ministries and the Federal Government</li> </ul>
<b>2. Local Community Consultation</b> - <i>Stakeholders in the community are engaged through a number of research and planning processes.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ June 28 Consultation Event</li> <li>◦ Consultation from many research projects through focus groups and interviews</li> </ul>
<b>3. Local Research and Data Analysis</b> - <i>The Hamilton community has research capacity and has been developing evidence to support housing and homelessness planning efforts.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Paul Dowling Work (HPS and Housing and Homelessness System)</li> <li>◦ The Planning Group's Environmental Scan</li> <li>◦ On Any Given Night (2010)</li> <li>◦ Rent Bank Statistics</li> <li>◦ Social Housing Waiting List Statistics</li> <li>◦ Social Planning and Research Council work</li> <li>◦ Ministry of Community and Social Services and HIFIS Data</li> </ul>
<b>4. Broader Housing and Homelessness Research</b> - <i>International, national and provincial bodies contribute regularly to the body of literature on housing and homelessness.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Precarious Housing in Canada - 2010 (The Wellesley Institute)</li> <li>◦ A Proactive Role to End Homelessness - 2007 (The Alliance to End Homelessness)</li> <li>◦ Housing Vulnerability and Health - 2010 (Research Alliance for Canadian Homelessness, Housing and Health)</li> <li>◦ Ending Homelessness: A Handbook for Policy Makers – 2010 (FEANTSA)</li> </ul>

### **Analysis of Core HPS Priority Setting Inputs**

This section describes one core example of each of the four inputs used to set priorities. A thematic analysis of the example follows.

#### **Ongoing Local Engagement - The Housing and Homelessness Planning Group**

The Housing and Homelessness Planning Group has been meeting since October 2010 to support the development of an Action Plan for Hamilton. Two particular exercises have illuminated key concepts that are integrated into the HPS priority setting – their Core Values and their identification of key priorities for the Action Plan.

The Core Values of the Planning Group include:

- Person-Centred Supports
- Evidence Based Decision Making
- Integrated Planning.

The Planning Group was asked for the two key priorities for the Action Plan. Themes from that exercise:

- Preventing homelessness
- Supporting people in housing (at all stages – finding and maintaining)
- Working on systemic/root causes of homelessness
- Valuing the need for ongoing data and evidence.

#### **Local Community Consultation – June 28<sup>th</sup> Event**

On June 28, 2011 people were invited to the Freeway Coffee House to provide input on the HPS priorities. Planners, management, front line staff, people who use services and citizens engaged in an open house format where they were encouraged to provide their feedback on flipchart paper or verbally to City staff.

The advice from the consultation includes:

- Supporting capital projects – renovating existing buildings and developing new housing with supports
- Building new housing - increase affordable housing stock in Hamilton
- Investing in existing core homelessness services
- Valuing the supports needed for people to get and maintain quality housing
- Supporting prevention and early intervention around homelessness
- Making sure planning is evidence based and collaboration focused
- Acknowledging the complexity of homelessness – it's not all about housing, it's also about food security, culturally appropriate supports, adequate incomes, mental health and well-being

- Recognize that different populations, communities and identities experience homelessness differently and require unique interventions.

### **Local Research and Data Analysis - Paul Dowling Reports**

Paul Dowling Consulting was hired to produce two reports, one on the Homelessness Partnering Strategy in Hamilton to date and another on the broader Housing and Homelessness system in our community.

Themes to consider from the HPS report include:

- Hamilton has been shifting its priorities to match the broader strategies named by Service Canada. The broad priorities have shifted from emergency responses to transitional housing and housing with supports to Housing First.
- The Emergency Shelter System is changing. In large part due to the increase in transitional housing and supportive housing options and because of specialized services within the emergency system, shelter demand has decreased in the men's system.
- HPS funding has helped develop the capacity of the Hamilton's homelessness service system through coordination, research, training and evaluation support.
- Recommendations from the report include: evidence-based and integrated human services planning, engagement of unrepresented sectors, knowledge transfer activities, making sure that 'No Wrong Door' is a reality in Hamilton and that people have access to 'system navigators'.

Themes to consider from the broader System Report include:

- HPS has strengthened Hamilton's response to homelessness and housing insecurity but in some cases we have become reliant on this funding for core, operating dollars.
- Some populations remain underserved in Hamilton, including people with mental health issues, homeless women, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people, seniors, newcomers and people transitioning from institutional care.
- Housing has emerged as the solution to homelessness (locally, provincially and nationally). The Hamilton community has a relatively good housing system (high vacancies, reasonably affordable rents) but is not meeting its Official Plan targets for new rental housing stock.
- Many activities point to the successful coordination of housing and homelessness efforts locally and provincially. Examples include the new single division with the municipality (the Housing and Homelessness Division) and the Province of Ontario's Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy.
- Local planning networks represent a real strength in the Hamilton community but require resources for research, administration and projects.
- Recommendations from the report include: service system integration, meaningful inclusion of consumers in planning, 'no wrong door' approaches, common intake and system navigation supports.

## **Broader Housing and Homelessness Research – Quick Scan of Themes**

There is a wide body of literature on the issues of housing and homelessness. The most current research demonstrates a shift in homelessness planning from managing homelessness to ending it. Many reports describe the need for a Housing First model (the model centres on the belief that people need safe and stable housing in order to work on the complexities in their lives). However, the Housing First philosophy needs to incorporate or consider the supports necessary to ensure successful housing for everyone. Finally, the current literature on housing and homelessness describes quality housing both as a right and as a core foundation to ensure optimal health.

## **Homelessness Partnering Strategy – Terms and Conditions**

The final key input into priority setting for HPS investment in Hamilton is the set of Terms and Conditions provided by Service Canada for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy. As Service Manager, the City of Hamilton is directed by Service Canada to focus on longer term sustainable solutions locally with a Housing First focus. Additionally, the unique needs of the Aboriginal Communities must be considered. The Aboriginal community should be provided funding that is representative of the population and support the autonomy in decision making for Aboriginal specific projects.

## **Hamilton's HPS Priorities (2012 – 2014)**

All of the aforementioned inputs have resulted in three priorities that will shape how HPS is invested in Hamilton.

### **Priority #1 – Direct and Person-Centred Housing Supports**

Providing direct supports that help people find, attain and maintain safe, affordable and appropriate housing.

#### **Core Principles:**

- *Person-centred.* People have complex and varied needs related to housing that are informed by their history, their employment, their health, their gender and their cultural identities. The person who is looking for support around housing must direct how that support looks.
- *Housing First.* Housing First is the understanding that people need safe and appropriate housing first and foremost. However, it is acknowledged that some people may require supports in order for housing to be successful.
- *Direct.* There are many facets of service provision that help people maintain housing. This priority is specific to programs that provide a direct support service to individuals and families. This support service must be one that is required for the successful attainment and/or maintenance of housing.

## **Priority #2 - Partnerships, joint planning, research and evaluation activities to promote solutions to end homelessness**

Supporting key stakeholders in the community to meaningfully plan, innovate, build collaborations and partnerships and evaluate to best meet the housing needs of people in Hamilton.

### Core Principles:

- *Collaborative.* There is an acknowledgement that partnership and collaboration supports stability and innovation. This priority focuses on stakeholders from sectors being supported to come together and think about the services they provide in an integrated and coordinated way.
- *Capacity Building.* The success of initiatives is built on the ability to understand complex problems and respond to them. It is also critical that community stakeholders can share what works with other services and sectors. It is important to have skilled and dedicated people to support the work of service providers.

## **Priority #3 – Aboriginal Community**

Continuing to support the autonomous community planning around housing and homelessness in the Aboriginal community.

## **Priorities Not Included: Population Based Interventions and Affordable Housing**

There are two major themes from the variety of inputs outlined above that are not explicit in the priorities outlined for Hamilton.

*The need to have unique and appropriate interventions for unique populations.* The past HPS priorities (see below) were essentially population-based. This new direction does not define priority populations because prioritizing groups of people can be problematic. For example, what is the criteria for deciding that young peoples' homelessness is more important than seniors' homelessness. Is it level of need? Urgency? Capacity to be successful? Rather than elevate the needs of one population over another, the priority around direct housing with supports is left broad enough for sectors to define and plan services that meet the needs of the communities they serve. It is also incumbent on those sectors to demonstrate the rationale for a population specific focus. It is acknowledged that women, youth, families, unattached individuals, newcomers, people from diverse ethno-racial groups, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and people with a wide range of disabilities require interventions that best meet their needs and capitalize on their strengths.

*The need for new affordable housing stock.* The call for new rental housing stock that is affordable to people who live in poverty is clear in all of the aforementioned inputs. The Hamilton community needs to see new rental housing built in order to meet the needs of all citizens. However, the HPS program clearly states that funds may be used for the



construction of new supportive or supported housing. New rental housing that is not directly connected to supports is not allowed under HPS funding.

### **Past HPS Priorities**

A list of the 2009 – 2011 HPS Priorities are provided for context:

- To help people who are experiencing long stays in emergency shelters and emergency accommodations to move into and maintain adequate and stable housing;
- To help women and their children leaving Violence Against Women shelters access second-stage housing or long-term housing as appropriate and support them in that transition
- To help people leaving corrections transition to, and maintain, appropriate housing;
- To prevent homelessness by helping at-risk seniors stabilize and maintain their housing;
- To help support people with mental health issues and concurrent disorders obtain and maintain housing;
- To support the Aboriginal community's priorities in its UAH application;
- To enhance the skills of staff and volunteers working with people experiencing homelessness;
- To support implementation of Everyone Has A Home, Hamilton's strategic plan to address homelessness;
- To assist at-risk and homeless youth retain and maintain appropriate housing during their transition to adulthood.