

**Region of Waterloo**  
**Community Services**  
**Housing Services**

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**To:** Community and Health Services Committee  
**Meeting Date:** November 7, 2023  
**Report Title:** 2023 Results of Fee for Service Requests in the Housing Stability System

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**1. Recommendation**

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo take the following action with respect to the results of the 2023 Housing Stability System Fee for Service Request and Proposal Response Protocol (the Protocol) for the 2024 budget process as outlined in report CSD-HOU-23-027 dated November 7, 2023:

- a) Approve the nine service and program proposals recommended for funding in 2024 as set out Appendix A in the total amount of \$3,113,493;
- b) Direct staff to include \$3,113,493 in the 2024 Housing Services Operating Budget to fund the operating and costs of the recommended service and program proposals, with funding from the 2024 property tax levy;
- c) Authorize the Commissioner of Community Services and Director of Housing Services to execute any agreements, memorandums of understanding and other documents needed to implement the recommended service and program proposals, to the satisfaction of the Regional Solicitor;
- d) Direct Housing Services staff to enter into discussions with Marillac Residence to support a potential development of 15 units of transitional housing and 15 units of supportive housing for pregnant woman and young mothers and bring forward any recommendation to Regional Council for consideration;
- e) Direct Housing Services staff to enter into discussions with YWCA Cambridge to support a potential development of 20-bed 24/7 women's emergency shelter in Cambridge and bring forward any recommendation to Regional Council for consideration;
- f) Direct Housing Services staff to update the Housing Stability Fee for Service Request and Proposal Protocol to further align with principles of Reconciliation,

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; and the forthcoming Plan to End Chronic Homelessness; and,

- g) Refer the above recommendations to the Strategic Planning and Budget Committee for consideration as part of the 2024 budget.

## **2. Purpose / Issue:**

This report provides Regional Council with the results of the Fee for Service Requests for budgetary consideration in the 2024 budget process. This includes staff recommendations for new and enhanced services for community agencies that aim to prevent and end experiences of homelessness.

## **3. Strategic Plan:**

This report addresses Strategic Priority 1: Homes for All, Strategic Priority 3: Equitable Services & Opportunities and Strategic Priority 4: Resilient and Future Ready Organization from the 2023-2027 Corporate Strategic Plan.

- Under Priority 1, we will eliminate chronic homelessness and reliance on traditional emergency shelter models. Key performance indicators include an increase in funds for supportive housing options.
- Under Priority 3, we will explore new models of service through community collaboration and partnerships. This includes finding new ways to partner with community organizations to improve service delivery. Key performance indicators include new funding to support investments in equitable service delivery.
- Under Priority 4, we will explore new service models and partnerships to achieve fiscal resilience and better service. This includes supporting staff and the community to drive service transformation that is culturally appropriate, safe and inclusive through co-design, data-driven decision-making, innovative digital tools, and other ways of knowing. Key performance indicators include increased satisfaction with service experience.

## **4. Report Highlights:**

- On June 6, 2023, Council directed staff to implement a Fee for Service Requests Protocol for calling for, receiving, and evaluating service request proposals to be included for consideration in the annual budget process (CSD-HOU-23-016). Through the 2023 Fee for Service Request and Proposal Response Protocol (the Protocol), Housing Services received and evaluated 19 proposals from 15 different service and program providers. Of these 19, staff are recommending Council consider funding nine proposals through the Fee for Service Request Process. Appendix A provides a descriptive overview of each of the recommended proposals.

- Community agencies, which provide services aimed at preventing and ending homelessness, continue to experience increasing capacity pressures as homelessness continues to rise in Waterloo Region (CSD-HOU-23-024). Without the allowance of additional funding to community agencies, those who access services are at increased risk of both experiencing homelessness and prolonged experiences of homelessness.
- There is currently no provision in the Preliminary 2024 Housing Services Operating Budget for this request. Any amount approved by Committee would be added to the Preliminary 2024 Housing Services Operating Budget and is recommended to be funded by the 2024 property tax levy. The recommendations, if approved, will be further considered by the Strategic Plan and Budget Committee as part of its 2024 Plan and Budget deliberations.
- Notably, no proposals were received from Indigenous-led agencies and few were received by grassroots organizations that specifically aim to serve equity-seeking populations experiencing homelessness. To address this shortcoming, Housing Services will further work with the Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) team to adapt the 2024 Protocol for the 2025 budget process. The recommendations in the forthcoming Plan to End Chronic Homelessness will also inform the Protocol.

## **5. Background:**

The Region of Waterloo is the Provincially designated Service Manager for Housing and Homelessness. Through this role, the Region is responsible for program planning, service delivery, distribution of resources, and quality assurance. The Region also administers various programs and services aimed to prevent and end homelessness, including Region-funded emergency shelters and housing support programs.

Beginning in March 2020, Housing Services began receiving additional temporary Federal and Provincial COVID-response funding through a number of different phases and initiatives. Through this temporary funding, community agencies implemented several new programs and enhanced existing services. Although all temporary COVID-response funding has ended, the Region continues to fund many of these new and enhanced programs, creating budget pressures.

In 2022, Housing Services received a number of funding requests from community agencies that provide services and programs focused on ending and/or preventing experiences of homelessness (CSD-HOU-23-005). On February 7, 2023, Council directed staff to report to Committee with funding recommendations following further review and due diligence by staff. From this, staff developed a Housing Stability System Fee for Service Request and Proposal Response Protocol, including evaluation criteria (the Protocol) (CSD-HOU-23-016). On June 6, 2023, Council directed staff to begin

implementing the Protocol in the 2024 budget process.

The Protocol aims to establish a transparent and effective process for receiving, evaluating, and responding to funding requests from community agencies. The Protocol also provides a pathway for addressing the fiscal strain placed on community agencies by enabling an annual process to potentially fund requests that are not already incorporated into the existing Housing Services operating or capital budget (CSD-HOU-23-024). The Protocol entails:

- An annual call for proposals open to all community agencies and partners;
- Housing Services staff and Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) staff form a committee to review and evaluate proposals;
- Proposals are scored using the evaluation matrix approved by Council (CSD-HOU-23-016), provided in Appendix B; and
- Proposals that pass the scoring criteria are recommended for consideration in the annual budget process.

Through the 2023 call for proposals, Housing Services received 19 proposals from 15 different community agencies and partners. Through the evaluation matrix, the committee scored proposals based on housing first principles, the funding guidelines of Federal and Provincial funding programs (i.e., Reaching Home and the Homelessness Prevention Program), equity-focused service provision, collaboration with the broader Housing Stability System, and ability to report on program outcomes. Of the 19 proposals, nine met the scoring criteria throughout the evaluation areas. Appendix A provides descriptions of proposals recommended for 2024 budgetary consideration through Fee for Service Requests.

The presence or lack of an existing funding agreement with the Region did not factor into scoring, as the Protocol was open to all service and program providers who aim to end and prevent homelessness. However, the vast majority of proposals were from partners with existing funding agreements. There was also notably no proposals received from Indigenous-led agencies, and few were received by grassroots organizations that specifically aim to serve equity-seeking populations experiencing homelessness (e.g., Black, Indigenous, Racialized, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and groups, and those with neuro-cognitive and/or physical disabilities).

## **6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public**

**Area Municipalities:** Through a Municipal Housing and Homelessness Leads Committee, Region staff remain closely connected with area municipalities in the collective work of addressing housing and homelessness related issues in the region. Staff meet and communicate regularly on housing and homelessness issues, including progress on the implementation of the Interim Housing Solutions. Through collaborative

problem solving, data sharing, and leveraging shared resources, area municipalities are a vital partner in building an equitable and resilient community for all.

**Public:** Housing Services staff communicate the evaluation results and provide feedback to each individual community agency who submitted proposals. Ongoing work with several community agencies exists through collaborative working groups, and the development of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness.

## **7. Financial Implications:**

There is currently no provision in the Preliminary 2024 Housing Services Operating Budget for this request. Any amount approved by Committee would be added to the Preliminary 2024 Housing Services Operating Budget and is recommended to be funded by the 2024 property tax levy. The current property tax levy impact for direct regional services (inclusive of all recommended service expansions) is 7.3% and the inclusion of the recommended amount will increase the property tax levy by \$3,113,493 and result in a revised impact of 8%. The recommendations, if approved, will be further considered by the Strategic Plan and Budget Committee as part of its 2024 Plan and Budget deliberations.

## **8. Conclusion / Next Steps:**

Next steps includes further integration of the Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion team into the call out process and consequent refinement of the scoring criteria for the Fee for Service Request Protocol. This integration will facilitate increased alignment with approaches taken for the Community Upstream Fund, which focuses on the social determinants of health, community-led approaches, and prevention. The call out process, scoring criteria, and evaluation matrix will also be adapted to align with recommendations that follow from the creation of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness (the Plan), which will be complete in 2024. The Plan is developed “in, by, and for community” with a focus on integrating the lived/living expertise of those with experiences of chronic homelessness into service provision and system transformation.

## **9. Attachments:**

Appendix A: Proposals Received and Evaluated for Funding Consideration in the 2024 Budget Year

Appendix B: Fee for Service Request Proposal Evaluation Matrix

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