

Region of Waterloo
Corporate Services
Corporate Finance

To: Community and Health Services Committee
Meeting Date: March 5, 2024
Report Title: Additional Reaching Home Funding

1. Recommendation

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo approve an increase of \$1,542,836 to the 2024 Homelessness and Supportive Housing Operating Budget expenditure and federal subsidy with no net property tax levy impact as outlined in report COR-CFN-24-001 dated March 5, 2024.

2. Purpose / Issue:

Staff are seeking approval from Council to increase the Region’s 2024 Homelessness and Supportive Housing expenditure and revenue budget by \$1,542,836 to reflect additional one-time Reaching Home funding to support the Region’s response to unsheltered homelessness during the 2023-2024 winter season.

3. Strategic Plan:

This report addresses the Region’s newly approved Corporate Strategic Plan 2023-2027, including Strategic Priority 3: Equitable Services & Opportunities.

4. Report Highlights:

- The Region’s 2024 Operating Budget includes \$56.0 million in expenditure for the Homelessness and Supportive Housing with a property tax levy requirement of \$28.3 million. Reflected in the 2024 budget was Infrastructure Canada’s November 2023 announcement of a \$320,000 Reaching Home funding reduction in fiscal 2024/2025.
- On December 22, 2023 Infrastructure Canada announced additional one-time Reaching Home funding of \$1,542,836 for the Region to support unsheltered homelessness through the 2023-2024 winter season to be used by April 30, 2024. Funding will help cover costs incurred from January 1 to March 31 by emergency shelter and homelessness system partners for items such as warming spaces, winter warming supplies and meals.

- Staff recommend amending the 2024 expenditure and revenue budget for Homelessness and Supportive Housing by the amount of the one-time additional funding with no net property tax levy impact.

5. Background:

On December 13, 2023 Regional Council approved the Region's 2024 Operating Budget and 2024-2033 Capital Program. Included in this budget approval was \$56.0 million in expenditure for the Homelessness and Supportive Housing with a property tax levy requirement of \$28.3 million. Reflected in the 2024 budget was Infrastructure Canada's November 2023 announcement of a \$320,000 Reaching Home funding reduction in fiscal 2024/2025.

Reaching Home funding is provided through Infrastructure Canada as part of its National Homelessness Strategy. It is a community-based program with a goal to support the most vulnerable Canadians in maintaining safe, stable and affordable housing and to reduce chronic homelessness nationally. Reaching Home funding is provided to urban, Indigenous, rural and remote communities to help them address their local homelessness needs.

In late December, 2023 Infrastructure Canada announced \$1,542,836 of one-time funding for Region of Waterloo to support the response to unsheltered homelessness for the 2023-2024 winter season. This funding forms part of the federal government's February 6, 2024 announcement confirming its intent to invest \$100M in emergency winter funding to enable communities across the country to provide more shelter spaces for people experiencing homelessness. Also included in the February 6th announcement was a \$99M national top-up to the Canada Housing Benefit, which helps to make rent more affordable by delivering rent support payments directly to individuals.

The spending deadline for this funding is April 30, 2024 and will be used to support additional homelessness expenditures such as motels and winter warming supplies in accordance with the funding guidelines.

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 the development of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness. 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: Extensive community engagement through the development of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness continues with Co-Creators and through the Social

Development Centre Waterloo Region's (SDCWR) Lived Expertise Prototyping Project. Co-creators consist of system partners who provide services and programming that aim to end and prevent experiences of homelessness. This partnership with community will continue to inform and guide our work as it relates to homelessness programs and services.

7. Financial Implications:

The 2024 approved Housing Services Operating budget includes total expenditure of \$147.5M with a levy requirement of \$96.3M. Of these amounts, the Homelessness and Supportive Housing Operating budget comprise \$56.0M with a levy requirement of \$28.3M. Staff recommend increasing the 2024 Homelessness and Supportive Housing Operating budget to reflect this one-time funding and increase expenditure by \$1.5M for additional homelessness support services, with no net tax levy impact in 2024.

8. Conclusion / Next Steps:

Recognizing the growing needs of the Region's homelessness population, this funding will provide much needed additional services to support them through the cold winter season.

9. Attachments:

Appendix A: Investment Plan for Winter 2023-2024 Unsheltered Homelessness Response.

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