
Subject: Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative Investment Plan
2021-22

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, January 12, 2021

Recommendations

1. That the Ministry mandated Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative investment plan for the 2021-22 funding allotment **BE APPROVED**.

Key Facts

- The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) provided notification on April 17, 2019 of funding allocations for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) which included the year 2021-22.
- Based on the April 17, 2019 notice, Niagara will receive \$7,847,786 for the one-year term April 1, 2021 through March 31, 2022.
- Consistent with previous years, MMAH requires service managers to submit the CHPI investment plan for 2021-22 by February 15, 2021 outlining the planned spending in the directed categories of: emergency shelter solutions, housing with related supports, homelessness prevention, other housing services and supports and program administration.
- The proposed investment plan included in the report has been developed based on the CHPI program guidelines (January 2017), in alignment with Niagara's Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan and with consideration to existing funding allocations to support a stable homelessness system in Niagara.
- In 2019, homelessness services in Niagara assisted 490 unique individuals through outreach funding, 2,303 with emergency shelter services, 1,915 through homelessness prevention funding, and 549 through supported transitional housing funding.

Financial Considerations

The total 100% provincial CHPI funding provided for 2021-22 is anticipated to be \$7,847,786. It should also be noted that Niagara Region is allocating \$2,724,168 of levy funding to the same priority funding categories beyond the proposed provincial amounts (assuming a consistent levy allocation in Q1 2022). Niagara Region also receives

\$1,113,488 of federal funding for Reaching Home (largely to fund Housing First programs, and to support Coordinated Access and Built for Zero participation) and \$750,490 in provincial funding for Home for Good (intensive supportive housing). These other funding sources are not included in the CHPI investment plan prepared for the MMAH.

Current homelessness service contracts were executed through a Negotiated Request for Proposal procurement process for each of the CHPI categories and have been approved for a three-year contract period from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2023. The contract awards align with the CHPI investment plan for 2021-22. Niagara Region funds and works collaboratively with 19 agencies in the region to deliver homelessness services and supports to the residents of Niagara.

Analysis

The proposed CHPI investment plan is designed to align with the CHPI program guidelines issued in January 2017 (revised May 2019). The Ministry requires that an investment plan be submitted each year indicating how Niagara Region plans to use the funding provided based on the categories identified by the province, and additionally, recognizing the four provincial homelessness priorities of chronic homelessness, youth, Indigenous persons and homelessness following transitions from provincially-funded institutions and service systems.

The vision for CHPI is to have “A coordinated and holistic service delivery system that is people-centered, evidence informed and outcomes-based, and reflects a Housing First approach that focuses on homelessness prevention and reduces reliance on emergency services.”¹ This vision reflects a shift towards a system that focuses on proactive and permanent housing solutions rather than reactive responses to homelessness.

The chart below shows the funding plan submitted for 2019-20, 2020-21, the proposed plan to be submitted for 2021-22 and the changes in funding allocations, over the prior year.

¹ Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative Program Guidelines, January 2017, Ministry of Housing.

2021-22 CHPI INVESTMENT PLAN

	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Change
Emergency Shelter Solutions	\$2,421,799	\$2,753,623	\$2,753,623	\$0
Housing with Related Supports	\$956,155	\$852,179	\$852,179	\$0
Other Services and Supports	\$314,016	\$397,521	\$397,521	\$0
Homelessness Prevention	\$3,555,701	\$3,555,701	\$3,555,701	\$0
Program Administration	\$288,762	\$288,762	\$288,762	\$0
Total	\$7,536,433	\$7,847,786	\$7,847,786	\$0

The relative amounts set out in Niagara's investment plan align with provincial expectations, and ensure funding levels in each category support stability in the Niagara homelessness system while allowing for the capacity to move the system forward in achieving provincially identified priorities. As a result of the procurement process held in 2020, some re-alignment of expenditures between categories was required. These adjustments were made within the levy contribution to each category, as the Region provides significant funding to the homelessness system in Niagara. The types of services that will be funded under the CHPI categories, as well as some specific work, related to system improvements, are outlined below:

Emergency Shelter Solutions

- Shelter providers will operate using a Housing Focused philosophy in the delivery of services, and utilize shelter diversion practices, building on the learnings of the successful youth shelter diversion pilot offered in 2019 and adult shelter diversion pilot offered in 2020.

- Funding will support a low barrier, safe bed, offered in a variety of settings, necessary basic needs, and meals, along with housing support services including transportation to shelter.
- There will be continued focus and effort to align with provincial policy expectations, emphasizing prevention over emergency responses.

Housing with Related Supports

- Consistent with best practices, funding will support Housing First units and, where appropriate, transitional housing programming in Niagara. These critical programs aim to increase housing stability, and reduce reliance on emergency shelters.
- Funded services will also include case management to assist clients with access to medical care, and supports related to mental health, substance use, and crisis intervention. Coordinated Access to these resources is another key component in Niagara's work associated with Built for Zero.

Other Services and Supports

- This category captures Niagara's outreach services, including assertive street outreach support workers who provide help to find stable housing, and connections to other services including mental health programs, healthcare, addictions services, and legal aid.
- Assertive street outreach is another key component in Niagara's movement to its improved 'System 2.0' and work associated with Built for Zero. Additionally Niagara successfully launched a hot spot mapping tool for encampments in 2020, to further support its work and enhance collaboration with municipal partners, community and police.

Homelessness Prevention

- Homelessness Prevention funding supports programs which address eviction prevention, assistance to secure and retain housing (most critical for those exiting shelter), and assistance with budgeting, banking, and trusteeship.
- This category includes the Housing Stability Plan (HSP), which, as in prior years, is an important component of the homelessness prevention program. HSP provides financial assistance for rent arrears, and rent deposits (again, quite helpful for those leaving shelter).

- Funding to support diversion work within the shelter system is considered in this category as well, and diversion tools and skills continue to be rolled out to the full shelter system in Niagara.
- This category also includes funding towards the Niagara Emergency Energy Fund to address utility arrears in order to support clients to retain housing.
- Niagara Region, in alignment with provincial direction, continues to emphasize prevention programs to reduce the need for emergency shelters, facilitate rapid rehousing efforts and support people to access and retain stable housing.

Program Administration

- Funding supports capacity building, supports for system transformation including training for staff and leaders at all third party agencies delivering programs.
- While permitted under the Administration category, Niagara Region does not allocate the full 10% available under the CHPI guidelines for administration, focusing as much funding as possible to direct client service delivery.

Risk Management Planning for CHPI

Under the CHPI program guidelines (January 2017), there is a requirement to identify potential risks and mitigation strategies. The risks that will be identified in this investment plan include:

Risk

- Effectively meeting the provincially mandated capacity, assessment and development requirements for municipal service managers and all third party agencies delivering programs on our behalf (particularly as the province has not yet shared expectations and targets for this requirement).

Mitigation

- Continue to monitor the sector for best practice developments and evolving policy changes.
- Continue to allocate administration monies to this initiative and work with all agencies to identify system wide training needs, ensuring system capacity along with standard processes. Plans for 2021 include a focus on transformation of the transitional housing system.

Risk

- An affordability risk in Niagara, as the annual base provincial funding available remains inadequate to support local needs and address existing demand for services. Ongoing reliance on local not-for-profit sector contributions and levy sources is not sustainable.

Mitigation

- Local funding allocations and contract award processes seek to ensure that selected agencies utilize outcome-based models and best practices. Niagara Region will continue to ensure effective monitoring of contracts and outcomes. Dialogue will continue with MMAH related to local needs and relative funding levels.

Alternatives Reviewed

Not applicable.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This recommendation is aligned to Council's strategic priority of ensuring a "Healthy and Vibrant Community." By approving this report, Niagara Region is able to receive this provincial funding and support clients through the stages of the housing continuum.

Other Pertinent Reports

- COM 08-2015 Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative Funding Allocations 2015-16 and 2016-17
- COM 02-2017 Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative Investment Plan 2017-18
- COM 02-2018 Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative Investment Plan 2018-19
- COM 01-2019 Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative Investment Plan 2019-20.
- COM 01-2020 Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative Investment Plan 2020-21

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