
Subject: Homelessness Prevention Plan – Investment Plan 2025-2026

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, March 4, 2025

Recommendations

1. That the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) mandated Homelessness Prevention Plan (HPP) investment plan for the 2025-26 funding allotment **BE APPROVED**.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to seek Council approval for the Ministry mandated HPP investment plan for 2025-26. Consistent with the previous year, the MMAH requires service managers to submit a HPP investment plan by April 15, 2025, outlining the planned spending in the directed categories of community outreach and support services, emergency shelter solutions, housing assistance and supportive housing.
- Through MMAH, Niagara is expected to receive \$20,771,400 for 2025-26.
- The proposed investment plan included in the report has been developed based on the HPP program guidelines (April 2022), in alignment with Niagara's Ten-Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan, and with consideration to existing funding allocations and other sources of funding to support a stable homelessness system in Niagara.

Financial Considerations

The total MMAH HPP funding for 2025-26 is \$21 million. This funding, along with the planned spending outlined in the HPP investment plan, is already included within the Council-approved 2025 operating budget. Niagara Region will contribute an additional \$5.8 million in levy funding through the 2025 operating budget to the same priority categories beyond the proposed provincial funding amounts.

Analysis

The proposed HPP investment plan is designed to align with the HPP program guidelines issued April 2022. 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 priority populations of chronic homelessness, youth, Indigenous persons, and homelessness following transitions from provincially funded institutions and service systems.

The vision under the Homelessness Prevention Plan Program Guidelines is to provide Service Managers with the resources needed to establish a coordinated housing and homelessness system in each community so that people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, have the housing and support services that they need to retain and/or obtain stable housing and achieve better outcomes. This vision has three goals, to prevent homelessness, address homelessness and reduce chronic homelessness which is a system that focuses on proactive and permanent housing solutions rather than reactive responses to homelessness.

Niagara Region funds and works collaboratively with 17 agencies in the region to deliver homelessness services and supports to the residents of Niagara. Current homelessness service contracts were executed through a Negotiated Request for Proposal procurement process for each of the HPP categories and have been approved for a three-year contract period from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2027, with some awards having an opportunity for extensions beyond the initial contract period. The contract awards align with the HPP investment plan for 2025-26.

The table in Appendix 1 details the funding plan submitted for 2024-25, the proposed plan to be submitted for 2025-26, and the changes in funding allocations, over the prior year.

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. While stability is a key goal in supporting the homeless sector in Niagara, the continued social, health and economic pressures and the increasing acuity of individuals experiencing homelessness has raised significant concerns regarding the ability of the system to support clients'

complex needs without additional funding and resources. The types of services that will be funded under the HPP categories, as well as some specific work related to system improvements, are outlined as follows:

Housing Assistance

Rent supplements for qualified applicants from the centralized housing waitlist to obtain and sustain affordable housing units, Housing help and other upstream prevention services to support clients with housing searches, shelter diversion, family reunification, and eviction and housing loss prevention. The shelter diversion program continues to see rates of 53% diversion for youth and 20% for adults (single and family).

- Rapid rehousing, an emerging best practice, supports shelter capacity management by the rapid movement of people from homelessness into permanent housing.

Supportive Housing

- Support transitional housing programming, specific to targeted populations (youth, newcomers, women) in Niagara. These critical programs aim to increase housing stability and reduce reliance on emergency shelters.
- The new Bridge Housing project on Geneva Street in St. Catharines will be funded through this category.
- Additional funding in this category will enhance housing allowances and ensure that clients in the Housing First and Home For Good programs are able to find affordable housing in the current Niagara region housing market.

Emergency Shelter Solutions

- Support a low barrier, trauma informed shelter system, offered in a variety of settings; providing necessary basic needs, and meals, along with housing support services including transportation to shelter.
- The demand for shelter in Niagara remains high due to average rental housing costs being up 17% over the last two years, which is increasing clients' length of stay in shelter as they struggle to find affordable rental units.
- There will be continued effort to align with provincial policy expectations, emphasizing where possible, prevention over emergency

responses.

- In alignment with a Shelter Capacity Review conducted in 2023, Niagara has increased full day/full year shelter spaces, by 30 beds/units in south Niagara, along with offering additional services in direct operations during cold weather alerts.

Program Administration

- Funding for administration, supports system capacity building, and system transformation including best practice training for staff and leaders of all third-party agencies delivering programs.
- While permitted under the Administration category, Niagara Region does not allocate the full 5% available under the HPP guidelines for administration, largely due to the limits of funding available, opting instead to focus as much funding as possible to direct client service delivery. Niagara currently applies approximately 4.7% of funding to administration.

Alternatives Reviewed

Not applicable, as the HPP investment plan must be developed, approved and submitted to the province in order to receive this funding to support Niagara's homelessness serving system.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This plan aligns with the goals in Niagara's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan, including Goal 1: housing individuals who do not have a home and Goal 4: building capacity and improving the effectiveness of the housing system.

The recommendation will also advance the following Council Strategic Priorities

- Effective Region – Transforming service delivery in a way that is innovative, collaborative, and fiscally-responsible.
- Equitable Region – Improve access to affordable and attainable housing.

Other Pertinent Reports

[COM 8-2024 Homelessness Prevention Plan Investment Plan 2024-2025](#)

https://niagararegion.escibemeetings.com/PHSSC_Mar05_2024/eSCRIBE%20Documents/eSCRIBE%20Attachments/COM%208-2024%20Homelessness%20Prevention%20Plan%20Investment%20Plan%202024-25%20Fiscal%20Year%20-%20DD.pdf

[COM 8-2024 Appendix 1](#)

https://niagararegion.escibemeetings.com/PHSSC_Mar05_2024/eSCRIBE%20Documents/eSCRIBE%20Attachments/COM%208-2024%20Appendix%201%20Sub-Categories%20Table%20Revised%20HPP%20investment%20plan%202024%20short.pdf

Prepared by:

Cathy Cousins, CPA, CA
Director, Homelessness Services and
Community Engagement
Community Services

Recommended by:

Henri Koning, MHSc
Commissioner
Community Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with John Pickles, Program Financial Specialist.

Appendices

Appendix 1 HPP Investment Plan

Appendix 1: HPP Investment Plan

Service Category Activities	2024-25	2025-26	Change	Projected # Households Assisted
Community Outreach & Support Services	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Housing Assistance	\$5,724,763	\$4,397,087	(\$1,327,676)	1113
Long-Term Housing Assistance	\$2,182,788	\$2,182,788	\$0.00	318
Short-Term/Emergency Assistance	\$1,631,834	\$150,000	(\$1,481,834)	163
Non-Financial Assistance	\$1,910,141	\$2,064,299	\$154,158	632
Supportive Housing	\$2,634,383	\$2,840,965	\$206,582	240
Rental Assistance	\$684,000	\$414,000	(\$270,000)	100
Mental Health and Addictions Supports	\$1,950,383	\$2,426,965	\$476,582	140
Emergency Shelter Solutions	\$5,507,754	\$12,558,348	\$7,050,594	2200
Program Administration	\$750,600	\$975,000	\$224,400	0
Sub Total	\$14,617,50	\$20,771,40	\$6,153,900	3553
Capital Program	\$6,153,900	\$0.00	(\$6,153,900)	
Total	\$20,771,40	\$20,771,40	\$0.00	3553