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**Subject:** Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2019

**Report to:** Public Health and Social Services Committee

**Report date:** Tuesday, May 12, 2020

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## Recommendations

1. That this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

## Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to update Council and the ministry on actions completed in 2019 related to Niagara's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP).
- Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSM) are required to report to the public and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing by June 30 each year with respect to efforts of the previous year. This report serves to meet the requirement for 2019.
- The 10-Year Plan includes a complete vision for addressing homelessness and access to affordable housing in response to identified local needs.
- In 2019, the HHAP focused on activities related to the completion of the five-year review, initiating a transformation of the homelessness services system and increasing readiness to address local affordable housing need.
- Significant accomplishments include joining the Built for Zero Canada movement, expanding the Home for Good supportive housing program, launching a shelter diversion pilot, beginning the procurement process for homelessness services for 2020-23 that align with best practices in Canada, and increasing public and provider education.

## Financial Considerations

The resources required to facilitate the management of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP) are provided within the approved annual budget.

## Analysis

The purpose of this report is to update Council and the ministry on actions completed in 2019 related to Niagara's HHAP. Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSM)

are required to report to the public and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) by June 30 each year with respect to efforts of the previous year. This report serves to meet the requirement for 2019.

The HHAP was developed in response to the *Housing Services Act 2011, section 6*, which requires municipalities to establish and implement a 10-year plan to address local housing and homelessness needs. The HHAP includes a complete vision for addressing housing and homelessness needs in response to identified local needs. The short term and medium term activities identified in the HHAP were completed between 2014 and 2019.

The HHAP was updated in 2019 after completion of a five-year review. The update ensures the HHAP remains responsive to recent changes in the community and housing market that affect the local demand for homelessness services and affordable housing over the long-term. The Five-Year Review and Updated Action Plan (2019–2023) was approved by Council in October 2019 (pending final approval by the MMAH).

In 2019, the HHAP focused on activities related to the completion of the five-year review, initiating a transformation of the homelessness services system and increasing readiness to address local affordable housing need. System transformation efforts addressed the key recommendations of the homeless system review, completed by Whitesell & Company in January 2019, and align with Canadian best practices in homeless service delivery. Best practices in program delivery were a focus of the procurement of homeless services for 2020-23. Work to develop coordinated access for services, a by-name list, and common assessment align with the Built for Zero Canada (BFZ-C) model.

Common definitions and a common assessment of current and future need for affordable housing in Niagara region and within each local area municipality were provided through contracted work by the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis (CANCEA). This significant data effort was supported through collaboration with Niagara Regional Planning and Development Services, Homelessness Services, and Niagara Regional Housing. The data provides a common understanding of local need, which can support coordinated and targeted efforts to provide an appropriate mix of housing options in Niagara.

Community engagement continues to be a focus and strength of the HHAP. The HHAP working groups provide an opportunity for funded agencies and other community partners and stakeholders to offer input into system and service planning on an ongoing

basis. In 2019 a Coordinated Access and By-Name List working group was added, a Housing Provider advisory was re-established, the Prevention working group was expanded to include shelter diversion, and the Lived Experience advisory was elevated to have equal status with all other working groups.

Highlights from 2019 related to the four goals of the HHAP include the following:

### **Goal 1 – House People Who do not Have a Home**

- Niagara was successful in its application to join the Built for Zero Canada movement in July 2019.
- Work began to develop Niagara’s Homeless By Name List (real time client record system), to make homelessness data available in real time and actionable on a systems level (allowing Niagara to answer critical system questions as we implement changes to our local system – e.g. “Did homelessness decrease?”) and individual level (e.g. Did Larry get housed?).
- An additional 18 spaces were added to the Home for Good program, which provides housing with supports to individuals experiencing chronic homelessness. New spaces include eight purpose-built units in Port Colborne and ten community based units. Clients were prioritized for access to these new program spaces through a process which incorporated components of coordinated access and common assessment of need in alignment with BFZ-C.

### **Goal 2 – Help People to Retain a Home**

- Niagara launched a shelter diversion pilot within Niagara’s youth emergency homeless shelter.
- NRH developed an In-Situ Rent Supplement Program to engage new landlords and offer applicants on the wait list an opportunity to receive Rent-Geared-to- Income Housing where they currently live.

### **Goal 3 – Increase Housing Options and Opportunities for Low- and Moderate-Income Households**

- The new Niagara Official Plan is in its drafting phase. Significant public consultation occurred in November 2019 to inform and receive feedback on all key areas of the Official Plan, including housing.
- Reports from CANCEA identify current and future affordable housing needs in Niagara, out to 2041. This invaluable data supports the development of Niagara’s

affordable housing strategy, providing common definitions and measures related to affordable housing, and will support strategic and targeted efforts to future housing investments.

- Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) hosted ONPHA's (Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association) Ready Set (re)Build training in December 2019. Local non-profits, cooperatives, church groups, and a private sector participant attended to learn how to successfully develop or redevelop affordable housing.
- A call for proposals for a Regional investment of \$1.7 million in affordable housing, through a joint venture model. Bidding closed in October 2019 and submitted proposals were under review by the end of 2019.
- Niagara Regional Housing added 85 new units of affordable housing on Carlton Street in St. Catharines, 12 affordable and RGI (rent geared to income) housing units (including eight net new units) on Roach Avenue in Welland and 6 units in Thorold, supporting the goals of increasing both density and number of affordable housing units.
- NRH provided down payment assistance to 17 Niagara households through the Welcome Home Niagara Homeownership Program.
- NRH launched a Social Enterprise Pilot with Niagara Resource Service for Youth ("The RAFT") through a Niagara Prosperity Initiative grant. The RAFT hires and trains at-risk youth to be mentored by an experienced contractor in preparing NRH units for new tenants.

#### **Goal 4 – Build Capacity and Improve the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Housing and Homelessness System**

- A five-year review and update of the HHAP was completed.
- Whitesell & Company completed a review of the homeless services system. Their report outlined a revised system model based on best practices and provided ten recommendations to shift to the new system model.
- To align with the recommendations of the service system review, a procurement process was undertaken with requirements to respond to system model changes and align with Canadian best practices to choose homelessness services providers for 2020-2023.
- A series of public information presentations on housing and homelessness were provided at the Grimsby, Port Colborne and Niagara Falls public libraries, along with a panel discussion at the Niagara Falls Public Library.
- Training sessions were provided to service providers, including:
  - Housing First for Women

- Use of Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)
- NRH and Homelessness Services partnered with the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the City of Niagara Falls to host the 2019 National Housing Day event for 80+ attendees on the topic of “What Makes a Great Affordable Housing Project”.
- Niagara Region hosted a presentation by Iain De Jong to nearly 300 attendees, including elected officials, service providers and other stakeholders, at the Scotiabank Centre in December of 2019. Mr. De Jong, an internationally recognized expert on ending homelessness, challenged commonly held assumptions, debunked myths about homelessness and provided insight about effective evidence-based approaches to ending homelessness in the Canadian context.

The annually published Community Update will be distributed to the public through the Region’s partner agencies as well as being available on Niagara Region’s website.

### **Alternatives Reviewed**

Not applicable. Reporting is required under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* per its regulations as noted above.

### **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

The HHAP describes actions, outcomes, and targets for the priority project of Affordable Housing that supports the Council Priority of a Healthy and Vibrant Community and contributes to Council’s direction to develop and implement an affordable housing strategy.

### **Other Pertinent Reports**

- COM 35-2013 Final Version of A Home for All: Niagara’s 10-Year Community Action Plan to Help People Find and Keep Housing
- COM 16-2015 Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2014
- COM 17-2016 Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2015
- COM 12-2017 Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2016
- COM 10-2018 Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2017
- COM 10-2019 Homelessness Services System Review
- COM 15-2019 Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2018
- COM 23-2019 Niagara Region Application for Built for Zero Canada

- COM 40-2019 Five-Year Review of Niagara's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan
- PDS 17-2019 Niagara Housing Statement: Affordable Housing Data

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