To: Chair and Members
Emergency and Community Services Committee

From: Ron Sharegan, Chair
Food, Shelter and Housing Committee (to be signed by the Chair)

Date: August 17, 2010

Re: Future of Federal Homelessness Funding in Hamilton (FSH10-001) (City Wide)

Recommendation:

That the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write a letter to the Federal Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada to advocate for:

(i) Continued federal funding of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy for the period of April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2014; and,

(ii) To request that Hamilton's allocation be increased to reflect its needs.

Background:

In September 2008, the Government of Canada announced an investment of $1.9 billion over five years for housing and homelessness programs across the country. The City of Hamilton received federal funding for the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2011, yet there has not yet been any announcements or information about continued homelessness funding beyond this time.

Since 1999, the federal government has provided funding to address homelessness in Hamilton. The City of Hamilton was selected as the Community Entity to administer the federal funding. The City of Hamilton receives advice from the Community Advisory Board, which consists of representatives from a variety of social service agencies as well as private citizens. HPS funding decisions are based on a Community Plan that is developed locally, but approved by Service Canada.
During the most recent iteration of federal funding to address homelessness, titled the Homelessness Partnership Strategy (HPS), Hamilton expects to receive $8.45 million from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2011. This funding has made significant impacts by allowing our community to continue assisting homeless people to find and maintain housing with supports appropriate to their needs.

Analysis/Rationale:

Since its inception in 1999, the HPS has funded a mix of capital and service delivery projects. The two year timeline associated with the most recent round of funding has resulted in the lions share of funding going to service delivery projects in Hamilton that support many of its most vulnerable citizens.

The termination of HPS funding would result in the reduction or elimination of valuable services to address homelessness in Hamilton.

A sampling of projects funded by HPS from April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2011 is provided below. It provides an insight into some of the services that would be affected:

- **Youth Housing Support Project**

  A collaborative partnership between Catholic Children's Aid Society, Living Rock Ministries, Catholic Family Services, Good Shepherd Youth Services, Children's Aid Society of Hamilton, Wesley Urban Ministries Youth Services, Alternatives for Youth and Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton. This project includes a team of housing support workers who provide service to young people at risk of homelessness through intervention, finding housing and housing maintenance. It also provides staff for two transitional houses to keep young people from being homeless. The staff provide life skills development, emotional and housing support to young people.

- **Transitions to Home Project**

  This project was developed as part of the Blueprint in Hamilton. The Blueprint is a two year plan to improve the emergency shelter service system in Hamilton and was developed by a community collaborative called the Hamilton Emergency Shelter Integration and Coordination Committee (HESICC). The HESICC consists of representatives from the three men’s emergency shelters in the community, the Wesley Centre, the Housing Help Centre, Mental Health Outreach Services, City of Hamilton Public Health Services, City of Hamilton Community Services and representation from the Regional Office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The Transitions to Home project consists of a multi-disciplinary mobile case management team designed to address specific needs of men experiencing long stays in emergency shelters.

- **Micah House - Settlement and Outreach Worker**
To assist homeless refugee claimants in making Hamilton their home. The project addresses issues of community, role and housing. The Settlement and Outreach worker works closely alongside the refugee claimant to move them into appropriate housing.

- **St. Matthew’s House - Health Intervention for the Prevention of Homelessness of Older Persons**

  This program prevents at-risk seniors from becoming homeless, by linking them with appropriate health and social services.

- **Salvation Army, Grace Haven – New Choices**

  Serves women with substance-use issues who are pregnant or parenting young children. Provides services to this population such as early child development, parenting, addiction, home management, life skills and women’s health.

The federal government has always spoken of the need for projects to be sustained beyond the end of federal funding. Hamilton has seen some great successes in this regard. The Claremont House Managed Alcohol Program run by Wesley Urban Ministries and the Shelter Discharge Beds run by Salvation Army has successfully obtained funding from the Local Health Integration Network. The reality is that the federal government has become an important partner in providing services to people experiencing homelessness and at risk of homelessness. Should funding end limited capacity exists within provincial, municipal and private funding sources to continue all of these valuable programs.

Increased federal funding is required to continue successful responses to homelessness in Hamilton. Despite many accomplishments the community has achieved, there is still much work to be done. As a community we are working in increasingly collaborative and effective ways to address homelessness. Hamilton has become a province wide leader in system planning to address homelessness. We need to maintain the momentum that HPS has provided to allow for further service improvements.

The uncertainty of the continuation and allocation of funding does not allow for homelessness services to move in a fluid and consistent manner.