TO: Chair and Members
Emergency & Community Services Committee

WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE

COMMITTEE DATE: September 22, 2010

SUBJECT/REPORT NO:
Update Hostels to Homes Pilot (CS10077) (City Wide)

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Council Direction:
Not applicable.

Information:

This report provides an update to the Emergency and Community Services Committee (E&CS) on the Hostels to Homes (H2H) Pilot that ended June 30, 2010. The update includes:

- A high level overview of interim H2H outcomes;
- The progression of the H2H Pilot to the Transitions to Homes (T2H) Program;
- An overview of temporary funding arrangements;
- The lack of funding to continue T2H past March 2011; and,
- Efforts to secure sustainable funding for T2H.

Background

In May 2007, the City of Hamilton launched the provincially directed Hostels to Homes pilot in six municipalities in Ontario. The goal was to stabilize the use of emergency hostel services and return the delivery of these services to the original intent – short term and infrequent use. The Pilot included a plan to reinvest community resources to support chronic shelter users in obtaining and keeping stable and affordable housing.
The Province ended the Pilot effective June 30, 2010, despite requests from the six participating municipalities for an extension. The Ministry of Community & Social Services (MCSS) has stated that the evaluation is delayed pending announcements concerning the Provincial Municipal Service Delivery Review and development of the Province’s Long-Term Housing Strategy.

The City is currently conducting an evaluation with local data. The final data collection is expected to be completed by the end of 2010. Staff will report back to E&CS Committee on a comprehensive evaluation of the pilot in the first quarter of 2011.

**Hamilton’s Experience with the H2H Pilot**

The H2H Pilot provided the Hamilton community with the opportunity to focus on chronic emergency shelter users who had used the shelters for over 42 days in the year prior to participating in the Pilot. Through the successes of H2H, occupancy within the men's emergency shelters was significantly reduced, which prompted creation of the Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services.

The Blueprint was developed to address the financial sustainability of the emergency shelter services and to design a new model for service. The new model also includes the T2H Team, which was built upon the best practices of H2H.

A high level summary of other accomplishments resulting from the H2H Pilot is as follows:

- **H2H provided participants with the opportunity to experience personal successes including:**
  - 145 men and women were housed and 109 remain housed;
  - Over 90 participants have engaged in various employment activities including many participants returning to school and accessing various addictions services;
  - 11 participants obtained full-time employment and 18 participants obtained part-time work;
  - Over 80 participants, who did not have a family doctor, accessed health services thus less frequently used the hospital emergency rooms;
  - A number of participants transitioned to the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP); and,
  - Some participants were able to reconnect with their children and other family members or have regained custody of their children.

- In 2008, H2H contributed to a reduction in 13,000 bed nights in the shelter system with $529,750 in associated per diem cost savings in the emergency shelter system;
• H2H outcomes created a opportunity for the City and community agencies to work together to redesign the emergency shelter services system to better meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness in Hamilton;

• The H2H provided the community with a better understanding of the chronically homeless in our community;

• The Local Hero Award was awarded to the Hamilton Emergency Shelter Integration and Coordination Committee, by the Canadian Urban Institute, for the accomplishments of the H2H Pilot and the resulting Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services; and,

• The Caledon Institute published an article on the H2H Pilot and the Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services.

Financial Sustainability

The funding for T2H is not sustainable. It will be necessary to reduce, adjust, or eliminate the service commencing March 31, 2011 if alternate and sustainable funding is not achieved. The long term vision is that the necessary resources to maintain the model will be achieved through flexibility in reallocating funds within the existing Provincial Homelessness Contract; and, the continued reinvestment of provincial savings from the Ontario Works Emergency Hostel Programs to T2H.

The funding model for H2H afforded municipalities the flexibility to reinvest emergency shelter program dollars to support the H2H Pilot. The projected reinvestment of savings from H2H for 2009 was $679,000; while actual expenditures were $626,000. This clearly supports the objective of the Pilot, that supporting individuals to secure and maintain appropriate affordable housing is more cost effective than utilizing a shelter. Other hidden savings include costs to the health care and justice systems.

The total cost of T2H is budgeted at $1,850,238 (gross) for 2010. In 2010, T2H is funded through a combination of one-time sources including:

• H2H Pilot funding until June 30, 2010;
• Homelessness Partnering Strategy (federal homelessness funding);  
• Employment Enhancement Services funding through Ontario Works; and,  
• Delivering Opportunities for Ontario Renters (DOOR) funding.
Advocacy Efforts

To-date, advocacy efforts for the continuation of the funding model for H2H, and additional sustainable funding for the Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services, has included:

- Two letters from the Mayor to the Province requesting an extension of the H2H funding model and increased flexibility within the Homelessness Service Contract;
- Presentations to senior MCSS representatives including the Minister of Community and Social Services, the MCSS Deputy Minister and leads for the H2H Pilot; and,
- A business case to the MCSS to support continuation of the H2H funding model and increased flexibility.

At the writing of this report, on August 24, 2010, the City had received no decision from the MCSS concerning the requests outlined in the Business Case.