SUBJECT: Update on the Homelessness Partnership Initiative (ECS08041) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That the Mayor, on behalf of City Council, correspond with the Federal Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Canada to advocate for continued and uninterrupted funding through the Homelessness Partnership Initiative.

(b) That the Federal Government also be requested to commit to ongoing federal funding for homelessness services.

(c) That a copy of the approved Council resolution be provided to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association and all local MPs and MPPs.

Joe-Anne Priel,
General Manager
Community Services Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI) is a federal program that provides funding to address homelessness. The City of Hamilton has entered into a two-year (2007-2009) agreement with Service Canada to serve as the Community Entity...
(program administrator) for this federal program. During the two-year term, Hamilton has received $8.45 million through HPI to address homelessness in our community.

While poverty is a root cause to homelessness, there are also a number of other contributing factors such as physical disabilities, mental health issues, addictions, physical and sexual violence, immigration status, gender, and age. HPI has provided community agencies with the necessary funding to address the complexities of issues that people experiencing homelessness are challenged with each day.

While HPI funding has been beneficial to these programs it also presents some limitations. The two-year term of the agreement and lack of commitment to ongoing funding does not allow the City, as Service System Manager, and community agencies to create long-term business plans and strategies. It also hinders the flexibility for community agencies to plan for the future collaboratively. The short-term nature of the program also makes it difficult to plan and develop large capital projects such as supportive housing, which is much needed in Hamilton.

On March 31, 2009, the HPI funding will terminate; leaving the future of HPI as uncertain. Service Canada has not yet made any commitments to continue this funding. There are several significant implications for Hamilton should the federal government discontinue funding to address homelessness. Many community agencies in Hamilton rely on federal funding to continue to provide services to people experiencing homelessness. The termination of this funding will result in the reduction or elimination of these services, and will reduce the community’s ability to develop new projects. The end of HPI funding will also have staffing implications for the City of Hamilton. A reduction in staff will affect the Community Services Department. Functions such as planning, program development, data analysis and reporting will be depleted.

Therefore, it is important that the Mayor, on behalf of City Council, correspond with the Federal Minister of Human Resources and Social Development to advocate for continued funding of programs to address homelessness through renewal of HPI. Furthermore, the renewal should be implemented without a break in service and that the renewal should be part of a commitment of ongoing federal funding for homelessness services. Copies of the aforementioned Council resolution should be provided to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and the local Members of Parliament and Members of Provincial Parliament.

**BACKGROUND:**

HPI is the cornerstone of the Federal government’s strategy to address homelessness. HPI is a two-year program that runs from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2009.

HPI’s objectives are as follows:

- Increased investment in transitional and supportive housing and services;
Increased knowledge of and measurements of outcomes; and,
Broader engagement of partners.

The total funding allocation under HPI to Hamilton is $8.45 million. With the assistance of the Community Advisory Board (CAB), the City of Hamilton, acting as the Community Entity (program administrator), has made a number of decisions regarding the allocation of HPI funding in the community as follows:

- $1.4 million to the Aboriginal community for aboriginal-specific projects;
- $2.3 million for 14 projects funded under the previous federal homelessness program (Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative) and deemed essential to continue;
- $850,000 for administrative costs;
- $3.2 million towards programs through Calls for Applications (a list of the HPI funded projects was provided to Council in an Information Update distributed on August 6, 2008, entitled, Projects Funded Through Homelessness Partnership Initiative Calls for Applications.); and,
- $700,000 for other programs including a community bed bug strategy, implementation of the Homeless Families and Individuals Information System (HIFIS), training and development for community agency staff and volunteers and the implementation of Everyone Has A Home: Strategic Plan to Address Homelessness.

HPI funding has demonstrated benefit to the community and to the City of Hamilton. For example, HPI funding has prevented homelessness in Hamilton through:

- trusteeship programs that assist people in maintaining their accommodations;
- health care services to people who do not have adequate identification or a family physician; and,
- funding renovation projects for buildings that house programs and services within the community.

Without HPI funding it is unlikely that these projects would not have been possible.

ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

On March 31, 2009, the HPI funding will be terminated. The future of HPI is uncertain as Service Canada has not yet made any commitments to continue this funding. There are several significant implications for Hamilton should the federal government discontinue funding to address homelessness.

Many community agencies in Hamilton rely on federal funding to continue to provide services to people experiencing homelessness. The termination of this funding will result in the reduction or elimination of these services, and will reduce the community’s ability to develop new projects. Without continued federal funding it will be more difficult to address outstanding needs within the community such as additional transitional and supported housing.
In terms of magnitude, federal funding through homelessness programs like HPI and its predecessor have provided approximately $4.2 million a year for project funding to Hamilton. In comparison, the Province provides $1.3 million annually as part of the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program.

The end of HPI funding will also have staffing implications for the City of Hamilton. A reduction in staff will affect the Community Services Department. Functions such as planning, program development, data analysis and reporting will be depleted. Currently, HPI funds 7.5 FTE positions within the City for the management, planning and delivery of the program.

In addition to renewal of the HPI program, staff recommends that the City call for ongoing funding. The length of HPI contracts (two years) decreases the ability for the community to work collaboratively and set long-term objectives. The uncertainty of the continuation of funding does not allow for the community to move in a fluid and consistent manner. Implementing new or extended short-term contracts has administrative implications and causes a loss in momentum to continue moving forward.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Funding through the HPI program represents 100% federal dollars to address homelessness through programs and services. Should the federal government not renew HPI after March 31, 2009, and should the City want to continue all or part of the programs and services formally funded under HPI, there will be a significant levy impact.

**FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Financial & Staffing Implications:

If HPI funding is not continued after March 31, 2009, 7.5 FTEs will be affected as their positions are funded by HPI which is 100% federal dollars. All but one of the positions falls under the provisions of CUPE 5167 Collective Agreement.

Legal:

There are no legal implications associated with the recommendations of Report ECS08041.

**POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:**

None.
RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Human Resources was consulted in the development of Report ECS08041 regarding staffing implications.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, and economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced.  ☑ Yes  ☐ No

Shelter, care and satisfying employment are accessible to all Hamiltonians. HPI is working to ensure that a continuum of housing and support services are available to people experiencing homelessness.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced.  ☐ Yes  ☑ No

Economic Well-Being is enhanced.  ☑ Yes  ☐ No

Poverty is reduced. Increased "social investment" in services to address homelessness helps improve the opportunities for program participants to achieve optimal independence and employability. By focusing on prevention it can also reduce long term social service costs.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?  ☐ Yes  ☑ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?  ☑ Yes  ☐ No