CITY OF HAMILTON
COMMUNITY SERVICES
Social Housing and Homelessness Division

TO: Chair and Members
Emergency and Community Services Committee
WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE

COMMITTEE DATE: April 7, 2010

SUBJECT/REPORT NO:
Accessible Units in Social and Affordable Housing (CS10033) (City Wide)
(Outstanding Business List Item)

SUBMITTED BY:
Joe-Anne Priel
General Manager,
Community Services Department

PREPARED BY:
Bob McKnight  905-546-2424 Ext. 3728
Gillian Hendry 905-546-2424 Ext. 4818

SIGNATURE:

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That the Mayor correspond with the Honourable Jim Bradley, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, requesting that any future funding for affordable housing include a stipulation that a minimum of five percent of any new or retrofit housing be fully accessible;

(b) That Item “S” - Accessibility and Funding for Social Affordable Housing, be identified as completed and removed from the Emergency & Community Services Committee’s Outstanding Business List.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Committee of the Whole, at its meeting on September 15, 2009, received Report 09-007 from the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD), which recommended the following recommendations. The ACPD Report 09-007 was referred to staff for a report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee:
(a) **Rent Supplement Program**
That the Rent Supplement Program currently being administered by CityHousing Hamilton include persons with disabilities in the program who may be living in or can access privately owned accessible housing while they wait for affordable or social housing to become available.

(b) **Accessible Social Housing**
That all newly built or retro-fit affordable and social housing have a minimum of five percent of the total number of units being built be fully accessible.

(c) **Accessibility and Funding for Social Affordable Housing**
That a letter be sent to the appropriate Provincial Ministry and Federal Department recommending that where any funding for social affordable housing is being transferred to municipalities, a stipulation be included that five percent of any new or retrofit housing be fully accessible.

The City of Hamilton’s Rent Supplement Program presently includes persons with disabilities; however, there is a limited supply of modified or accessible units both in the private market and the non-profit sectors. Staff from the Social Housing Administration and Homelessness Division of the Community Services Department is working with housing providers to create new modified or accessible units when there is new construction. Additionally, social housing providers are encouraged to convert existing standard units to modified or accessible units when renovations are underway with the provision of additional capital funding.

An increase in the number of accessible units located in social housing is dependent on additional funding through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program (COAHP). Should there be an opportunity for renewed COAHP funding; staff will ensure that all future Requests for Proposals include criteria that at minimum five percent of the new constructed units will be modified or accessible units. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Mayor correspond with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing requesting that any future funding for affordable housing include a province-wide stipulation that at minimum five percent of any new or retrofit housing be fully accessible.

**Alternatives for Consideration –Not Applicable**

**FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**Financial:**
There are no financial implications associated with Report CS10033


**Staffing:**
There are no staffing implications associated with Report CS10033.

**Legal:**
There are no legal implications associated with Report CS10033.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

**Rent Supplement Program**

Under the Rent Supplement Program, the City of Hamilton enters into agreements with landlords of apartments and townhouses to provide units to eligible households who require rent-geared-to-income (RGI) assistance. The eligible households must have applied to the coordinated waiting list for social housing, i.e. the Access to Housing (ATH) Service. The Rent Supplement agreement between the City and the landlord stipulates that the tenant will pay to the landlord the maximum rent that they can afford based on their income (RGI), and the City pays to the landlord the residual difference between the RGI rent and the market rent for the unit. The City receives funding from the province under the Rent Supplement Program to pay for the difference between what the tenant can afford to pay and the market rent of the unit. Provincial and municipal funding is approximately $3 million for 500 rent supplement units in private sector buildings in the City.

Rent Supplement units in the City presently house persons with disabilities, however there is a limited supply of modified or accessible units both in the private market and the non-profit sectors. There are many different types of modified or accessible units depending upon the needs of the individual. Examples may include roll-in showers, wider doors for wheelchair access and units adapted for the visually impaired.

Historically, there has been a shortage of accessible units in the subsidized housing system, whether the housing provider is non-profit, co-operative or a private landlord offering a rent supplement program. Access to accessible units is further limited by the low turnover rate because once a family or individual is able to obtain a modified or accessible unit, they typically remain in the unit for an extended period of time. It is the experience of staff conducting searches for accessible units for clients that private market rental apartments and townhouses rarely contain modified or accessible units.

City of Hamilton Social Housing Administration staff is working with housing providers to create new modified or accessible units when there is new construction. Additionally, social housing providers are encouraged to convert existing standard units to modified or accessible units when renovations are underway with the provision of additional capital funding. It is an action item on the 2010 Operational Plan for the Social Housing
and Homelessness Division to support social housing providers in creating at least 12 additional modified or accessible units on an annual basis.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

N/A

**RELEVANT CONSULTATION**

The provider of the Access to Housing (ATH) Service, Fengate Property Management Ltd., was consulted in the writing of this report.

**ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- There are 14,400 subsidized social housing units in Hamilton of which 872 are categorized as accessible.
- There are 980 Rent Supplement Units in both the private and non-profit sectors of which 7 are designated as accessible.
- Of a total of 5,050 applicants on the ATH wait list for social housing, there are 150 applicants requesting a modified or accessible unit.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

There are no alternatives for consideration.

**CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN** (Linkage to Desired End Results)


**Skilled, Innovative & Respectful Organization**

- Council and SMT are recognized for their leadership and integrity.

**Financial Sustainability**
Vision: To be the best place in Canada to raise a child, promote innovation, engage citizens and provide diverse economic opportunities.

Values: Honest, Accountability, Innovation, Leadership, Respect, Excellence, Teamwork

• Delivery of municipal services and management capital assets/liabilities in a sustainable, innovative and cost effective manner.

Intergovernmental Relationships
• Influence federal and provincial policy development to benefit Hamilton.
• Acquire greater share of Provincial and Federal grants (including those that meet specific needs).

Growing Our Economy
• An improved customer service.

Social Development
• Everyone has a home they can afford that is well maintained and safe.
• People participate in all aspects of community life without barriers or stigma.

Healthy Community
• Adequate access to food, water, shelter and income, safety, work, recreation and support for all (Human Services).

APPENDICES / SCHEDULES

There are no appendices attached to this report.