In the last decade, there has been a significant increase in bed bug infestations throughout the world, including southern Ontario. This nuisance problem is found in five-star hotels, privately owned homes and apartments, as well as in community housing in Hamilton.

CityHousing Hamilton (CHH) owns and operates approximately 6,300 units of mixed density residential development located throughout the City’s urbanized area. At the present time, infestation problems are concentrated in high-rise buildings located in the downtown area with some outbreaks occurring on the central mountain.

In 2008, CHH doubled its annual bed bug control spending to approximately $250,000 and added specialized contractors to ensure a faster response to treatment requests. With this increased activity, come greater workload pressures for property management and tenant-relations staff that often assist tenants, experiencing mental health or physical limitations, to prepare for the pest control treatments.

CHH staff has reviewed a variety of research documents developed by other social housing providers, met with pest control companies, and Public Health Services officials to ensure best practices are being utilized and it has become evident that an integrated approach is required to manage the problem. To that end, the Community Advisory Board has recommended that $334,600 from the Federally funded Homelessness Prevention Initiative be allocated to a pilot project that would result in the establishment of a community based pest management solution. The partners in this project will be CHH, Good Shepherd Centres and Hamilton East Kiwanis Non-Profit Homes Inc.
The expected product of this pilot will be an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program that deals with all aspects of bed bug control including:

- a comprehensive resident education program;
- strategies for assistance with unit preparation;
- service of 24 hour notices for treatment; and,
- tracking and scheduling pest control services.

This chain of accountability will focus on:

- Increasing co-ordination of pest control services;
- demonstrating due diligence in addressing pest control issues;
- education, training and communication for tenants;
- knowledge to take proactive and preventive measures;
- consistent protocols for pest control contractors;
- consistent preparation forms in multiple languages;
- full cycle treatment request and dispatch service;
- analysis of treatment outcomes for better informed decision making;
- increasing levels of building occupant satisfaction and improved quality of life; and,
- providing financial assistance, where needed, to tenants who are required to throw out beds and other furniture that cannot be treated.

Funding for this pilot should be finalized by the fall of 2008 and must be expended by March 31, 2009.

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