Council Direction:

At its meeting of October 15, 2008, Council approved Item 5(c) of the Committee of the Whole Report 08-030, Report PED05215(c)/SPH05066(c) – Roomers and Boarders – A Comprehensive Approach, which reads as follows:

“(c) That the Comprehensive Rooming House Strategy pilot project be endorsed, contingent upon funding being obtained from the Federal/Provincial Delivering Opportunities for Ontario Renters (DOOR) Program or other sources.”
Information:

The Comprehensive Rooming House Strategy is an initiative to improve the condition of existing lodging homes through inspections, enforcement, education and improved relationships with lodging home operators; and, by working with tenants “to ensure they are aware of their rights, and have access to appropriate income, social services and mental health supports.” The other component of the strategy is to bring into compliance other lodging homes, which may be operating without a license. In order to complete this work, it was recommended that a Rooming House Coordinator position be created contingent upon federal or provincial funding.

The City of Hamilton entered into a “Lodging-Rooming House Cooperative Initiative” with the Housing Help Centre to initiate the Comprehensive Rooming House Strategy pilot project. In September 2009, the Housing Help Centre received funding for that position and the pilot project through the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) for the period October 1, 2009 to March 31, 2011.

A Rooming House Coordinator was hired, effective October 8, 2009. The Coordinator reports to the Executive Director of the Housing Help Centre (a not-for-profit organization that assists with affordable housing solutions/options for tenants) and to the Manager of the Residential Care Facilities and Hostel Unit in the Social Housing and Homelessness Division of Community Services Department. As well, the Rooming House Coordinator receives support and advice from the Superintendent of the Municipal Law Enforcement Section.

As recommended in Report PED05215(c)/SPH05066(c)), the Rooming House Coordinator will:

- Facilitate the development of a comprehensive/collaborative strategy with relevant City staff and community partners to address both enforcement and social support aspects of Lodging Houses. This strategy will include three components and will involve working with landlords and tenants as key stakeholders. The three components of this strategy will address:
  - Currently licensed Lodging Houses;
  - Potentially Unlicensed Lodging Houses; and,
  - Education of tenants, landlords and community.
- Liaise with community partners and other municipalities;
- Coordinate the maintenance of a harmonized list of licensed Lodging Houses;
- Coordinate an interdepartmental team (enforcement and social services);
- Develop relationships with owners/operators, landlord groups, etc.; and,
- Explore ongoing opportunities for funding to assist landlords with renovation costs.
Staff will report back to the Emergency and Community Services Committee with a status report on the progress of the Room Housing Coordinator in achieving the key components of the Comprehensive Rooming House Strategy in the Fall of 2010.