TO: Chair and Members
Emergency & Community Services Committee

WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE

COMMITTEE DATE: March 24, 2010

SUBJECT/REPORT NO:
Implementation Strategy for the Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services
(CS09015(b)) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item – “AA”)

SUBMITTED BY: Joe-Anne Priel
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SIGNATURE:

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That the Emergency Hostel Purchase of Service Agreement, with Wesley Urban Ministries for 55 beds, be terminated effective July 31, 2010.

(b) That the Mayor correspond with the Minister of Community and Social Services to request:

(i) That the City of Hamilton be authorized to continue to reinvest Provincial savings from the Emergency Hostels Program into supports for individuals exiting emergency shelters; and,

(ii) That the City of Hamilton be given greater flexibility to redirect funds within the Homelessness contract in 2010 and on an on-going basis to support implementation of the Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services.

(c) That Item “AA” – Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services, be considered completed and removed from the Emergency & Community Services Committee’s Outstanding Business List.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (High level overview)

The Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services (the Blueprint) (CS09015), was approved by Council on April 29, 2009, is a plan to reduce the size of the emergency shelter system and develop permanent mobile supports to help homeless people obtain sustainable housing and remain housed.

The Implementation Strategy (the Strategy) for the Blueprint is a two-year plan that proposes to improve the emergency shelter service system in Hamilton. Improvements for people experiencing homelessness include providing enhanced supports to address their needs; and, assisting them in securing and maintaining long-term housing. It includes the development of Transitions to Home (TTH), which is a multi-disciplinary, mobile case management team, and the introduction of Basic Emergency Shelter Service Standards.

In 2009, the occupancy rate in the men’s sector of the emergency shelter system averaged 70%, which is due in part, to the impact of the success of the Hostels to Homes Pilot (H2H). The pilot successfully helped 136 men and 9 women find housing. Of the 145 participants, 109 currently remain housed. The success of this initiative, as well as the Good Shepherd HOMES program and Claremont House, has contributed to low occupancy rates at the shelters.

Given the ongoing excess capacity in the system, it is recommended that the Emergency Hostel Purchase of Service Agreement, with Wesley Urban Ministries for 55 beds, be terminated effective July 31, 2010. The Hamilton Emergency Shelter Integration and Coordination Committee (HESICC), of which Wesley Urban Ministries is a member, are jointly making this recommendation. Shelter occupancy rates will be monitored closely. It is anticipated that a further reduction in emergency shelter beds will occur in 2011 to adjust to the continued decrease in shelter occupancy rates.

Limited Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program (CHPP) and Delivering Opportunities for Ontario Renters (DOOR) funding are being utilized to fund the TTH case management teams; and, a Basic Emergency Shelter Service Standards Supplement for the shelters. The ability to sustain these initiatives over the long-term will require the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) to allow additional flexibility in the City’s Homelessness Service Contract. It is necessary to advocate to the MCSS to secure alternate funding arrangements, which will meet the needs of our community. The reinvestment of cost-savings from the emergency shelter per diem funding and greater flexibility within the Homelessness Services Contract would significantly support the funding requirements of the emergency shelter system.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 9
FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (for Recommendation(s) only)

Financial:

The closure of the 55 emergency shelter beds, at Wesley Urban Ministries, will allow the remaining shelters to benefit from higher occupancy and more dependable operating revenue. It is anticipated that a further reduction in emergency shelter beds will occur in 2011 to adjust to the continued decrease in shelter occupancy rates.

The per diem funding model does not recognize the fixed costs associated with operating a shelter, nor does it fully fund the services as outlined in the new Basic Emergency Shelter Standards. To off-set additional costs related to the new standards, effective January 1, 2010, funding for basic emergency shelter services will be a combination of:

- Per diem funding through the emergency hostel program (cost-shared 80/20);
- CHPP funding (100% provincial); and,
- DOOR funding (100% provincial).

The combined funding will reduce, although not eliminate, the variance between the actual costs incurred by the agency delivering basic emergency shelter services and the funding. The shelters will continue to cover the variance in a range of 30% to 60% of the actual operating costs. The Shelter Supplement Funding is a more pro-active approach and will replace year-end deficit funding for the shelters.

One-time DOOR funding will be fully expended by March 31, 2011.

Staffing: There are no staffing implications for the City, as a result of the recommendations.

Legal: Emergency Shelter Service Agreements and the CHPP Service Contracts will be renegotiated with the four service providers in 2010 to reflect the changes in service standards and the new funding model.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Blueprint Plan represents a fundamental shift to a strategy that supports a shorter length of stay and a focus on intensive case management and mobile supports to assist chronically homeless individuals to access and sustain housing. The objectives of the Blueprint for Emergency Shelter Services are as follows:

- Emergency shelters will provide basic short-term shelter services, based on established operational standards which include 24/7 accessibility.

- An integrated mobile case management team (Transitions to Home) will be established and modeled after the H2H Pilot Project, as described in Report (ECS08047).

- The number of shelter beds will be reduced over the next three years to more closely reflect the emergency shelter occupancy rates.

- A new funding model will be proposed to the MCSS for emergency shelters and homelessness services to support a sustainable emergency shelter system.

The implementation strategy for the Blueprint is a two-year plan involving the four shelters that serve primarily men including the Good Shepherd Men’s Centre, Mission Services, the Salvation Army Booth Centre and the Wesley Centre. It includes the development of TTH which is a multi-disciplinary mobile case management team and the introduction of Basic Emergency Shelter Service Standards.

**Reduction in Emergency Shelter Beds**

In 2009, a reduction in the use of the men’s emergency shelters resulted in an excess capacity within the system. The average occupancy in the four men’s shelters in 2009 was 70%. Due to the resulting lower revenues, the emergency shelters experienced budget deficits in 2009. Up to 75% of the shortfall in per diem revenues was offset by a combination of 2009 surpluses from the CHPP and DOOR funding. A request from the City to MCSS to utilize the surplus from the 2009 Domiciliary Hostels Program to offset pressures in the shelter system was denied.

Given the ongoing excess capacity in the system, it is recommended that the Emergency Hostel Purchase of Service Agreement with Wesley Urban Ministries for 55 beds be terminated effective July 31, 2010. HESICC, of which Wesley Urban Ministries is a member, are jointly recommending this difficult decision.

On average in 2010, 41 men and 11 women per night utilized emergency shelter services at Wesley Centre. Beginning August 1, 2010 men will be diverted to the
remaining three men’s shelters. Women will be referred to the Good Shepherd Centre’s Mary’s Place, which is expanding its capacity from 10 to 20 emergency shelter beds for women in their new facility. Expected completion of Mary’s Place is slated for August 2010.

The Wesley Centre Drop-In Program will continue operation during the day after the emergency shelter services are no longer available. A variety of services and supports are available to help individuals take steps towards independent living. For example, Wesley Centre provides on-site access to the TTH team, health and employment services, a meal program, and connections to the housing support system. Wesley Urban Ministries is presently undertaking a planning process to determine these details related to their day program. In 2010, an average of 260 to 280 individuals per day will access Wesley Centre day time drop-in services.

**Basic Emergency Shelter Service Standards**

Implementation of Basic Emergency Shelter Service Standards began January 2010. Basic Emergency Shelter Services are defined as the core services that will be provided to all persons experiencing homelessness. The standards will ensure a safe environment for clients and staff and will be monitored to ensure compliance.

Standards include:

- Room and board;
- A common intake process;
- Access to the shelter 24-hours a day, seven days a week; and,
- Referrals to supports to access housing in an expedient manner.

The 24 hour operation means that individuals staying in emergency shelters are no longer required to leave the shelters during the day, as is the current practice in most of the men’s shelters. Increased access to the shelters will provide residents with greater opportunities to work with case managers and participate in programming during the day.

To off-set additional costs related to the new standards, effective January 1, 2010, Shelter Supplement funding to support the 24-hours a day operation will be provided to the shelter providers through a reallocation of the CHPP and DOOR budgets. This funding will reduce, not eliminate, the variance between the actual costs incurred by the agencies delivering the basic emergency shelter services. The shelters will continue to cover the variance in a range of 30% to 60% of the actual operating costs. The Shelter Supplement Funding is a more pro-active approach and will replace year-end deficit funding for the shelters.
Transitions to Home (Integrated Mobile Case Management Team)

The TTH Team was formed on January 4, 2010 to provide mobile case management supports. It represents an integration of the existing case management responses within the Emergency Shelter System. It also incorporates the H2H Pilot staff, the Finding Home Pilot staff and other case management services supporting persons experiencing homelessness. While several existing programs are being combined, it represents an expansion of service. H2H focused primarily on men staying in shelters more than 42 days and exclusively on people who were eligible for Ontario Works. TTH will be able to serve people who are on Ontario Disability Support Program and will be able to carry a greater caseload.

Wesley Urban Ministries is the lead agency for the Transitions to Home Team and is responsible for the day to day operation and supervision of the team. The Director of Transitions to Home reports to the Executive Director of Wesley Urban Ministries, but has a dual accountability to HESICC for the implementation of and work of the Team.

The team is comprised of the Director, Team Leads, Case Managers, an Addictions Worker, a Nurse, a Recreational Therapist and Social Workers. The model of engagement and support is based on the best practices and lessons learned through the H2H Pilot. The team provides supports 24-hours a day, seven days a week to program participants and will provide an array of supports including personal and addictions counseling, and recreational therapy supports.

As the integrated mobile case management team begins to focus their energies on engaging long-term users of the system, staff providing basic shelter services will begin to refocus their work to assist short-term users of the emergency shelter system.

A critical success factor for the TTH Program will be ensuring that appropriate, affordable housing can be found for participants. The H2H Pilot utilized Housing Allowances to offer affordable housing options for participants. Housing Allowances provide a fixed supplement to participant’s rent on a monthly basis and are most often used in private market rental housing. There is an advantage in that participants are able to access housing in many different locations across the city. Limited funding has been set aside from the DOOR program for this purpose.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Funding for emergency hostel services must be in accordance with the legislation and directives of the Ontario Works Act, 1997. CHPP funding must comply with the terms of the MCSS Homelessness Service Contract.
The Emergency Hostel Purchase of Service Agreements and the CHPP Service Contracts will be adjusted to reflect adjustments to funding arrangements and Basic Emergency Shelter Service Standards, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

HESICC is a collaborative including the City, the MCSS Hamilton/Niagara Regional Office, representatives from each of the agencies providing emergency shelter services as well as the Housing Help Centre and the Mental Health Outreach team. Program decisions such as the content of the Basic Emergency Shelter Standards and TTH are made in collaboration with HESICC.

Public Health Services (PHS) delivers a number of services linked to the emergency shelters including the Street Health Clinic and the Needle Exchange program. PHS staff noted that the elimination of overnight stays at certain shelters will impact on the hours that their programs are delivered and may require some logistical changes. PHS does not foresee any direct financial or staff implications related to the closure of over night services at Wesley Centre. A concern was raised regarding adequate beds in the event of a cold alert. At present, surge capacity for cold alerts is available within the system and will be factored into the planning process for future bed closures.

In the writing of this report, staff consulted with the Corporate Services Department, Finance and Administration Section and the Legal Services Division.

MCSS was consulted in their funding role. It was confirmed that the City would not be authorized to transfer under spent funds in the Domiciliary Hostel Program to meet the financial needs of the emergency shelters system in 2009. No financial commitment has been made to fund the Blueprint for 2010 or beyond, pending outcome of the H2H Evaluation and the Provincial Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review.

ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

(include Performance Measurement/Benchmarking Data, if applicable)

Bed Reductions

In 1997, shelter use began to rise dramatically following the introduction of the Ontario Works Act. Rigid eligibility criteria and a decrease in social assistance rates resulted in fewer people qualifying for social assistance and turning to the shelter system as a last resort.
In 2003, 118 shelter beds were added to the system to address the increased need. Capital funding for the increase was provided by the Federally-funded Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative. The Good Shepherd HOMES program was introduced to help homeless people with mental health issues secure long term housing. Claremont House and the H2H Program built on this success and have helped many more people move from emergency shelter into some form of long term housing.

The following chart illustrates the number of beds utilized in the men’s shelter system from 1995 to 2009 with a downward trend in utilization from 2007 to the present.

It is anticipated that a further reduction in emergency shelter beds at one other agency will occur in 2011 to adjust to the continued decrease in shelter occupancy rates. It is expected that the work of TTH will result in a decrease in the number of chronic shelter users accessing the shelter system. An analysis is underway to determine the site and timeframe for the next closure. It is necessary to phase the closures to carefully assess the impact of each closure to the homeless service system. Staff will continue to work with HESICCC to monitor shelter occupancy levels closely.

**Funding for Basic Emergency Shelter Services**

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Commencing January 1, 2010, funding for basic emergency shelter services is a combination of per diem funding through the emergency hostel program, CHPP funding and a Standards Supplement utilizing DOOR funding. The Standards Supplement recognizes fixed costs associated with operation according to the new standards such as additional staff and the provision of three meals per day. The supplement equals $10 per bed per day. The combined funding will reduce the variance between the actual costs incurred by the agency delivering basic emergency shelter services and the funding.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**
(include Financial, Staffing, Legal and Policy Implications and pros and cons for each alternative)

None.

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


**Skilled, Innovative & Respectful Organization**
- A culture of excellence
- More innovation, greater teamwork, better client focus

**Financial Sustainability**
- 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)
- Maintain effective relationships with other public agencies

**Growing Our Economy**
- An improved customer service

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Social Development
• Everyone has a home they can afford that is well maintained and safe

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

APPENDICES / SCHEDULES

None.