SUBJECT:  Opportunity Fund -- Request to Transfer Funds (SPH05045) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That the $35,000 originally approved for the Youth Connections Program from the Opportunity Fund be transferred to the Accreditation For Immigrants Program.

(b) That the Hamilton Future Fund Board of Governors be advised of this change.

Joe-Anne Priel, General Manager
Public Health and Community Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In 2003 City Council approved a $500,000 allocation from the Hamilton Future Fund for the Opportunity Fund. This fund provided funding allocations to six programs: Greater Hamilton Food Share, the Housing Emergency Loan Program, Bridges, Youth Connections, Road to Independence, and the Accreditation for Immigrants Program.

Since that time the funding for four of the programs has been expended (Greater Hamilton Food Share, the Housing Emergency Loan Program, Bridges, and the Accreditation for Immigrants Program). Funds are still available in two of the programs: Youth Connections and Road to Independence.

The purpose of the Youth Connections program was to provide computers to youth focussed drop-in programs and shelters. Throughout 2004, many of these youth focussed drop-in programs and shelters received surplus computers resulting from the relocation of the Employment Resource Centres. As a result, staff are recommending
that the $35,000 originally approved for the Youth Connections program be transferred to the Accreditation Program for Immigrants. Although the funding for the Accreditation program was expended, due to the importance of this program, additional funds were found for the program from Ontario Works (Employment Assistance). The $35,000 will off-set some but not all program costs for 2005. The balance will be absorbed by the Ontario Works Employment Assistance Budget. Funds are allocated within the 2006 budget for continuation of the program.

BACKGROUND:

On July 9, 2003 Hamilton City Council approved a recommendation forwarded by the Affordability & Accessibility Issues Sub-Committee detailing allocations for the $500,000 Opportunity Fund. The $500,000 for this fund was allocated from Hamilton Future Fund. The Opportunity Fund program recommended funding for 6 programs with varying timelines and conditions.

1. Bridges Program (subsidized recreation) $125,000
2. Housing Emergency Loan Program (rent bank) $75,000
3. Youth Connections (computers in youth programs) $35,000
4. Road to Independence (assistance with public transit for those leaving Ontario Works due to employment) $65,000
5. Accreditation for Immigrants (skills validation/certification for immigrants on Ontario Works) $100,000
6. Greater Hamilton Food Share (building purchase) $100,000

In April 2005, Council approved a staff report (HCS04082) extending the deadline for funding for three of the programs (Road to Independence, Youth Connections, and the Accreditation for Immigrants) from December 31, 2004 to December 31, 2005.

As staff began the developmental work for the Youth Connections Program, it was determined that several youth organizations were to be provided with surplus Human Resources Social Development Canada (HRSDC) computers in 2004. These computers were available as a result of the relocation of the Employment Resource Centres operated through the Public Health and Community Services Department and were distributed in accordance with Human Resources Social Development Canada guidelines.¹

The following list summarizes both the organizations and numbers of computers distributed:

1. Wesley Youth Centre 3 computers
2. Notre Dame Youth Hostels 3 computers
3. Living Rock Ministries 3 computers
4. Generation Now City Kidz 8 computers
5. St. Martin’s Manor 3 computers
6. Grace Haven 3 computers

¹ Staff have maintained complete records regarding the distribution and receipt of the surplus HRSDC assets.
Since a number of computers have already been provided to the youth focussed drop-in programs and shelters, staff recommend that the funds originally allocated for computers in youth hostels in the amount of $35,000 should be transferred to the Accreditation for Immigrants program also funded through the Opportunity Fund.

The Accreditation for Immigrants Program exceeded its funding allocation from the Opportunity Fund in early 2005. Since 2003, 21 participants have achieved accreditation as a result of the program, 30 participants are in the process of obtaining accreditation, and 28 participants have left Ontario Works for employment. Some examples of professions in this program include: doctor, dentist, nurse, veterinarian, pharmacologist, electrician, architect, and medical laboratory technologist.

The $35,000 will off-set some but not all program costs for 2005. The balance will be absorbed by the Ontario Works Employment Assistance Budget. Funds are allocated within the 2006 Ontario Works Employment Assistance budget for continuation of the program.

**ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES:**

N/A.

**FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

None. The funding for the Opportunity Fund was approved in 2003. Staff are only requesting the transfer from one approved program to another in order to maximize the funding from the Opportunity Fund.

**POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:**

N/A.

**CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT DEPARTMENTS/AGENCIES:**

This report was prepared in consultation with staff from Corporate Services (Finance) and with staff from the Public Health & Community Services Department. This report will be reviewed at the October 20, 2005 Hamilton Future Fund Board of Governors special meeting.

**CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:**

The recommendations for the Opportunity Fund support the City’s strategic direction to be a great City in which to live. Many of the programs funded also support the general goals of the Social Vision for the City of Hamilton by enhancing accessibility to City and community services.