SUBJECT: Renewal of the Homelessness Partnership Strategy Agreement (CS09022) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That the General Manager of Community Services be authorized and directed to enter into an Agreement with Service Canada to become the Community Entity for the facilitation and administration of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy Program, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

(b) That the Homelessness Partnership Strategy Agreement be effective from April 1, 2009, until March 31, 2011.

Joe-Anne Priel,
General Manager
Community Services Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) is the federal government’s primary program to address homelessness. The Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI) is the strategy’s cornerstone. The City of Hamilton currently has an Agreement with Service Canada to serve as the Community Entity to administer the HPI program. This Agreement will terminate on March 31, 2009. Service Canada will be extending the current HPI contract for one-year (March 31, 2010), through a minor amendment, to expend any remaining funds. Service Canada has recently confirmed that the HPI program will be extended for an additional two years (2009-2011). A major amendment
to the current Agreement is required. The Community Services department is requesting authorization to continue to serve as the Community Entity for the HPI program.

As the Community Entity, the Community Services Department is charged with administering the HPI program in accordance with HPI Terms and Conditions, and working with the Community Advisory Board (CAB) to allocate HPI funding within the community. All funding decisions are based on the priorities outlined within the HPI Community Plan.

Service Canada has made a commitment to continue Federal homelessness funding for five-years. The HPI, under the current Terms and Conditions, has been extended for two-years with the following conditions:

- Hamilton will receive $8.45 million through HPI funding, as in the previous iteration;
- The term of the new Agreement will run effective April 1, 2009 to March 31, 2011;
- A major amendment to the current HPI contract is required; and,
- The major amendment will be based on Hamilton’s existing Community Plan (revisions to the Community Plan can be made at a later date, if necessary).

By assuming the role of Community Entity, the Community Services Department is able to continue to co-ordinate and leverage provincial and federal initiatives. As the Community Entity, the City of Hamilton is able to minimize any duplication of community efforts in working with all levels of government to address homelessness.

**BACKGROUND:**

The City of Hamilton has assumed the role of Community Entity for federal homelessness funding since the introduction of the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI) program in 2000. Effective April 1, 2007, SCPI was replaced by the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) (SPH00062b). The HPS is intended “to prevent and reduce homelessness by helping to establish the structures and supports needed to move homeless and at-risk individuals towards self-sufficiency and full participation in Canadian society.” The HPI is the cornerstone of the Federal Government’s strategy to address homelessness. The HPI recognizes that the first step toward self-sufficiency is to ensure that individuals attain housing stability with an emphasis on supportive and transitional housing. HPI is a two-year program that runs from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2009.

HPI objectives are as follows:

- Increased investment in transitional and supportive housing and services;
- Increased knowledge of and measurements of outcomes; and,
- Broader engagement of partners.
Hamilton received $8.45 million through HPI between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2009. As the Community Entity for the HPI program, the Community Services Department is charged with administering the program and working with the HPI Community Advisory Board (CAB). The CAB reviews proposals from the community and recommends funding decisions to the City of Hamilton. All funding decisions are based on eight priorities that have been outlined in the HPI Community Plan. These priorities include:

1. Assisting individuals who are experiencing long stays in emergency shelters and emergency accommodations to move into and maintain adequate and stable housing;
2. Helping women and their children leaving Violence Against Women Shelters access second-stage housing or long-term housing, as appropriate, and support them in that transition;
3. Helping people leaving corrections and the child welfare system transition to and maintain appropriate housing;
4. Preventing homelessness by helping at-risk seniors stabilize and maintain their housing;
5. Supporting people with mental health issues and concurrent disorders obtain and maintain housing;
6. Supporting the Aboriginal community’s priorities in its HPI Aboriginal application and help develop and sustain the Aboriginal-specific housing continuum;
7. Enhancing the skills of staff and volunteers working with people experiencing homelessness across Hamilton; and,
8. Supporting the implementation of the planning, community development and data collection strategies in Everyone Has a Home, Hamilton’s strategic plan to address homelessness and Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).

Service Canada has committed to renewing HPI funding, under the current Terms and Conditions, for an additional two years. The new Agreement will be effective April 1, 2009, to March 31, 2011. During this time, Hamilton will receive $8.45 million in HPI funding. A major amendment to the current HPI contract is required with Service Canada should Hamilton continue to serve as the Community Entity for this program. The amendment will be based on the existing Community Plans. Revisions to the current Community Plan may be implemented at a later date, if necessary.

Community Services staff are in the process of developing strategies that will facilitate the transition into the new HPI term. Next steps will include:

- Facilitating community consultations that will allow community stakeholders to provide feedback on the current HPI Community Plan. The information gathered will help determine any necessary changes to the Community Plan and guide funding decisions over the next two years.
- Extending all service oriented projects for six months, which are currently funded through HPI. This timeframe will allow agencies to wind down services or apply for additional funding under the next HPI term.
• A Call for Applications will be issued in the spring of 2009 through the next HPI term. This call will address gaps identified within the current HPI Community Plan.

ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

HPI has created a considerable legacy of innovative projects in Hamilton and increased the community’s capacity to provide a coordinated response to homelessness. If Hamilton does not continue to serve as the Community Entity for this program, it will result in a loss of $8.45 million in federal funding, the reduction or elimination of some services and will have human resource implications for the City. The Community Services Department will need to find ways to provide ongoing service system management functions, such as:

• planning;
• program development;
• data analysis; and,
• reporting with reduced staffing.

The City of Hamilton is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) for the delivery of Ontario Works, Social Housing and Homelessness. Continuing the role of Community Entity under the new HPI Agreement, positions the City to execute this mandate. The City of Hamilton, serving as the Community Entity for HPI is able to continue to coordinate and leverage provincial and federal initiatives.

Currently, Community Services staff have established partnerships with CAB, Service Canada, community partners and service providers over the past several years. These relationships facilitate collaborative approaches to homelessness initiatives and reduce the duplication of roles within the community. Continuing the role of Community Entity will assist in the transition and resources required to implement the new HPI term. It will also prevent any disruption in services currently funded by HPI.

The Strategic Plan to address homelessness (Everyone Has A Home) (ECS07020) was approved by Council on March 21, 2007. By assuming the role as Community Entity, City staff are able to implement the HPI program effectively by articulating agreed upon strategies and outcomes that can guide program development. The HPI program also provides additional resources to support data collection, planning and community development in key areas.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

Council could elect not to enter into another Agreement with the federal government to serve as the Community Entity for the HPI. This would require a new organization to be identified effective April 1, 2009. The process of establishing a new Community Entity will delay the issuance of HPI funding within our community and potentially risk not fully allocating the $8.45 million of HPI funding by the deadline of March 31, 2011. This
delay would cause a disruption in services being offered to people experiencing homelessness in Hamilton.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Financial: There are no financial implications associated with the recommendations of Report CS09022.

Staffing: If the City of Hamilton does not assume the role of Community Entity for the HPI program, 7.5 FTE staff will be affected as the current Agreement with Service Canada will terminate on March 31, 2009. Staff administers the HPI program and assists the City of Hamilton in its role as CMSM. Staff positions funded through HPI serve functions such as program planning, data analysis, research, contract development, program monitoring and reporting. These positions are funded at 100% by federal dollars through the HPI program.

Legal: There are no legal implications associated with the recommendations of Report CS09022.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

None.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

The Community Services Department staff have consulted with CAB who have expressed their support for the City of Hamilton to continue as the Community Entity for the HPI program.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

The continuation of the role as Community Entity for HPS will assist the City to achieve the goals and strategies identified in the Strategic Plan by developing a caring community, which gives support and opportunity to all of its members.
Environmental Well-Being is enhanced.  ☐ Yes  ☑ No

Economic Well-Being is enhanced.  ☑ Yes  ☐ No

Poverty is reduced.  Increased "social investment" in services to address homelessness helps improve the opportunities for program participants to achieve optimal independence and employability.  By focusing on prevention it can also reduce long term social service expenditures.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?  ☐ Yes  ☑ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?  ☐ Yes  ☑ No