

## **Red Cross Personal Disaster Assistance Program**

Presented To:	Finance and Administration Committee
Meeting Date:	September 21, 2021
Type:	Managers' Reports
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Recommended by:	General Manager of Community Safety

## **Report Summary**

This report provides recommendations regarding the Red Cross Personal Disaster Assistance (PDA) Program.

## **Resolutions**

### **Resolution 1:**

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury authorizes a one-time increase to the Red Cross Personal Disaster Assistance Program of up to \$80,000 for 2021 to be funded from Social Services through the Federal Reaching Home COVID-19 Program, as outlined in the report entitled “Red Cross Personal Disaster Assistance Program”, from the General Manager of Community Safety, presented at the Finance and Administration Committee meeting on September 21, 2021.

### **Resolution 2:**

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury directs staff to create a business case for additional funding for the Red Cross Personal Disaster Assistance Program effective 2022, as outlined in the report entitled “Red Cross Personal Disaster Assistance Program”, from the General Manager of Community Safety, presented at the Finance and Administration Committee meeting on September 21, 2021.

## **Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP)**

This report refers to operational matters and has no direct connection to the Community Energy and Emissions Plan.

## **Financial Implications**

With a projected cost of \$112,000 needed to support the PDA Program for the 2020-2021 financial year, Emergency Management is requesting the cost of up to \$80,000 to be funded from CGS Social Services through the Federal Reaching Home COVID-19 Program.

The 2021 Emergency Management operating budget was approved with a \$30,000 Red Cross grant to support the Personal Disaster Assistance Program, and as a result requires additional funding at this time.

If approved, a business case will be developed for consideration during the 2022 budget process.

## Background

The current COVID-19 pandemic has shown that every emergency is unique with its complexities and individual sets of circumstances. With many people remaining at home to help reduce the spread of COVID-19, there has been an increase in the number of residential fires resulting in the loss of personal items and residents being displaced. This is not unique to Greater Sudbury and is currently being experienced by municipalities across Canada.

Our homes have become places of work and schooling, and as such, families now have more distractions at home. This distraction has led to many unfortunate situations including house fires, particularly in multifamily dwellings, affecting more individuals and families.

Many occupants do not have home insurance as they are faced with socio-economic challenges, making them vulnerable after a fire incident. When displaced by a fire, occupants will need to access services such as the PDA Program in the first 72 hours to reduce further vulnerabilities, followed by further supports from municipal social services, if required.

In 2019, there were 82 reported residential fires in Greater Sudbury compared to 106 in 2020, representing a 30% increase from the previous year. To date (August 30<sup>th</sup> 2021), there has been 81 reported residential fires in Greater Sudbury. It is projected that 122 residential fires will be recorded in 2021.

The City of Greater Sudbury has been providing funding to the Canadian Red Cross on a reimbursement basis to support its delivery of the PDA program since 2001. In 2012, Council authorized funding at a level of up to \$20,000 on a multi-year basis, ending with the 2017 calendar year.

With a further increase in demand and individuals in need over the last few years, and since the Red Cross has exceeded \$20,000 in costs for the PDA Program over the last four consecutive years, the current grant agreement was approved up to a level of \$30,000 for a five (5) year period from 2018-2022 to provide for the continued delivery of the Personal Disaster Assistance Program.

This funding is used for direct client assistance with items such as lodging, food, and clothing.

The aim of the program is to help individuals reduce the impact of disaster and emergencies and encourage a return to self-sufficiency. Personal disasters may include but are not limited to:

- Flood
- Fire
- Gas leak
- Hostage taking
- Explosion
- Interruption of public services
- Public health crisis

The Personal Disaster Assistance Program is available throughout the City of Greater Sudbury on a twenty-four hour, seven day-a-week basis via the local Red Cross network of trained personal disaster assistance volunteers. At all times there are two volunteers with pagers who are on-call and ready to respond. Should the situation warrant additional responders, a call out system is in place to obtain additional responders as needed. Red Cross volunteers provide on-site emotional support and can offer impacted households, at no cost to the beneficiary, the following services for up to 72 hours through established agreements with suppliers:

- Accommodations
- Food

- Clothing
- Personal care items
- Immediate medication needs

Red Cross is activated upon request by the City's Emergency Services (EMS, Police, Fire, and Infrastructure Services) personnel and/or by the client themselves. With the immediate needs of disaster victims taken care of, Emergency Services personnel are able to focus their efforts on responding to the emergency. When activated directly by the client, we always follow up with City contacts to validate the response.

## **Conclusion**

COVID-19 has affected many areas in our lives such as work and social activities. In Ontario, the pandemic has had many other less obvious ramifications due to the implementation of public health measures such as the Stay At Home Order and quarantine. With more people staying at home during the pandemic, there has been an increase in the frequency and severity of residential fires.

This increase in fire incidents in Greater Sudbury during the pandemic has seen an uptake in the number of individuals and families accessing the PDA Program because of being displaced from their dwelling and not having home insurance.

Given the increased demand on the PDA program, the current approved annual grant of \$30,000 will be insufficient in covering the cost of operating the program for the 2021 financial year.

City of Greater Sudbury's (CGS) Emergency Management works closely with CGS Social Services to ensure support for the City's most vulnerable, especially during times of crisis. CGS Social Services has approved funds from their Federal Reaching Home COVID-19 Program to cover the outstanding costs for 2021 of providing this immediate personal disaster assistance to individuals and families who meet the criteria for this support.