

## **Background**

### **City of Greater Sudbury Homelessness Programs**

The City of Greater Sudbury (City) receives funding from the Federal, Provincial and Municipal government to provide services and supports for people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in our community. Each funding envelope comes with different guidelines, eligible expenses, reporting requirements, and time frames. Homelessness initiatives are coordinated through the Social Services Division within the Community Development Department. The funding is utilized in a strategic and integrated manner.

Providing homelessness services requires strong community partnerships and integrated service delivery across a variety of sectors including housing, income support, corrections, health, mental health, and addictions. The City of Greater Sudbury works closely with community stakeholders to develop local solutions and continues to evolve stronger and more collaborative supports. Local plans and strategies, developed with community consultation such as the 2013 Ten Year Housing and Homelessness plan, help identify priorities for our community.

<http://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=feed&action=file&attachment=11106.pdf>

A complete overview of the programs funded through Homelessness Funding was presented in a Report to Community Services Committee in February 2016.

The resolution also directed staff to bring forward a report for the use of the increased funding for future years.

<https://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=feed&action=file&agenda=report&itemid=2&id=1011>

### **Provincial Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)**

The City of Greater Sudbury receives funding through the Provincial Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) to address local priorities and better meet the needs of individuals and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in their local communities. The Province has recently communicated that the City will receive an increased allocation of funds for 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020.

Funding allocations from April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2020 are as follows:

- 2013/2014 allocation - \$2,622,528
- 2014/2015 allocation - \$2,671,375

- 2015/2016 allocation - \$2,671,400
- 2016/2017 allocation - \$2,671,400
- 2017/2018 allocation - \$2,800,703 (\$129,303 increase over 2016/2017 allocation)
- 2018/2019 allocation - \$2,930,117 (\$129,414 increase over 2017/2018 allocation)
- 2019/2020 allocation - \$3,059,602 (\$129,485 increase over 2018/2019 allocation)

A report presented to the Community Services Committee on September 18, 2017 with a resolution for the allocation of the 2017-2018 increase.

<https://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=feed&action=file&agenda=report&itemid=5&id=1204>

Communities have the opportunity to create solutions to address homelessness that are locally driven and partnership based.

CHPI has four broad service categories:

1. Emergency shelter solutions;
2. Housing with related supports;
3. Other services and Supports; and
4. Homelessness Prevention.

## **Housing First Program**

'Housing First' is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centers on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed. The Housing First approach is a key guiding principle for the Provincial CHPI program, and is a program requirement under the Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) funding.

The City endorsed the Housing First Strategy in December 2006.

[https://www.greatersudbury.ca/content/div\\_councilagendas/documents/cc\\_min\\_1213.pdf](https://www.greatersudbury.ca/content/div_councilagendas/documents/cc_min_1213.pdf)

Since 2007 the Homelessness Network, under funding agreements between the City and the lead agency Centre de santé communautaire du Grand Sudbury, have been providing housing assistance in the community using the Housing First approach including a centralized administration of outreach support and homelessness prevention services. While hundreds of people who experienced homelessness were moved quickly into housing, the lack of capacity to provide ongoing support to help people remain housed resulted in people cycling back into homelessness and the emergency shelter system.

Following the demonstrated success of a federally funded demonstration project entitled “At Home Chez Soi”, as well as the continued development of the Housing First model within communities across Canada; the Homelessness Network revised its model in 2016 to better meet fidelity to the Housing First principles, this included the implementation of:

- a centralized intake;
- prioritization assessment tool completed with people in community locations such as the emergency shelter programs;
- housing case management support at a ratio of one Case Manager to twenty-five people. Provided to people who need the most support and can last up to twelve months to ensure someone is stable in their housing; and
- collaboration with community partners to connect people with the supports they need to stay housed.

<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/document/24376/national-homechez-soi-final-report>

In February 2017, in order to continue to develop the Housing First program:

- Federal HPS funds were allocated to add two intensive case management positions to the Homelessness Network, who would work with the highest acuity participants at a ratio of one Case Manager to ten people;
- a Housing First Steering Committee was developed to build a systems approach to Housing First across sectors within the community; and
- a trainer from the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness completed a fidelity assessment to assess the program's progress toward Housing First fidelity and provided quality improvement advice.

Since January 2017, the new Housing First model has demonstrated success as follows:

- 144 persons experiencing homelessness who have completed the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT);
- 124 persons provided with a Housing Case Manager;
- 31 persons provided with an Intensive Case Manager;
- 120 persons housed; and
- currently there are 69 active participants in the Housing First program and 55 are housed.

Community partners have reported that emergency shelter stays have decreased and persons who were previously chronically homeless are now housed and improving their health outcomes with the support of the Housing First program.

Some qualitative case studies from program participants are as follows:

Participant One is a senior woman who has struggled with being homeless or precariously housed for over 30 years. She has been living with trauma from physical and sexual abuse, suspected mental illness, and had lost relationships with her children. When she managed to find housing she was a hoarder with poor hygiene habits. Since being supported by a Housing First Intensive Case Manager she has been successfully housed for the past five months. She accepts a home visit one to two times per week, has maintained a clean, uncluttered apartment, and takes care of her appearance and hygiene. Now she is well enough to allow her son to visit, which he does willingly as the apartment is being kept clean and his mother is able to socialize better.

Participant Two is a young man and has been homeless on and off for the past ten years. He has suffered for years from serious mental illness, trauma and substance abuse issues. He is not attune to social rules and norms, for example will openly yell in the streets, and has had multiple paramedic and police responses. He has also been in jail multiple times for short periods. Since being supported by a Housing First Case Manager, he has been successfully housed for over a year. This person has required high levels of support from the Housing First Case Manager to remain housed including multiple weekly visits, mediation with property managers, and advocacy through the housing tribunal. Since being part of the Housing First program his interactions with police have greatly decreased to the extent that police mentioned the positive change for the community.

To ensure the ongoing success of the Housing First program it is recommended that additional CHPI funds be allocated to this program to support additional staff in community agencies and increased operating expenses linked to the provision of a Housing First program. The staffing would increase over the next two years to support the enhancement of the Housing First program.

## **Homelessness Prevention**

The local CHPI program provides assistance for persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with:

- Payment of rental arrears to prevent eviction;
- Payment of last month's rent deposit to become housed;
- Payment of utility arrears and/or connection fees for persons facing utility disconnection; and
- Funding for household items under exceptional circumstances.

While persons at risk of eviction from social housing units due to unpaid rental arrears are supported through the local CHPI program, individuals at risk of eviction due to arrears caused from damages have not previously met the local CHPI program criteria. This has been identified as a barrier in being able to support low income families to maintain affordable housing. It is recommended that some of the additional CHPI funding be added to this program and policies be revised to provide greater flexibility in making local decisions that support people to remain housed.

## **Emergency Shelter Review**

One of the priorities identified in the 2013 Ten Year Housing and Homelessness Plan states "There is a need to strengthen approaches to preventing homelessness, increase the diversity of emergency shelter options and support individuals with multiple barriers in obtaining and maintaining their housing".

An action item under this priority was "As a ten year goal, with increases in permanent affordable housing stock and monitoring of shelter usage, work over time to gradually retiring some of the capacity of the emergency shelters and re-directing funding to support individuals and families in transitioning to and maintaining permanent housing". This was intended to meet the objective "Ensure emergency accommodation is available when needed, but focus on transitioning to permanent housing".

As additional CHPI funding is directed towards the Housing First program and Homelessness Prevention, it is recommended that an independent consultant will complete a review of the current emergency shelter system. with a report back to the Community Services Committee by December 2018.

## **Next Steps**

Upon approval, the Social Services Division will work with Centre de santé communautaire du Grand Sudbury to add additional staffing. Policy changes will occur regarding the Homelessness Prevention program to expand program eligibility for clients and give discretion to Social Services Caseworkers to keep people housed. A consultant will be retained to provide a review and make recommendations regarding the shelter system funding with a report back to the Community Services Committee by December 2018.