

Proposed Short-Term Provincial Program to Help Address Housing Affordability Issues

Date:	August 23, 2010
To:	Council
From:	General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek authority for the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to negotiate terms, enter into a transfer payment agreement or related agreement with the provincial government and develop delivery mechanisms for a new time limited provincial rental assistance program to help address affordability issues of households in need, at no net cost to the City.

While program details, delivery arrangements and funding allocations have yet to be finalized and negotiated, this report is being presented to Council at an early date in view of the upcoming municipal election and the consequent interruption of the regular meeting schedule for Council and its Committees. The program funding is anticipated to be time limited and action may be required while Committee and Council is not in session in order to capitalize on the opportunity to participate in the program and assist Toronto residents in need.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, in consultation with the City Solicitor, to enter into a transfer payment agreement or related agreement(s) with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing or related entity for funding available under a new short term rental assistance program;

2. City Council authorize the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to negotiate with the provincial government to develop the terms of the new program and to undertake appropriate measures to develop program guidelines, as required;
3. City Council authorize the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to enter into agreements with the provincial government, other City divisions, community agencies and/or private entities to deliver the program, as required; and
4. City Council direct the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to report to Community Development and Recreation Committee and Council in early 2011 on the details and any further implications of the new short term provincial rental assistance program.

Financial Impact

Entering into a transfer payment agreement or related agreement(s) with the provincial government to administer a new short term provincial rental assistance program may impact Shelter, Support and Housing Administration's (SSHA) 2010 and/or 2011 Operating Budget. The impact will depend on the timing and amount of the (as yet unknown) allocation. Any impact to SSHA's 2010 Approved Operating Budget will be reflected in a future in-year budget adjustment report, if required. Any impact to the 2011 Operating Budget will be reflected in the 2011 Operating Budget submission for SSHA with the 2012 and 2013 impacts included in the respective Operating Budget submissions for SSHA as may be required.

There will be no net impact to the City as all program costs will be reimbursed by the provincial government at 100%.

The Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

Equity Impact

The purpose of a new short term rental assistance program is to assist low-income individuals and families with housing affordability issues. Many of those served by the program will likely be from equity seeking groups, such as women, seniors, people with disabilities, individuals with mental health issues, and other vulnerable groups. The program will help these households to maintain their housing and provide some modest economic relief over the short term.

DECISION HISTORY

The Housing Opportunities Toronto Affordable Housing Action Plan 2010-2020, adopted by Council at its meeting of August 5 and 6, 2009, contains 67 actions within eight

strategic themes to be undertaken by the City of Toronto and the federal and provincial governments. The HOT plan requests that the provincial government assist low-income residents through sustainable increased funding for rent supplements, housing allowances, and/or other shelter benefits.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2009/cc/decisions/2009-08-05-cc38-dd.htm>

COMMENTS

The Province has recently indicated that it is contemplating a new modest short term rental assistance program to help address housing affordability issues over the short term. While program details, delivery arrangements and funding allocations have yet to be determined, the program will be 100% provincially funded, and there will be no net cost to the City. The program is anticipated to run over the next three fiscal years and be completed by March 31, 2013. While the criteria and scope will likely be different, the program will be somewhat similar in objective and administration to the Canada-Ontario-Toronto Housing Allowance Program and the City's Recession Strategy In-situ Housing Allowance.

It is anticipated that a portion of the program funds are required to be expended by March 31, 2011. Because of the time-limited nature of this opportunity, action may be required to finalize program details while Committee and Council are in recess during the municipal election period in order to capitalize on the opportunity to participate in the program and maximize available funding. Therefore this report recommends that Council authorize the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to negotiate terms, enter into agreements with the provincial government and develop delivery mechanisms in order to implement the program. Any negotiations will be guided by actions outlined in the Council approved Housing Opportunities Toronto Action Plan.

While the new program is time-limited and does not meet the Housing Opportunities Toronto request for long-term, sustainable funding for rent supplements, housing allowances, and/or other shelter benefits for low-income households, the City's participation in the program will provide modest economic relief to some vulnerable households in Toronto who are struggling with housing affordability.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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