



## STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

### Survivors of Domestic Violence – Portable Housing Benefit Pilot

<b>Date:</b>	September 9, 2016
<b>To:</b>	Community Development and Recreation Committee
<b>From:</b>	General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration
<b>Wards:</b>	All
<b>Reference Number:</b>	

#### SUMMARY

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The Ministry of Housing (MH) has made \$3,414,425 in funding available to the City of Toronto through the Survivors of Domestic Violence – Portable Housing Benefit (SDV-PHB) pilot. The pilot program will provide a monthly housing benefit to survivors of domestic violence in the Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) waiting list Special Priority Program (SPP). The Shelter, Support and Housing Administration Division (SSHA) estimates that the funds allocated under this pilot program will assist 355 persons to secure housing up to March 2018.

The SDV-PHB pilot's key goals are to reduce the amount of time it takes for survivors of domestic violence to find safe, affordable housing, as well as to learn which services and supports most effectively enable housing stability. This pilot also supports the Province's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS) to provide more portable housing benefits, enabling people to more quickly find housing in their preferred locations.

The pilot will be administered by Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA). To receive this funding, SSHA is required to enter into a Transfer Payment Agreement with the Ministry of Housing. This report recommends the necessary actions to receive and administer this funding.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council approve the receipt of \$3,414,425 from the Province over a two-year period to deliver the Survivors of Domestic Violence – Portable Housing Benefit (SDV-PHB) pilot.
2. City Council authorize the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to enter into a Transfer Payment Agreement and related agreement(s) with the Ministry of Housing necessary for the receipt and expenditure of funding under the SDV-PHB pilot program on such terms and conditions as are satisfactory to the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, and in a form approved by the City Solicitor
3. Council authorize the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to extend or replace the current administration agreement between the City of Toronto, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (now the Ministry of Housing) and the Ministry of Finance, beyond its current termination date to facilitate the delivery of the 2016-17 and 2017-18 SDV-PHB pilot program on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager and in a form approved by the City Solicitor.
4. City Council amend the Approved 2016 Operating Budgets for Shelter, Support and Housing Administration by \$1,228,225 gross, \$0 net to deliver the Survivors of Domestic Violence – Portable Housing Benefit pilot and include \$2,186,200 gross and \$0 net in Shelter, Support and Housing Administration's 2017 recommended budget.
5. City Council authorize the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to utilize 10% of the funding for administration, an amount of \$341,442, the administrative allocation permitted by the Survivors of Domestic Violence – Portable Housing Benefit pilot.
6. City Council amend the 2016 Approved Operating Budget for Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) by \$42,711 gross and \$0 net, and approve staffing expenditures in the 2017 and 2018 (SSHA) budgets of approximately \$298,289 gross and \$0 net from SDV-PHB pilot administrative allocation, to hire a full time temporary Supervisor, Client Services; Caseworker; and Support Assistant B to assist with the administration of the SDV-PHB Pilot Program.
7. City Council authorize the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, as appropriate, to enter into agreements or other suitable arrangements with other City divisions, provincial agencies, community agencies, private entities and/or individuals to deliver the Survivors of Domestic Violence –

Portable Housing Benefit pilot in accordance with the provincial guidelines for the program .

### **Financial Impact**

The Provincial SDV-PHB funding will flow \$3,414,425 gross and \$0 net to the City over two years as follows:

<b>SSHA Operating Budget Year</b>	<b>SDV-PHB Funding Year</b>	<b>Amount which the City will receive from the Province</b>
2016	2016 to 2017	\$1,228,225
2017	2017 to 2018	\$2,186,200

This funding will require an in-year budget adjustment to initiate the pilot's delivery and cover any related administrative costs, requiring the 2016 Operating Budget for SSHA to be amended by \$1,228,225 gross and \$0 net. The 2017 recommended budget will include the pilot funding amount of \$2,186,200 gross and \$0 net.

The SDV-PHB pilot allows up to 10% of funding, \$341,442, to be allocated to administrative funding to deliver the program, to be divided over the funding years. Although staff are still exploring the possibility of extending an existing agreement for housing allowance administration with the Ministry of Finance (MOF), 3 temporary full time administrative staff support is required to lead the implementation of the project, support the referral process and oversee data collection for Ministry reporting and evaluation.

It is recommended that a Supervisor, Client Services; Caseworker, Housing; and Support Assistant B be hired on a temporary full time basis to cover the administrative needs in the 2016, 2017 and 2018 budget years to be fully funded by the SDV-PHB-Pilot administration allocation.

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

### **Equity Impact**

Housing allowances are an important tool used by the City to improve housing affordability for residents and assist individuals experiencing homelessness to find housing more quickly. The City's participation in the SDV-PHB pilot will support survivors of domestic violence and their families, including those experiencing homelessness, living in transitional housing and staying in unsafe conditions.

## DECISION HISTORY

The City of Toronto is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) for housing and homelessness services as designated by the Province in the Housing Services Act, 2011.

At its meeting of December 9 and 10, 2015, City Council adopted the *City's Intimate Partner Violence Action Plan*, and provided direction to the City Manager, SSHA and other divisions to identify opportunities to further address the housing needs of those affected by intimate partner violence.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.HL8.1>

At its meeting of December 16, 17, and 18, 2013, City Council adopted the *2014-2019 Housing Stability Service Planning Framework* (HSSPF). HSSPF outlines the Division's strategic directions, which include creating housing opportunities for clients with a range of service needs through new programs and new service linkages.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.CD25.10>

SSHA is now in the process of implementing the strategic directions identified in the HSSPF. The Update on Implementation of the 2014-2019 Housing Stability Service Plan report CD11.8 adopted by Community Development and Recreation Committee on April 13, 2016 provides an update on the progress made to date.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CD11.8>

The *Housing Opportunities Toronto Affordable Housing Action Plan 2010-2020* was adopted by City Council at its meeting of August 5 and 6, 2009. HOT proposes 67 actions laid out in eight strategic themes to address Toronto's housing needs, including rent assistance through the coordination with community partners to expand the housing allowance initiatives.

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

## ISSUE BACKGROUND

In April 2016, SSHA submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI) to receive funding from the Ministry of Housing (MH) Survivors of Domestic Violence – Portable Housing Benefit (SDV-PHB) pilot. The pilot program will provide a monthly benefit to survivors of domestic violence in the Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) waiting list Special Priority Program (SPP) until March 2018.

The pilot application required that SSHA outline a proposed SDV-PHB program. After performing an income gap analysis which considered family size, costs to secure and rent an apartment, other benefits available to households, and the proportion of income needed for housing, SSHA proposed a two-part benefit which includes a one-time \$2,500 start-up payment to secure new housing and a \$500 per month housing allowance.

Key aims are:

- to allow survivors to move more quickly from shelters and other precarious housing to safe and stable housing, such as those on the Centralized Waiting List who wait an average of 10 months to move into social housing;
- to expand housing choice for SPP households beyond social housing, and to better understand the housing choices that will be made by recipients given the benefit's portability;
- to evaluate the household's experience and range of benefit options with respect to the delivery of a portable housing benefit, and to better understand the support services needed to achieve successful housing outcomes; and
- to align with Ontario's Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment and related City of Toronto policies such as the Intimate Partner Violence Action Plan.

SSHA estimates that up to 355 households will be able to participate in the pilot program, given the benefit structure, funding amount, and the March 2018 end date; however, the Province has advised that the pilot may be extended depending on the Province's evaluation of its outcomes.

The City has entered into an Administrative Agreement with the provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (now the Ministry of Housing) and Ministry of Finance (MOF) to deliver the existing IAH Housing Allowance program. The model makes use of an automated benefit management system utilizing Canada Revenue Agency data and implements a responsive and accountable issues resolution process for clients. Possibility of extending this agreement for the new program will be explored with provincial staff.

## **COMMENTS**

City Council has previously taken the position that the social housing waiting list is not an appropriate or effective mechanism to support the specific needs of women fleeing violence and has requested that the Provincial government replace the Special Priority Housing Category with long-term funding for a specialized program to provide rent supplements and appropriate supports that better meet the housing needs of survivors of domestic violence. The SDV-PHB pilot is taking the first steps to develop a program that achieves those outcomes.

Housing affordability is a significant challenge in Toronto, and the lack of affordable rental housing may be hindering women who wish to leave abusive situations to protect themselves and their children. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) 2015 Ontario Rental Market Report demonstrates that Toronto's rental vacancy rate is the lowest of all major cities in the province and average rent is the highest, adding an additional challenge to those in search of a new home.

SSHA will utilize its well-established programs, resources and partnerships to identify recipients for this benefit, drawing from the Centralized Waiting List which at any given time has approximately 1,500 households in the Special Priority Program (SPP), and working with community partners to reach households living in a variety of housing situations at various stages of their journey towards recovery and housing stability.

The City's Intimate Partner Violence Action Plan, approved by City Council on December 9, 2015, identified that the City should work with the Province to identify further opportunities to address the housing needs of those affected by intimate partner violence.

For these reasons, the City's participation in the SDV-PHB pilot is an excellent opportunity to provide another tool to support Toronto's SPP applicants in their move to a safer home. It is anticipated that Toronto's participation in the program will have benefits throughout the service system, such as:

- enabling survivors of domestic violence who are currently homeless, in shelters, and other transitional housing to more quickly find safe and stable homes;
- reducing the number of people in the SPP program awaiting social housing, as well as allowing those remaining in the program to access housing more quickly; and
- providing the City with the opportunity to learn from the delivery of this new portable benefit, to strengthen its community partnerships involved in service delivery, and to continue to develop its understanding of how best to support survivors of domestic violence with securing safe, stable homes.

SSHA collaborates regularly with the Violence Against Women (VAW) services sector to coordinate access to shelter and other services and has ongoing communication with the leading agencies that work locally to protect the rights of women and their families, such as Children's Aid Societies, the Violence Against Women (CAS/VAW) Advisory Committee, the Transitional and Housing Support Program (THSP) Network, the Violence against Women Network (VAWN) and the Woman Abuse Council of Toronto (WomanACT).

These groups have all indicated their support for Toronto's participation in the pilot and have committed to support implementation by assisting clients to apply for housing allowances and secure appropriate housing. SSHA will engage with these organizations to further develop program implementation plans and develop a referral process to support clients to apply for and secure housing through the pilot program.

As a component of the pilot, the MH will conduct an evaluation of the program to evaluate its viability as an alternative to traditional RGI assistance and its impact on the lives of survivors of domestic violence.

The City's participation in the SDV-PHB pilot is an important opportunity for Toronto to provide an additional support to survivors of domestic violence, strengthen the collaborative services provided with our community partners, and to gain further insight into the supports needed for persons to achieve housing stability. Both the City and the Province will have a better understanding of how the housing needs of survivors of domestic violence can be improved, providing evidence basis for future program and policy decisions.

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## **SIGNATURE**

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