



Portable Housing Benefit – Special Priority Policy (PHB – SPP) Program Extension

Date: June 27, 2018

To: Community Development and Recreation Committee

From: General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration

Wards: All

SUMMARY

The Ministry of Housing (MHO) has made \$30,000,000 in funding available, province-wide, for the Portable Housing Benefit - Special Priority Policy (PHB - SPP) Program. The PHB - SPP Program is an extension of the Survivors of Domestic Violence – Portable Housing Benefit (SDV-PHB) pilot program, which was introduced in 2016. The program will provide a monthly housing benefit to survivors of domestic violence or human trafficking who have special priority policy (SPP) status on the Centralized Waiting List. Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) estimates that the funds allocated under this program will assist up to 500 households in Toronto to secure housing over two years.

The PHB - SPP Program aims to provide SPP households with additional options to meet their housing needs, alleviate pressure on the social housing system, and build on the success of the pilot. Instead of staying in shelters or other precarious housing situations until a social housing unit becomes available, this program will provide survivors of domestic violence or human trafficking with the option to receive a portable housing benefit so they can quickly find housing in their community. This program 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.

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council approve the receipt of \$250,000 in 2018-2019, and \$250,000 in 2019-2020, and ongoing, for housing assistance for, among others, households included in the special priority category under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*;
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 and the Ministry of Finance or either of them, to facilitate the delivery of the 2018-19 and 2019-20 PHB - SPP Program and, subject to the appropriate budget approvals, any amendments thereto to extend the term of the program beyond 2020, on terms and conditions satisfactory to the General Manager and in a form approved by the City Solicitor;
3. City Council amend the Approved 2018 Operating Budget for SSHA by \$250,000 gross and \$0 net to deliver the PHB -SPP Program and include \$250,000 gross and \$0 net in SSHA's 2019 recommended budget; and
4. 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 PHB - SPP Program in accordance with the provincial guidelines for the program.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The Ministry of Housing will flow PHB-SPP program funding to the City over two years as follows:

SSHA Operating Budget Year	PHB - SPP Program Funding Year	Funding Received from the Province
2018	2018 to 2019	\$250,000
2019	2019 to 2020	\$250,000

This funding will require an in-year budget adjustment to initiate the program's delivery and cover any related administrative costs, requiring the 2018 Operating Budget for SSHA to be amended by \$250,000 gross and \$0 net. The 2019 recommended budget will include the program funding amount of \$250,000 gross and \$0 net.

The Interim 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 PHB - SPP Program will support survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking 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 on June 7, 2017, the Community Development and Recreation Committee received for information the Survivors of Domestic Violence Portable Housing Benefit - Update on Sector Consultations. The consultations provided the opportunity for both the City and the Violence Against Women sector to reaffirm their commitment to continue to work together to seek opportunities to develop or improve initiatives and programs that help survivors of domestic violence find and maintain safe and affordable housing.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.CD21.15>

At its meeting of October 5, 6 and 7, 2016, City Council adopted the Survivors of Domestic Violence - Portable Housing Benefit pilot and authorized the General Manager, SSHA, 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 Survivors of Domestic Violence - Portable Housing Benefit pilot program.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CD14.10>

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>

COMMENTS

The *Housing Services Act* provides a framework that Service Managers are required to follow in the assessment of eligibility for special priority status. Applicants assigned special priority status have historically received subsidized housing faster than other applicants.

In 2016, the City implemented a pilot program funded by the Ministry of Housing (MHO) known as the Survivors of Domestic Violence – Portable Housing Benefit (SDV-PHB). This pilot program provided a portable housing benefit to 168 applicants with special priority status. Feedback from households who participated in the pilot program was extremely positive. However, some eligible households declined the benefit preferring to wait for an RGI housing offer from the Centralized Waiting List due to the uncertainty of ongoing funding beyond the March 31, 2018 pilot end date. The PHB - SPP Program is an extension of the pilot program, which will allow SSHA to assist up to 500 households to secure housing over two years.

The City has on average 1200 applicants with special priority status on the Centralized Waiting List at any given time. Approximately 25% of the applicants approved for special priority each year are referred through agencies that are mandated to support survivors of domestic violence. The remainder of the referrals come from agencies funded to provide housing help by the City, community agencies, and victim and social service agencies. The City is participating in the PHB - SPP Program to provide an additional housing option for applicants with special priority status.

In April 2016, stakeholders in the VAW Sector supported the program, indicating that they had the "capacity to identify women in need and who would qualify for portable subsidies, connect them with private landlords, and provide administration and other supports".

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