



REPORT FOR INFORMATION

Additional Information on Automated Income Verification for Property Tax, Water and Solid Waste Relief Programs

Date: December 20, 2019

To: General Government and Licensing Committee

From: Controller

Wards: All

SUMMARY

In response to a request from the General Government and Licensing Committee, this report provides information on consultations conducted by the Controller to gather input from stakeholders regarding a City proposal to engage the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) to use the CRA's income data to determine eligibility for the City's property tax and utility relief programs.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The financial implications associated with entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Canada Revenue Agency to provide automated income verification are identified within the staff report from the Controller dated November 22, 2019 ([Item GL10.2, Automated Income Verification for Property Tax, Water and Solid Waste Relief Programs](#)).

There are no further financial impacts associated with this report.

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

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting on December 2, 2019, the General Government and Licensing Committee deferred consideration of [Item GL10.2: Automated Income Verification for Property Tax, Water and Solid Waste Relief Programs](#) and requested that the Controller consult with stakeholders and report back to the January 6, 2020 meeting of the General Government and Licensing Committee on the recommendations within the report.

COMMENTS

Consultation with Stakeholders

On December 12, 2019, Revenue Services made a presentation to the Toronto Seniors Strategy Accountability Table on a proposal to engage the Canada Revenue Agency to use the CRA's income data to determine eligibility for the City's property tax and utility relief programs.

The Toronto Seniors Strategy Accountability Table is composed of senior's advocates from various organizations and service providers, seniors and caregivers, community support service agencies, university and research institutes, as well as representatives from various city divisions, school boards, businesses and provincial, national and international partners. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Samir K. Sinha, Director of Geriatrics at Sinai Health Systems and University Health Network. An excerpt from the official meeting minutes can be viewed in Attachment 1, and membership information for the Accountability Table can be found in Attachment 2 to this report.

The purpose of the consultation was to discuss the recommendations listed in the report, and to record stakeholder views on the use of automated income verification from the Canada Revenue Agency for the purposes of determining eligibility for the City's Property Tax, Water and Solid Waste relief programs, as well as the potential for expansion of automated income verification to other City programs that utilize income information to determine eligibility.

Overall, the discussion and feedback was positive and very receptive to the proposed changes with respect to the automated exchange of income information between the City and the Canada Revenue Agency. One of the comments made was that there is already a vast array of application forms that exist for various programs for seniors and persons living with a disability, and that the application process can be quite difficult for these groups to navigate through. Therefore, any changes the City can implement to improve and simplify completion of the requisite forms or the application process were encouraged and positively accepted by stakeholders.

Another comment made commended the efforts and commitment of Revenue Services to continue to allow and accept the traditional paper-based application form and associated verification documents, in this technologically advancing climate. It was mentioned that various marginalized groups of seniors and those living with a disability may not have access or the ability to complete the application form online, and that this will continue to be an issue. Continuing to allow the paper-based method of application will ensure that potential applicants will not be disadvantaged or prevented from applying if they are not able to use, or are not comfortable with, an online application process.

A question that arose during the meeting was whether we could extend the proposed Memorandum of Understanding with the Canada Revenue Agency in the future, to possibly go one step further. The comment proposed that the Canada Revenue Agency and City could work together to proactively notify individuals at the time that their Notice of Assessment is provided of any and all City programs that they may qualify for based on their income level.

The fact that discussion took place with respect to ways that we could potentially expand out the proposed Memorandum of Understanding in ways that would further assist seniors and those living with a disability, even prior to its adoption by Council, signify the overall positivity and embracement of the recommendations within this report.

In summary, participants expressed their support of a more timely and cost effective process to apply for and receive confirmation of eligibility for the City's tax and utility relief programs.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

Andrew Flynn
Controller

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Excerpt from Toronto Seniors Strategy Accountability Table Minutes

Attachment 2 – Membership – Toronto Seniors Strategy Accountability Table