



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the General Committee

From: Sheldon Laidman, Commissioner of Community Services

Meeting Date: December 2, 2019

Subject: Report CSSS19-015
Centralized Waiting List Services at Peterborough Housing Corporation

Purpose

A report to recommend the termination of the agreement with Peterborough Housing Corporation for the Centralized Waiting List services provided by Housing Access Peterborough, and for the service to be transferred to the Social Services Division.

Recommendation

That Council approve the recommendation included in report CSSS19-015 dated December 2, 2019 of the Commissioner of Community Services, as follows:

That the Commissioner of Community Services be authorized to terminate the Centralized Waiting List Management agreement with Peterborough Housing Corporation for Centralized Waiting List services provided by Housing Access Peterborough as of June 30, 2020.

Budget and Financial Implications

Centralized Waiting List services are proposed to be provided by Social Services staff as of July 1, 2020. The draft 2020 budget reflects a 50% reduction (\$71,350) in the payment to Housing Access Peterborough line to reflect this change.

Background

The **Housing Services Act**, 2011 requires that Service Managers have a Centralized Waiting List for selecting households who are waiting for Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance. Service Managers may delegate these duties to another organization, but the responsibility for the service remains with the Service Manager.

In 2003, shortly after the download of social housing service management from the province to municipalities, the City of Peterborough delegated Centralized Waiting List duties to Peterborough Housing Corporation (PHC). Housing Access Peterborough (HAP) was established via a service agreement, as an administrative group of PHC, not incorporated separately.

The service agreement with PHC requires 6 months written notice from either party to terminate. Staff met with PHC in advance of this report to discuss these recommendations. Pending approval of the recommendations, staff will formally notify PHC in writing to terminate the agreement as of June 30, 2020. Social Services staff will provide Centralized Waiting List services starting July 1, 2020.

The proposed change is not in response to deficiencies in the service provided by HAP since in its 16 years in operation - HAP has provided excellent service to applicants and the Service Manager. But the landscape has shifted starting in 2018 where the City of Peterborough committed to ending chronic homelessness by 2025, using a person-centred, data-driven approach. This approach requires direct control over access to the 1,569 units of Rent-Geared-to-Income housing that the City funds and administers in addition to the realized cost savings.

Review of the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan

The 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan launched in 2014 committed to “reviewing the system of applying for Rent-Geared-to-Income housing and rent supplements”. A key recommendation in the Review of the Housing and Homelessness Plan conducted in 2018-19 is that, to end chronic homelessness by 2025, the City must dedicate more of its publicly funded housing resources to help people experiencing homelessness.

As part of the Review of the Plan, OrgCode Consulting Inc. (OrgCode) performed an Operational Review of Peterborough’s homelessness response system. OrgCode identified a disconnect between the homelessness system and access to publicly funded housing. The consultant pointed to an “almost non-existent” access to RGI housing for people experiencing homelessness. The report states: “If achieving the goals of Peterborough’s 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan is to be successful, ensuring that all publicly funded Housing and Homelessness projects cooperate together, with vulnerable households experiencing homelessness receiving a higher priority in the housing waiting list.”

Housing Access Peterborough has continued to meet its original mandate of administering the waiting list according to initial legislated requirements. Direct delivery by the City is required to be able to respond to changing priorities and to ensure municipally funded housing resources can be leveraged to end chronic homelessness.

Staff will undertake a review of waiting list priorities early in 2020 to determine how best to implement a waiting list priority for people experiencing homelessness.

Integration of Housing and Homelessness Services

Managing the Centralized Waiting List directly will enable the City to provide improved people-centred service through integrated service provision. An individual seeking help at the Social Services office will be able to apply for income support, get help to find a job, access childcare subsidy and put their name on the waiting list for Rent-Geared-to-Income housing assistance.

Social Services delivery of the Centralized Waiting List will help close a gap for vulnerable households already on the list who may be challenged to keep their information up to date. If a household cannot be reached or does not respond to an annual update request, their name is removed from the Centralized Waiting List. For Ontario Works recipients, staff will be able to cross reference with the SAMS database to find their most current contact information, so they do not lose their place on the wait list.

This change would bring Peterborough into alignment with the majority of Service Managers across Ontario. Out of the 47 Service Managers in the province, Peterborough is one of only three that continue to have their Centralized Waiting List service provided by their Local Housing Corporation.

Implementation

Staff have a draft implementation plan for the delivery of Centralized Waiting List services by Social Services staff, including a plan for training staff and managing the transition with applicants, tenants and housing providers who use the service. Staff for the Centralized Waiting List services will come from shifting responsibilities for existing Social Services staff. No additional positions will be required to provide this service.

Summary

Direct management of the Centralized Waiting List will be a major change for Peterborough Housing Corporation, applicants, non-profit housing providers and City staff. But it is a significant step forward in creating a more collaborative system to end chronic homelessness – a key commitment in the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Submitted by,

Sheldon Laidman
Commissioner of Community Services

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