



City of  
**Peterborough**

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**To:** Members of the General Committee

**From:** Sheldon Laidman, Commissioner, Community Services

**Meeting Date:** August 8, 2023

**Subject:** Homemakers Program Expansion, Report CSD23-011

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## **Purpose**

A report to expand the use of the **Homemakers and Nurses Services Act** (the Act) to deliver intensive in-home supports and training to low-income, hard to house individuals and families for the purpose of improving housing retention, preventing homelessness, and to strengthen family and housing circumstances.

## **Recommendations**

That Council approve the recommendations outlined in Report CSD23-011, dated August 8, 2023, of the Commissioner of Community Services as follows:

- a) That staff be authorized to submit a request to the Ministry of Health to increase the City budget target for the Homemakers Program by \$200,402 starting in 2024;
- b) That staff be directed to use other non municipal funding sources from the Social Services Division budget for the required 20% cost match to ensure no net impact to the municipal budget; and
- c) That if the request to the Ministry of Health is successful, up to two new full-time permanent positions are approved in the Social Services Division to start as early as July 2024 on a full-time permanent basis.

## **Budget and Financial Implications**

Two new staff positions are being recommended in this Report. These positions will be in the Social Services Division similar to the Client Support Worker (CSW) position. The

annual salary and benefits cost for these two positions in 2024 is estimated to be \$180,402. An additional \$20,000 in client support funds are also being included. The Homemakers Program is an 80/20 cost share, with the Province of Ontario, through the Ministry of Health (MoH), paying 80% and the City paying 20%.

If approved for the 2024 budget, these positions are projected to start in July 2024 due to budget and approval timing with the Province. Therefore, the 2024 budget would include 6 months of salary and expenses. The full annual cost of the positions and client support funds is \$200,402. The 20% City share is \$40,080 annually. The 6-month implication for 2024 would be \$20,040. After 2024, these positions would be full-time permanent and subject to the fully 20% City share. The recommendation is to use non municipal program funding for the 20% City share to ensure no net impact to the municipal budget. Potential sources include the recently increased provincial Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) funding or Ontario Works life stabilization provincial funding. City staff have reviewed the Act and it does not appear to restrict usage of other provincial funds for the City funding portion. If the Province does not approve of the use of provincial funding for the City's 20% cost share, staff would return to Council for further direction.

The current budget for the Homemakers Program is \$140,000. If the increase of \$200,402 is approved, the total annual budget for this program would be \$340,402.

## **Background**

### **Current Homemakers Program**

The City has delivered the Homemakers Program for many years. The local purpose of this program is to provide light housekeeping services, such as cleaning, laundry, and food preparation to assist low-income seniors or people with disabilities. The goal is to help perform these tasks that would otherwise not get done and compromise their basic home upkeep. This service aims to improve the quality of life for clients by preventing home disrepair and negative health outcomes and therefore help them stay in their home longer and avoid long-term care or dependency on other government services.

The City hires an external service provider to deliver this service. The current service provider is CBI Health and their contract is currently in the process of being renewed for 2024. Prior to the pandemic, approximately 90 clients were receiving services. No new clients were brought into the program during the pandemic resulting in a drop to the current level of 65 clients. Staff are accepting referrals from qualified agencies to increase client levels to 90 individuals.

The current budget for the Homemakers Program is \$140,000 with \$112,000 covered by the MoH and \$28,000 paid by the City and County. The County is included as the program has clients in the County.

### **Service options available under the *Homemakers and Nurses Services Act***

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The *Homemakers and Nurses Services Act* (the Act) allows municipalities to deliver homemaker services under the following three situations:

1. When separate accommodations would be needed to care for a child while a parent or guardian is absent due to illness or other health-related factors.
2. For seniors or people with disabilities who need assistance to remain in their home.
3. For a household experiencing family or financial difficulties that require help to avoid dependency on public assistance.

The City currently delivers service based on the second criteria noted above. This report is recommending expanding the services covered through the Act by building a program that would qualify under the third criteria.

### **Proposed Home Support Program**

This report is recommending the creation of a Home Support Program (HSP) within the Social Services Division. The City's review of gaps in the homelessness service system clearly identifies that the greatest unfunded need is access to supportive housing programs. City staff's review of this provincial program is that it provides an opportunity to leverage provincial funding to create a new program of housing supports. The purpose of this program would be to improve the likelihood of high-risk, low-income individuals and families to maintain a home and build confidence in performing activities of daily living. This would be achieved through custom designed plans based on the unique needs of each individual, family, or group. People who are at-risk of losing their housing, struggling to maintain their housing, and those transitioning from homelessness to housing are the target populations for this program.

The customized plans developed for each client could include things such as:

- budgeting, household management, and routines
- coping with housing issues
- basic nutrition, menu planning, grocery shopping, and meal preparation
- parenting
- managing and keeping appointments
- goal setting
- problem solving
- time management

- stress management
- self-esteem
- managing relationships with neighbours and landlords.

The HSP would also include the delivery of workshop on the topics noted above in groups setting with the target populations.

It is expected that with the addition of two new staff, this program could accommodate 50 clients in the program at any one time. These 50 clients would be shared among the Social Services outreach work. Clients for this program would be selected by Social Services staff using a combination of sources such as the By-Name Priority List, Client Service Workers input, Outreach Worker recommendations, and local agencies. The needs of the client would dictate the scope and duration of service.

The HSP budget includes a support fund of \$20,000. These funds would complement other funds available from Social Services to further increase the likelihood of success when transitioning someone from homelessness or assisting a family.

### **Current Social Services Outreach Workers**

The Social Services Division currently has 42 Client Service Works (CSW) positions. Four of these positions are dedicated to homelessness outreach. While the CSW Job Description includes homelessness outreach activities, the daily activities of the outreach workers are quite different from other CSWs. Outreach CSWs:

- Do not have a caseload, while other CSWs have between 110-120 cases.
- Work directly with individuals who are homeless, including those living in shelters, living rough, couch surfing, and those living outside.
- Continually work with people in crisis and needing assistance on many challenging levels, including homelessness.
- Are assigned to shelters and transitional housing locations to conduct outreach.
- Are frequently called to emergency situations in the field, office, shelters, and other agencies.
- Assist people to move into new accommodations.
- Assist people on other forms of social assistance other than Ontario Work and otherwise do not have a high level of life stabilization supports.
- Are the City's first contact for anyone tenting.

### **Service Gap**

One of the biggest successes an Outreach Worker can achieve with a homeless client is to secure stable and affordable housing for them. Unfortunately, many of the newly housed clients do not possess the basic skills needed to independently manage a home. The availability of community supports to assist with the transition from homelessness to stable housing is sporadic and a significant gap locally.

Some local agencies do support their clients to manage their home. However, this assistance is linked to clients already receiving services from those agencies and connected to other health supports or based on residency in a property managed by the agency.

The HSP would significantly expand the availability of home support services and make them available to a population that may not be eligible for those services from other agencies. Social Services staff will collaborate with other agencies to allocate and manage this new service effectively.

### **Proposed Timeline**

If the recommendations in the Report are approved the following is the anticipated timeline to move the program forward:

- **August 2023** staff submit a request to the MoH for an increase in City's funding limit by \$200,402.
- **April/May 2024** the MoH will inform the City of their budget target and if the requested increase was successful.
- **May/June 2024**, if successful, staff will proceed with recruitment of the two new positions.
- **July 2024** would be the earliest start date of the new program.
- **May 2024**, if the funding request is declined, this program will be paused and an application to the MoH will be resubmitted for 2025.

If the MoH approves a lesser amount from what is being requested, the option to hire one new staff will be pursued if the funding increase can sufficiently cover this cost.

Funding increases to the MoH for this program are evaluated based on several factors. Some factors include current MoH budgets, fluctuating allocations to other municipalities, and potential requests from other municipalities for allocation increases.

### **Summary**

The City has used the *Homemakers and Nurses Act* for many years to assist low-income seniors and people with disabilities with basic home services. These services

have helped them remain independent, avoid unhealthy living conditions, and avoid reliance on other forms of government assistance. By expanding the City's use of the Act, two additional Social Services staff would be hired to help create a Home Support Program. This program would assist high-risk individuals to retain housing and assist families who are struggling to maintain their housing. Developing the Home Support Program is contingent upon a successful request to the Ministry of Health for additional funding.

Submitted by,

Sheldon Laidman  
Commissioner of Community Services

**Contact Name:**

Chris Kawalec  
Community Development Program Manager  
Phone: 705-742-7777 Ext. 3834  
Toll Free: 1-855-738-3755 Ext. 3834  
Fax: 705-876-4610  
E-Mail: [ckawalec@peterborough.ca](mailto:ckawalec@peterborough.ca)