

To:	Warden Halliday and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	June 14, 2018
Subject / Report No:	HDR-CW-10-18 Portable Housing Benefit- Special Priority Policy Program
Title:	Portable Housing Benefit- Special Priority Policy Program
Prepared by:	Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Housing
Reviewed by:	Kim Wingrove
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	
Status:	Recommendation adopted by Committee of the Whole as presented as per Resolution CW146-18; Endorsed by County Council on June 28, 2018.

Recommendation

1. That report HDR-CW-10-18 be received and that a by-law regarding the Portable Housing Benefit- Special Priority Policy Program Transfer Payment Agreement with the Province be brought forward for Council's consideration.

Executive Summary

Ontario is launching the Portable Housing Benefit - Special Priority Policy program to provide rental assistance to households who qualify for the Special Priority Policy (victims of domestic violence) under the Housing Services Act, 2011. A transfer payment agreement with the Province is required to assist in the delivery of this program with the Ministry of Finance.

Background and Discussion

The Portable Housing Benefit - Special Priority Policy (PHB-SPP) program provides rental assistance to households who qualify for the Special Priority Policy category according to the Housing Services Act, 2011.

Eligible applicants who would prefer to live in private rental housing rather than wait for social housing are able to apply for monthly portable housing benefit payments under this program.

Recently, amendments were made to the SPP to expand the policy to include survivors of human trafficking, improve the application process for households, and better ensure the policy is culturally inclusive to Indigenous groups and reflective of the complex cycle of abuse experienced by some households.

What is a Portable Benefit?

A portable housing benefit (PHB) is a monthly subsidy (housing allowance) provided to a low-income household to assist with housing costs. Unlike other forms of housing assistance, the benefit is tied to the household and not a physical housing unit, allowing the benefit to move with the household to any Service Manager area in Ontario. Households will have more flexibility to choose where they live to be closer to family, social support networks, schools and employment opportunities. For this reason the program and subsidy is administered by the Ministry of Finance.

Eligibility

Applicants must meet the following criteria to be eligible to begin receiving a PHB-SPP benefit:

- Reside in Ontario;
- Be on a social housing waiting list and eligible for the SPP category set out in Ontario Regulation 367/11 under the Housing Services Act, 2011;
- Be a renter household or fleeing an abusive situation;
- Not be in receipt of, or part of a household in receipt of, RGI assistance, a PHB-SPP benefit, or any other government-funded housing benefit, with the exception of social assistance shelter payments; and
- Consent to being removed from the social housing waiting list of the Service Manager that designated the household under the SPP, once a PHB-SPP benefit is received.

Service Manager Role

The Service Manager role will be to provide information about the program to eligible households, assist in the completion of the application, calculate the subsidy based on the latest Canada Revenue Agency notice of assessment and provide first and last month's rent. Grey County does not provide the funds for the actual subsidy. The subsidy is provided by the province.

The Service Manager will receive a \$250 administration fee for each application that receives funding and a reimbursement of the first and last month's rent provided to the eligible applicant.

Pilot Project

The province launched a pilot Portable Housing Benefit Pilot for Survivors of Domestic Violence in 22 communities in September 2016. Key findings and lessons learned from the pilot project highlighted the significant and immediate positive impact this program had on the ability of households to quickly find safe, stable and affordable housing, and the strong support of participants to recommend the program to other households.

Funding 2018-20

Households transitioning from the pilot project to this program will be given priority for the funds. Up to \$10 million in 2018-19 and up to \$15 million in 2019-20 is available for eligible applicants approved for the program. Due to the PHB-SPP program budget, the ministry cannot guarantee funding of all eligible applicants.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

Grey County is required to enter into a transfer payment agreement with the Province by June 30, 2018.

Financial and Resource Implications

Administration costs and first and last month's rent reimbursed from the Province for each applicant that received funding from the Province.

The subsidy amount is provided directly from the Province to the participant.

Relevant Consultation

Internal:

External:

Appendices and Attachments

[Portable Housing Benefit Transfer Payment Agreement](#)