

To:	Warden McQueen and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	March 12, 2020
Subject / Report No:	HDR-CW-03-20
Title:	Canada -Ontario Housing Benefit Program Transfer Payment Agreement
Prepared by:	Anne Marie Shaw
Reviewed by:	Kim Wingrove
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	County-wide initiative
Status:	Recommendation adopted by Committee March 12, 2020 as presented per Resolution CW64-20;

Recommendation

1. That Report HDR-CW-03-20 regarding the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit Program Transfer Agreement be received; and
2. That any additional funds made available to Grey County through the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit program be approved for use in 2020; and
3. That staff be authorized to proceed prior to County Council approval as per section 25.6 (b) of Procedural By-law 5003-18.

Executive Summary

The Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit program is part of the National Housing Strategy bilateral agreement signed between Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and the Province. The County of Grey is required to enter into a transfer payment agreement to assist with the execution of the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit program for eligible County of Grey residents.

Background and Discussion

The Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) is a federal-provincial housing allowance program launching on April 1, 2020. The purpose of the program is to increase the affordability of rental housing by providing an income-tested, portable housing benefit directly to eligible households in Housing Need that are on, or are eligible to be on, social housing waiting lists or living in Community Housing.

The portable housing benefit is a monthly subsidy provided to a low-income household to assist with housing costs. Unlike other forms of housing assistance such as rent-geared-to-income assistance, the portable housing benefit is tied to the household and not to a physical housing unit, allowing the portable housing benefit to move with the household to any Service Manager area in Ontario.

The role of the Service Manager is to assist households to fill out the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit and send to the Ministry of Finance. Eligible households will receive a monthly benefit based on 80% of average market rent for the area and 30 per cent of their adjusted family net income. Payments will be sent directly to households and there will be an annual review completed by the Ministry of Finance for on-going subsidy.

Eligibility

Household must meet the following criteria to be eligible for the COHB:

- Reside permanently in Ontario
- Be on a social housing waiting list; or eligible to be on such a waiting list, or living in community housing;
- Not be in receipt of, or part of a household in receipt of, RGI assistance, a COHB benefit, or any other government-funded housing benefit, with the exception of social assistance shelter payments;
- Consent to being removed from the social housing waiting list of the Service Manager where the application was completed and approved.

Service Manager Role

The Service Manager is not directly delivering this program but does play a significant role. The Service Manager will:

- The Service Manager provides information to the household and determines eligibility
- Assist the applicant with the application
- Determine the Adjusted Family Net Income and verifies other information
- Service Manager submits application and back up information to Ministry of Finance
- Ensure the annual allotment of funds is spent and not over-spent

Subsidy Amount

Subsidy is determined using the following method assuming the Average Market Rent for a one bedroom in Grey County is \$767

Example: Senior on a fixed income of \$17,500 a year. The monthly COHB benefit is calculated as:

Monthly COHB = (AMR x 80%) – [(AFNI x 30%) / 12 months]

$\$767 \times 80\% = \614

$\$17,500 \times 30\% = \$5,250 / 12 \text{ months} = \437.50

\$614 - \$437.50 = \$176.50 a month

Households that are found eligible are also eligible for first and last rents month through the Service Manager where applicable. Households that receive this benefit must agree to be removed from the service managers local housing list

Service Managers are provided with annual planning allocation amounts for PHB payments to successful applicants, administration costs, and reimbursement of first and last month's rent payments to eligible households, for each fiscal year. The funds come directly from the Ministry of Finance to the resident.

Links to 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

The CHPI funding assists Grey County in providing services to fulfill goals of the Grey County 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan which was reviewed and updated this year. The plan identifies four key strategic areas:

- Create More Affordable Housing
- Preserve Existing Stock
- Reduce Chronic Homelessness
- Increase Supportive Housing

Related goals include:

- Create more affordable housing units
- Provide sustainable housing options for residents of Grey County

Financial and Resource Implications

\$180,678 in provincial funding will be available for residents eligible for funding for the fiscal year of April 2020 to March 2021. This program has a neutral impact on the County, as no levy funds are required.

Grey County receives \$250 as an administration fee for each successful application. This is subtracted from the annual allotment. First and last months' rent is also subtracted from the annual allotment

It is thought this funding amount will provide a monthly subsidy to 35- 40 households of Grey County.

Relevant Consultation

Internal: 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan

External:

Appendices and Attachments

[Transfer payment agreement](#)

