

To:	Warden McQueen and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	May 14, 2020
Subject / Report No:	HDR-CW-04-20
Title:	Social Services Relief Fund and COVID Related Housing Initiatives
Prepared by:	Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Housing
Reviewed by:	Kim Wingrove, CAO
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	All
Status:	Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CW87-20; Endorsed by County Council May 28, 2020 per Resolution CC54-20;

Recommendation

1. That report HDR-CW-04-20 regarding an update on the Social Services Relief Funds and COVID 19 related housing initiatives be received for information.

Executive Summary

The County of Grey received Social Services Relief Funding (SSRF) through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) to assist community agencies that support people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness with COVID 19 related expenses. The funds are to provide supports through the pandemic and into the recovery phase.

Background and Discussion

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a provincial \$200 million Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) to help protect the health and safety of the province's most vulnerable people has been created. On March 23, 2020, a joint memo was received from the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services (MCCSS) and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) outlining broadly how the SSRF would be allocated.

The SSRF has two components. One part is funding to individuals for current and non-social assistance clients (\$52 million across the province), to be delivered by Ontario Works. The second component is funding to Service Managers to keep frontline critical social services operating (\$148 million across the province) to be delivered through CHPI (Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative).

Service Managers determine local need and distribute the funding to ensure agencies and people are receiving the supports they need. The funds could be used for initiatives such as:

- Emergency Housing
- Use of motels and hotels
- Transportation Costs
- Isolation Centres
- Food and supplies
- Enhanced cleaning services
- Non-medical staffing
- Protective Equipment

Funds should be directed at supporting people in community housing, supportive housing, people with low incomes and those experiencing homelessness.

Grey County received a total allocation of \$2,312,900 for 2020-2021 out of the \$148 million allocated to service managers. Fifty percent of the funding was received in April, 25% in July and the remaining 25% in September, if required by the County to maintain COVID related services and supports. The funding letter states, “where necessary the balance of your Social Services Relief Fund allocation may be subject to reallocation or adjustment depending on local needs across the Province”. To date, 50% or \$1,156,450 of the County’s total allocation that has been received, \$246,550 of this funding has been provided (expensed) to the Community, with \$725,000 committed/promised, and the remaining \$184,900 available for future needs, as detailed below:

SSRF Funding Allocation – To Date

Recipient / Project	Expensed	Committed	To Be Determined
OSHaRE (Owen Sound Hunger and Relief Effort)	\$50,000		
SOAHAC (Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre)	\$22,000		
211 Community Connection	\$10,000		
Housing with Related Supports Providers	\$38,550		
Flesherton Food Bank	\$18,000		
South East Grey Community Services	\$ 5,000		
Markdale Food Program	\$5,000		
Y Housing	\$15,000	\$200,000	
Safe n Sound Grey Bruce	\$45,000		
United Way	\$28,000		
St Anglican Church (Town of The Blue Mountains) Food Programs	\$10,000		
Reception Centre – Owen Sound		\$ 50,000	
Isolation Centre – Sydenham Campus		\$125,000	
Non-Profit Housing/ Grey County Housing		\$200,000	
Rent Benefit		\$150,000	
Future Costs/To Be Determined			\$184,900
Total	\$246,550	\$725,000	\$184,900

Social Services Relief Fund Initiatives to Date

Communication to Community Partners

Since the advent of the current pandemic, County staff has been in close contact with funded service providers across the local homeless prevention system, with the intent to proactively offer resources and supports, and to stay ahead of emerging needs.

Through the Community Enhancement Program, Grey County supports many community partners and agencies that deliver services to people experiencing homelessness, at risk of homelessness or considered a vulnerable population. Staff reached out to these existing groups to determine their funding requirements for COVID 19 related expenses.

A one-page application is on the County website and social media was used to reach groups staff are not familiar with or groups that do not require County funding normally but still provide services to people at risk of homelessness. Applications are still being received to date.

Support for Community Agencies

The SSRF fund is assisting organizations that provide meals to help pay for increased food costs due to an increase in numbers attending for take out meals. OSHaRE normally provides approximately 500 meals a week and is now providing over 1500 meals a week. Food delivery to a person isolating has emerged as a need, through the United Way meals are being arranged and delivered by Habitat for Humanity. Funds are being used to assist agencies such as Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC) and M'Wikwedong as there is an increase in the need for their services.

Housing with Related Supports

The County funds five Housing with Related Supports Providers. The Providers are seeing costs such as enhanced cleaning, PPE expenses, an increase in wages to staff, an increase in staffing and other COVID expenses. Second Avenue Lodge has seen an increase in residents coming from the hospital. These residents are not normally funded (there are only so many subsidies available) and the County is subsidizing the extra residents at this time. Funding for current expenses and extra funds for the remaining fiscal year will be provided to support these housing providers

Emergency Housing

Y Housing provides emergency housing throughout Grey County. March saw a \$30,000 increase in the need for housing. Many of the County's vulnerable residents have physical health issues which require them to self isolate. Also, those living in group settings or couch surfing are coming forward for shelter. Staff expect this added service need to continue throughout the year. Y Housing has secured motel and hotel rooms around Grey County for those that may need to isolate and cannot due to congregate living arrangements.

Funds were also given to Safe n Sound for extra staffing and COVID related needs.

Reception Centre

A reception centre in Owen Sound has opened as a collaboration between Grey Bruce Public Health, Canadian Mental Health Association, Safe n Sound, and Grey County. The centre provides screening, information on COVID 19, refreshments, staff to answer questions and provide information and a chance to make referrals for services. Services include food, emergency housing, mental health services, funding, and other related services.

Isolation Centre

An isolation centre is being set up at the Sydenham Campus. The site can accommodate up to 15 people for isolation. The site will be used for people that do not need medical treatment but have been told to isolate and have nowhere to isolate. It is also available in the event a supportive housing provider needs to relocate residents.

Rent Benefit

A rent benefit will be set up to support those that have lost income due to COVID 19 and are market rent tenants in affordable housing or and make under the Household Income Limits set by the Province for Grey County. The rent bank will start in May. It will be a one-time use fund.

Other expenses

The SSRF will also assist with COVID related expenses for Community Housing, Non- Profit Housing, added expenses to current programs such as Sustainable Housing Benefit and other unknown expenses at this time

COVID 19 Housing Initiatives

Area of Need	Actions
Community and Non-Profit Housing	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Enhanced cleaning seven days a week of public high touch areas in Grey County Housing Buildings. Information posted in buildings for social distancing, self-isolation, procedures for safely doing laundry. Common room areas closed to deter social gathering2. Phone reach out to residents of Grey County Housing to provide information, referrals to services and general well-being of tenants3. Implement a short-term rent benefit program for market rent households living in community housing (non-profit) who have lost employment income as a result of COVID-19 starting in May<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand to residents making under the Household Income Limits as set by the Province4. Implement the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit program on April 2, 2020 to assist households on the County's subsidized housing wait list living in private rental housing with a rent benefit.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will provide a subsidy to approximately 30 households on the Grey County waitlist.

Area of Need	Actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit is intended to help bridge the gap between the rent a household can afford to pay and the market rent of their unit <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Postpone evictions in Grey County Housing properties, except for those associated with criminal activity or serious safety issues, and encourage other community housing providers to do the same <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with tenants having difficulty with rental payments due to COVID 19 by offering payment plans 6. Monitor to determine if additional funding will be needed for the Sustainable Housing Benefit 7. Communications and meetings with Non-Profit Housing Providers to ensure providers are supported with education, information and funding
<p>Services for People Experiencing Homelessness</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Increased funding through Social Services Relief Fund for emergency housing. Rooms secured at motels and hotels throughout Grey County 9. Reception Centre to provide screening, education, resources and referrals for some of our most vulnerable residents 10. Establish a Self-Isolation Centre for people who are experiencing homelessness and need a place to live when they are confirmed to have COVID-19 or pending results of their COVID-19 test. Centre could be used as a relocation centre for supportive housing, if required 11. Funding to Safe n Sound to allow to expand services due to need 12. Funding to local groups providing food and meals due to increased need 13. Funding to 211 Community Connections for staffing due to large increase in volume of calls. Receive weekly reports of unmet needs and find solutions to housing and homelessness related gaps. 14. Funds to local indigenous outreach services due to increase in need 15. Assist Housing with Related Supports Providers with additional costs. Provide funds for subsidized beds due to increased numbers coming from hospitals.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

The County of Grey as the Service Manager provides leadership to local homelessness prevention community planning and funds numerous related programs and services.

Financial and Resource Implications

The Social Services Relief Fund is 100% Provincially funded.

Relevant Consultation

Internal: Housing and Finance staff

External:

Appendices and Attachments

None