

Municipality Of Chatham-Kent

Community Human Services

Housing Services

Information Report

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Beth Earley, Program Manager Housing Services

Date: January 21, 2020

Subject: Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) Program Funding Allocation Announced

This report is for the information of Council.

Background

The federal government, through Canada Mortgage Housing Corporation (CMHC), released its National Housing Strategy (NHS) on National Housing Day, November 22, 2017. On May 1, 2018, Chatham-Kent was given notice by Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing Assistant Deputy Minister, Housing that a CMHC-Ontario Bilateral Agreement under the NHS was in effect (as of April 1, 2018). Based on the CMHC-Ontario Bilateral Agreement, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) initiated the Ontario Community Housing Renewal Strategy to help support housing that is affordable, adequate, accessible, and meets the needs of diverse communities and vulnerable populations. Programming under the Community Housing Renewal Strategy has been developed in three streams:

1. Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) that supplements funding decreases to the Social Housing Agreement.
2. Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) that is the successor of the Investment in Affordable Housing Extension (2014).
3. Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) that provides funding for portable housing benefits.

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent was notified of COCHI and OPHI funding allocations from the MMAH by a letter dated April 17, 2019. Allocations were provided for three provincial fiscal years (2019-2020, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022). On June 24, 2019, Council authorized the Director, Housing Services and the General Manager, Community Human Services to execute the Ontario Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA) with MMAH for COCHI and OPHI funding. The MMAH subsequently accepted the submitted Investment Plan and Transfer Payment Agreement was executed.

Council received a letter dated December 20, 2019 from The Honourable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, announcing Chatham-Kent's funding allocation under the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB). The funding allocation is for two years of the nine-year Community Housing Renewal Strategy.

Comments

Starting on April 1, 2020, the COHB provides participants with a provincially delivered portable housing benefit intended to improve access and affordability for community and private sector rental housing. Funds may also be directed to households in need of first and last month rent deposits.

Funding Allocation:

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has allocated incremental funding for two years to the Municipality of Chatham-Kent

Year	April 1 2020- March 31 2021	April 1 2021 – March 31 2022
Initial Funding	\$197,703	\$197,703
Incremental Funds for New Uptake	Not Applicable	\$61,346
TOTAL	\$197,703	\$259,049

The province has indicated that funding under the COHB is expected to increase; it will replace the OPHI program over the nine years of the Ontario Community Housing Renewal Strategy.

As of April 1, 2020 the provincial "Portable Housing Benefit – Special Priority Policy" (PHB-SPP) will continue to be delivered and rolled into the new COHB. Funding to support the 22 Chatham-Kent households currently receiving the PHB-SPP Policy will continue to be provided under COHB but it is not included in this allocation.ⁱ

Program Delivery:

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent, as Service Manager, will assist in program delivery by making program referrals and assisting households applying for the COHB. For this, the MMAH will pay the Municipality two hundred and fifty dollars (\$250) per approved application for administration costs capped at five percent of the annual allocationⁱ. This will be paid quarterly, based on Service Manager reporting. Administration costs are not included in the program allocation amount. The Ontario Ministry of Finance will determine eligibility, calculate benefit amounts, administer payments and manage

ongoing eligibility for participating households based upon the filed income tax returns of participants.

All active households on the Rent Geared to Income (RGI) Centralized Waiting List and households who would qualify for RGI assistance are eligible to apply for the COHB. Assistance is prioritized for households that are survivors of domestic violence or human trafficking, homeless or at risk for homelessness, seniors, and those that are managing disabilities. Any household that is active on the Centralized Waiting List that accepts COHB assistance must agree to be removed from the Centralized Waiting List. Program participants are not prohibited from re-applying to the Centralized Waiting List, but they essentially go to the bottom of the list.

At year-end 2019, 382 eligible households were on the Centralized Waiting List for portable housing benefits, and 42 households are prioritized as “Special Provincial Priority”. Housing Services expects the COHB will assist 60 of these households to secure and/or maintain affordable housing.

Consultation:

The Program Manager, Housing Services consulted with the Program Manager, Employment and Social Services to confirm participation, service delivery, and current funding levels of the PHB-SPP program delivered by Homelessness Prevention.

Financial Implications:

This funding is in addition to funding announced at the June 24, 2019 Council meeting, as noted in the following report: <https://www.chatham-kent.ca/Council/Meetings/2019/Documents/June/Jun-24-14b.pdf>

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Consulted and confirmed the content of the consultation section of the report by:

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Attachment: none

C. Polly Smith, Director, Employment and Social Services, Community Human Services

i MMAH has not yet provided Service Managers with the Program Guidelines and Q&A documentation from the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit - Service Manager Teleconference (January 9, 2020/2:00 EST). Hence, information obtained from this conference call (as footnoted above) is subject to change.

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