

MINUTES

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON

THURSDAY 2 DECEMBER 1999

CHAMPLAIN ROOM

1:30 P.M.

PRESENT

Chair: A. Munter

Members: D. Beamish, W. Byrne, L. Davis, C. Doucet, D. Holmes, H. Kreling,
M. McGoldrick-Larsen

Regrets: A. Loney

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

**That the Community Services Committee confirm the Minutes of the meeting of
4 November 1999.**

CARRIED

INQUIRIES

1. YEAR 2000 PREPAREDNESS

In response to questions from Councillor D. Holmes, Commissioner Stewart indicated that the Social Services Department will forward an Information report to all Members of Council, informing them of arrangements for emergency shelter/accommodation at certain facilities in Ottawa-Carleton that could accommodate persons living in shelters or on the street should a serious emergency ensue from the arrival of Year 2000.

Notes: 1. Underlining indicates new or amended recommendations approved by Committee.

2. Items requiring Council approval will be presented on 8 December 1999 in Community Services Report No. 38.

2. NEW PROVINCIAL STANDARDS FOR PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

Councillor D. Holmes asked whether the new standards related to playground equipment were applicable, and what position child care centres were finding themselves in having to replace these. Commissioner D. Stewart confirmed there are stricter regulations and he indicated most child care centres will find it difficult to replace their existing equipment. He spoke about raising the matter with the Director of Child Care Programs in Ontario who expressed her uncertainty as to whether this would be considered a health and safety issue. The Director, Child Care Directorate, Gayle Preston, clarified that the new standards only apply to new construction or to major changes being made to a structure. She added that, while this may not be an immediate problem, it will be a significant one.

Councillor Holmes proposed the Committee Chair write to the Minister of Community and Social Services, stating that, in the Committee's opinion, this is a health and safety matter and requesting funds from the Province to assist agencies. She also requested the Department report back on this matter at the next regular committee meeting.

3. BULK FOOD SALES

Councillor McGoldrick-Larsen asked that the Health Department provide information on the requirement for wearing gloves in places where bulk food is sold. The Medical Officer of Health, Dr. R. Cushman said the Department will report back and will send a "reminder" to the relevant businesses about the health requirements and regulations.

4. SURPLUS SCHOOL FACILITIES

Councillor Doucet asked that the Legal Department provide an opinion on whether it is possible to sever the yards of schools deemed surplus by the Province for use as community facilities.

REGULAR ITEMS

HEALTH

1. HEALTH STATUS OF THE HOMELESS

- Medical Officer of Health and Special Advisor on Social Housing report dated 15 Nov 99
- Response to CS Motion 6(98)

The Associate Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Geoff Dunkley, introduced Dr. Tim Aubry, University of Ottawa and Ms. Susan Farrell. Dr. Dunkley began by saying the study has underlined how little information exists about the health of the homeless. An initial attempt at setting up a system to routinely collect data in the shelters operated by the Region was unsuccessful, and it was decided to proceed with a parallel effort to get that information.

Some of the findings included:

- ◆ the homeless population faces significant health problems, both chronic conditions and a broad range of ill-health, higher than in the general population;
- ◆ there are very high levels of reported mental illnesses;
- ◆ there are high levels of injury and victimization;
- ◆ there is a higher incidence of alcohol and substance use.

Speaking to the issue of victimization, Dr. Dunkley said this includes physical and sexual abuse and high levels of assault, partly due to the fact the homeless have no protection. The report also underlines that, even with the broad range of problems enumerated, it is not strictly a matter of health care utilization. He posited that access to the health care system, while it can be improved, will not address the problems of this population. Dr. Dunkley spoke about the Action Plan to End Homelessness being aware of this, and taking steps to address the special needs of the homeless population. He concluded his presentation by saying a report to be presented to Committee in February will propose ways to improve the serious health problems. In addition, being able to monitor the situation and report back will need to be an important element of the Region's overall homelessness initiative.

Dr. Aubry underlined the unique nature of the collaboration between the Health Department, the University of Ottawa and the Alliance to End Homelessness which provided considerable input into the survey. He pointed out there is very little empirical research on homelessness in Canada, hence the heavy reliance on American studies. Dr. Aubry posited this is the first survey done in the region with such a broad cross-section of homeless persons. The focus of the study was to get a sense of who are the homeless, what are their characteristics, what factors contribute to their homelessness and what health care issues they face. The study was twinned with measures used in the National Population Health Survey, a panel study done every two years across Canada. The findings are a comparison of homeless persons with housed persons. The survey provides a cross-sectional snapshot, its general characteristics are limited in that they represent just one point in time. It is also problematic to separate causes and effects in terms of what contributes to homelessness versus what contributes to the health problems homeless people experience. Dr. Aubry indicated that the study will be followed up with a series of Fact Sheets providing a more comprehensive presentation of the results. The Fact Sheets are expected to be released early in the new year.

Ms. Farrell described the report methodology. It consisted of 230 in-person interviews conducted across all the emergency shelters in the Region. Those interviewed included adult males and females, youth males and females, families and people living on the street who use drop-in centres and meal programs. Ms. Farrell said another important piece of information is that attempts were made to capture people between the end of January and the end of May, to account for seasonal variabilities in persons and their shelter use.

Councillor D. Holmes said she had been appalled by the report findings. She asked whether the February report alluded to by Dr. Dunkley will make recommendations on health solutions, housing solutions and measures against violence and victimization. The Special Advisor on Social Housing, Joyce Potter, said the report will respond to all the recommendations contained in the Community Action Plan (to end homelessness). These encompassed everything from the need for additional housing to health and social supports, the need for more discharge planning, and for other broad-based activities.

In reply to further questions from Councillor Holmes about a reporting system, Dr. Dunkley said the Street Health Coalition has been trying to identify when deaths occur in the street population. The Coalition has identified that 47 deaths occurred since May 1998, however there is only information about the causes of death in a small number of instances.

Councillor Holmes asked whether the February report will contain more detail, as well as analysis about whether or not a new women's shelter is needed. Joyce Potter pointed out that the Community Action Plan has identified there is a greater need for transitional and permanent housing than for another shelter. She indicated that some interesting proposals have been received to deal with those needs for women, and one for aboriginal women in particular.

The Committee Chair, A. Munter, asked for information about the number of applications received and the rough value of those applications. Ms. Potter replied that \$1.7 million is available, and proposals totaling \$7.7 million have been received. Chair Munter said these numbers really underline how difficult it is for the Region to deal with the housing issue on its own after having been abandoned by both the provincial and federal governments. He indicated he intends to forward the report to local MPs, provincial MPPs, to the provincial and federal Housing Ministers and to the federal Homelessness Minister. Chair Munter said it is a tragedy that in Canada's capital, so many people are, literally, dying on the street. He thanked staff for presenting the facts.

That the Community Services Committee receive this report for information.

RECEIVED

SOCIAL SERVICES

2. COMMUNITY HOUSES

- Social Services Commissioner's report dated 16 Nov 99

The Committee heard from Barbara Carroll, Chair of the Coalition of Community Houses. She requested that increased funding be allocated to these facilities and that the funds come from the unallocated portion of the National Child Benefit Supplement savings.

She described the numerous programs provided through the Community Houses, noting these are aimed at the high percentage of single parent families, new Canadians and children and youth living in the communities who reside in those communities.

Councillor D. Beamish asked whether the coordinators' salaries were common between facilities. Ms. Carroll explained there are huge discrepancies between salary rates. The newly-formed Coalition hopes to be able to ensure people's earnings are commensurate with the amount of work they perform. She added, in reply to further questions from Councillor Beamish, that rates vary between \$10 and \$13 per hour and coordinators work approximately 35 hours per week. Councillor Beamish asked whether increasing the number of hours worked would have an impact and would encourage staff to stay. Ms. Carroll pointed out that, in order to attract persons with coordination skills, a \$15,000 a year salary is not sufficient. She said it was not a question of providing more hours, but rather of the quality of the coordinators' skills.

Councillor D. Holmes wanted Ms. Carroll to clarify whether any of the requested additional funds would be used to increase service hours in the Community Houses. Ms. Carroll said this would not necessarily be the case. She explained that each House Committee will decide whether to increase salaries or to provide additional hours. Responding to comments from Councillor Holmes about the range of programs provided in each facility, Ms. Carroll posited this is a good thing, since each community is unique and Community Houses respond to that uniqueness. She added that Community Houses share a common commitment to youth and children, to new Canadians, to literacy issues and to meeting basic needs as well as possible.

Councillor McGoldrick-Larsen asked for additional information about the House Committees. Ms. Carroll described the membership and the mechanisms used to bring a Committee together. She spoke about the Debra-Dynes facility, indicating the membership consists of three community residents, one as Chair, a representative from the Tenants' Association, a representative from one of the local churches and a representative from the South Ottawa Legal Clinic.

Ms Elizabeth Chin, Ottawa-Carleton Housing, addressed the Committee. She spoke about each Community House being different, noting each facility has a different governance model. Some have House Committees composed of tenants; others work with the community service providers, or with Ottawa Housing staff; one or two houses have committees consisting only of tenants.

Councillor McGoldrick-Larsen asked whether the presenters would comment on the apparent conflict inherent in House Committees choosing either to increase hours or increase the salaries of the coordinators. Ms. Chin responded by saying that most coordinators are paid for 30 hours but work longer hours. Community Houses are mostly run by volunteers who really need someone to help them coordinate the programs. She indicated that having a good coordinator makes a great deal of difference.

Ms. Chin added that, in the past year, eight out of twelve coordinators changed and this is not good for clients. The Coalition has tried to establish a salary scale, and hopefully the Community Houses will adopt the salary scale, to ensure fairness.

Councillor H. Kreling asked how the services provided by Community Houses differ from those provided by the Community Resource Centres, also funded by the Region. The Social Services Commissioner D. Stewart, stated that, while a small number of clients may access service from both locations, there is not much overlap between the services offered in these facilities. Some clients may feel more comfortable dealing with Community Houses that are in their neighbourhood as opposed to Community Resource Centres which are increasingly larger organizations. Chair Munter pointed out that community agencies use Community Houses to deliver services.

Councillor Beamish asked whether it was appropriate to use part of the National Child Benefit Supplement savings to fund the requested increase to Community Houses. Commissioner Stewart indicated that, should the Committee decide to recommend increasing the base funding for 1999, the NCB savings would be the only source available. He added that the goals and objectives of Community Houses are somewhat consistent with those of the NCB, in that they support children and families. The reason the department does not recommend an adjustment for 1999, nor for 2000, is that there will need to be decisions made about the current unallocated balance of \$1.4 million. These decisions could include options for Community Houses, decisions about contributions to Child Care Capital funding for the year 2000, as well as other options, and the entire discussion should be part of the year 2000 budget deliberations.

Chair Munter thanked the representatives from Community Houses for their presentation to Committee. He indicated that a Motion on Community Houses submitted by Councillor W. Byrne will be considered in the context of the item on the Proposed Reinvestment of the Year 2000 National Child Benefit Supplement Savings. (See Agenda Item 3).

3. **PROPOSED REINVESTMENT OF THE YEAR 2000**
NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT SAVINGS
- Social Services Commissioner's report dated 16 Nov 99

The Social Services Commissioner, D. Stewart, presented the report. He drew Committee's attention to Annex A which outlines expenditures for 1999 and the proposed allocations for 2000. Mr. Stewart indicated there has been "under-spending" in Employment Supports and Employment Development, primarily because the Department has invested in its clients through cost-shared programs, through the Ontario Works budget and/or through Essential Health and Social Supports to provide training opportunities and transportation supports. Additional funds are recommended for these areas in anticipation of increased demand in 2000 and because staff do not expect to have the same surplus in the coming year. Mr. Stewart spoke about the sole support parents transferred from the Province, reminding Committee members they are the

portion of the caseload that will need the highest investment in terms of employment objectives. The Commissioner highlighted a recommendation proposing to invest \$250,000 in the Success by Six Program in year 2000. This is a joint Social Services/Health Department initiative and the contribution should be ongoing, subject to availability.

The Committee Chair, A. Munter, presented a Motion from Councillor W. Byrne, calling for additional funding for Community Houses to be funded from the cumulative unallocated NCB savings. Commissioner Stewart indicated that, if the intent of the Motion is to adjust the base funding, an ongoing source will need to be identified, since the unallocated amount is “one-time” unallocated.

Councillor D. Holmes suggested the Motion be amended to clearly indicate the amount should remain in the base. She pointed out that the NCB funds represent money clawed-back from people at the lowest income scale. She inquired what percentage of the recommended funding will be going back to families and children. Commissioner Stewart replied that the entire amount in Employment Supports will go directly into clients’ hands; funding for Employment Development will support clients indirectly through training towards employment; 80% of Ontario Works Child Care helps clients directly or is paid on their behalf to organizations that provide the service. Replying to a subsequent question from Councillor Holmes, Mr. Stewart said it was correct to say that funds earmarked for Child Care Capital would mostly go mostly to agencies rather than directly into the hands of families and children.

Councillor M. McGoldrick-Larsen asked whether the funds for Employment Supports would be used for the new directorate in the Social Services Department. Commissioner Stewart replied the directorate was established some time ago, adding none of the funds will be used for that purpose. Staff will bring forward in the 2000 Draft Estimates, recommendations for staffing of the directorate and proposed decreases in other parts of the department. Asked by Councillor McGoldrick-Larsen whether the department would be able to provide a cost-by-client for this service, Commissioner Stewart indicated this information would not be available for the budget deliberations of 16 December, but could be provided at a later date.

Speaking to her Motion calling for increased funding to Community Houses, Councillor W. Byrne spoke about having personally seen the valuable work done in these facilities. She mentioned that the tenants of Michele Heights are currently engaged in establishing a facility. This involves raising \$7,000 to convert an unit of Ottawa-Carleton Housing and the tenants are doing this, as they see a Community House as having valuable benefits. Councillor Byrne said it is difficult to attract people to the coordinator’s position, since many put in a lot of their own time, in addition to the hours they are paid to work. The Councillor added it is not unreasonable to ask that they be paid adequate salaries and she asked that Committee members support of her Motion.

Councillor Holmes said she decries the fact that not enough money is being put back into the hands of families and children. She called herself a great supporter of Community Houses, indicating strong support for getting services to people where they live. She expressed her support for the Motion, as putting more money into the base funding will provide stability.

Councillor McGoldrick-Larsen said going to a Community House is the first step people have to take to better their chances in life, adding they are more likely to go to a house in their community than to another facility where they don't feel confident. She spoke about the benefit of Community Houses providing a venue for other agencies to deliver a service. The Councillor said she was a firm believer in Community Houses being linked directly to Community Resource Centres, of having a community development officer or a member of the CRC Board sit on a House Committee to ensure there are connections between the facilities. She expressed the hope the Coalition will look at this suggestion, and she indicated she looked forward to receiving feedback on any progress made in this direction.

Moved by W. Byrne

That the (year) 2000 draft estimates include an addition of \$100,000 to the base funding for Community Houses, to be funded out of the National Child Benefit supplement savings (cumulative unallocated).

CARRIED

Chair Munter ruled that Councillor Byrne's Motion is a substitution for the staff recommendation in Agenda Item 2, Community Houses (see previous Minute).

Moved by H. Kreling

That Community Services Committee recommend Council approve the Year 2000 National Child Benefit Supplement reinvestment allocations outlined below:

1. Building Community Capacity	\$ 693,000
2. Employment Supports	\$ 895,000
3. Employment Development	\$ 400,000
4. Ontario Works Child Care	\$ 205,000
5. Learning, Earning and Parenting	\$ 330,000
6. Success by 6 / 6 Ans et gagnant	\$ 250,000
7. Cumulative Unallocated	\$1,493,508

CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3: 00 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 16 December 1999 - 9:00 a.m.
Committee Budget deliberations

CHAIR

CO-ORDINATOR