

MINUTES

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON

THURSDAY 4 NOVEMBER 1999

CHAMPLAIN ROOM

1:30 P.M.

PRESENT

Chair: A. Munter

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

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

That the Community Services Committee confirm the Minutes of the meeting of 21 October 1999, as amended by substituting the name “JDS Uniphase” for “JDS Fitel” in Item No. 3, Preliminary Costing of the Task Force on Poverty (p. 12).

CARRIED, as amended

PRESENTATION(S)

1. OTTAWA-CARLETON HOUSING AUTHORITY - PRESENTATION ON COMMUNITY HOUSES PROGRAM
- Committee Co-ordinator's report dated 26 Oct 99

The Committee Chair, A. Munter, suggested that Committee members avail themselves of the opportunity to visit a Community House. Chair Munter called the facilities remarkable places, and he posited it was beneficial for the Committee to hear about some of the financial pressures the Community Houses are facing.

The Committee heard from Mssrs. Brian Dorling, Chair, Ottawa-Carleton Housing, and John Cook, General Manager. Mr. Cook provided a history of the development of

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- Notes: 1. Underlining indicates new or amended recommendations approved by Committee.
2. Items requiring Council approval will be presented on 10 November 1999 in Community Services Report No. 36.

Community Houses, culminating in the establishment of 11 such facilities throughout the Region. The Houses are driven by the belief that community-based services to residents is the optimum service delivery model. Converting one unit of housing generates in excess of \$2.5 million of in-kind service. Mr. Cook posited that the current rate of turnover in community house coordinators is due to a lack of adequate remuneration. He requested that consideration be given to raising coordinators' salaries to \$20,000 per annum to ensure that Community Houses can continue bringing services into the communities they serve.

Ms. Barbara Carroll, Coordinator, Debra-Dynes Community House and Chair, Coalition of Community Houses, addressed the Committee. She introduced Dawn Smith, Coordinator, Russell Heights, Nancy Cloutier, Coordinator, Britannia Woods, Sandra Vézina, Interim Coordinator, Banff Family House, Andrea Thompson-Smith, Coordinator, Confederation Court and Blair Family House and Desirée Rapoch, Coordinator, Pinecrest and Morisson Gardens.

Ms. Carroll said Community Houses respond quickly to needs of residents, they are accessible and quickly adapt to the changing needs of low income families. She pointed out this is increasingly difficult since the Community Houses are being asked to expand the services they offer and the coordinators either only work part-time or less than part-time. Ms. Carroll asked that when the Committee examines this issue, it take into consideration that Community Houses are located where people need help the most. They come into contact with 2,489 units of Ottawa-Carleton Housing; the Maison communautaire de la basse-ville also offers services to City Living and to other tenants in the vicinity. Some Houses, such as the one at Debra-Dynes, offer food programs that serve the wider community.

Ms. Carroll said the total budget for Community Houses is \$638,870: the value of the programs they offer, counting invisible incomes, is over \$1,596 million. The 11 facilities run over 140 programs, 105 of which are weekly programs. There are at least 195 people who volunteer regularly; out of those volunteers, 125 are from the communities themselves. Ms. Carroll expressed the hope that her presentation has given the Committee good insights into the work of Community Houses and the impact they have on the lives of the low income families they serve.

In response to a question from Chair Munter, Ms. Carroll confirmed the request is for a base budget adjustment of \$55,000 representing an additional \$5,000 per house (11 houses) for the coordinators' salaries. She pointed out that, while Ottawa-Carleton Housing has suggested the salary be \$20,000, in reality it should be \$25,000.

Councillor M. McGoldrick-Larsen asked whether, with the additional funds, consideration would be given to increasing the hours of service. Ms. Carroll replied that the coordinators would want to consolidate and maintain the current hours of service, to allow for greater continuity and to help them find community partners who can offer additional programs. Responding to a further question from Councillor McGoldrick-

Larsen, Ms Carroll indicated that work-plans and long and short-term goals are things that are done on an individual basis with the governing boards of each House.

Councillor D. Holmes presented the following Motion:

GIVEN THAT Community Houses serve low-income families and children (pursuant to the goals of the National Child Benefit Reinvestment Fund), that staff be directed to report back on the possibility of allocating dollars from the 1999 reinvestment fund to the community house;

FURTHER THAT the request for a permanent change to the base funding be referred to the 2000 budget estimates.

CARRIED, as amended

That the Community Services Committee receive the presentation from the Ottawa-Carleton Housing Authority for information.

RECEIVED

SOCIAL HOUSING

2. VACANCIES IN SENIORS' HOUSING UNITS
(RESPONSE TO CS INQUIRY NO. 23(99))
-Special Advisor on Social Housing report dated 14 Oct 99

That the Community Services Committee receive this report for information.

RECEIVED

3. HOMELESSNESS FUNDING
- Special Advisor on Social Housing report dated 13 Oct 99

Councillor A. Loney pointed out that Council has approved that requests for funding under Homelessness Action Plan be brought to Committee and Council for approbation. He asked whether the staff recommendation means that the approval function would be delegated to the Selection Committee. The Special Advisor on Social Housing, Joyce Potter, indicated that, at the start of implementation of the Homelessness Action Plan, there was some uncertainty as to how the program would develop. Eventually, several different sources of funding were combined and one Request for Proposals was issued, to simplify matters for the community groups submitting proposals. Ms. Potter confirmed that the recommendation means the approval authority would be delegated to the Selection Committee.

Councillor Loney said he did not favour this approach, adding that there likely will be contentious decisions to be made and Council should make these decisions. He presented a Motion calling for replacing the words “make decisions” with “make recommendations” to Committee and Council. He also proposed that the name of Councillor R. van den Ham be added to the Selection Committee.

The Committee Chair, A. Munter, spoke about the former process for the Social Services Grants, comparing it to the current Health and Social Services Project Grants process, and positing there are pros and cons to both approaches. Councillor Loney said the situation would be different if this were an ongoing program, but as it is presently a one-time effort, Council should be fully aware of the allocations made under it, as was originally approved. Chair Munter clarified that some of the funds in this “envelope” come from other sources, and there are indications these will be ongoing.

Councillor L. Davis spoke about there being a great amount of interest from community groups to access these funds. She felt Council should have the opportunity to discuss the proposals, to ensure its needs are met, and to warrant that one area of the Region is not necessarily overburdened. Councillor Davis asked why there hadn’t been a more open process to allow participation from other interested, private sector parties. Ms. Potter replied that, when the matter was discussed at Council, several Members expressed the wish that the funds be disbursed rapidly. She said that bringing together the various funders, ensuring there was enough time for community groups to put together good proposals and getting the funds out before the end of the year would not be easy. The recommended process was seen as a way to have decisions made before Christmas.

Chair Munter said he was willing to shoulder part of the responsibility for the recommendation, as he has been pressing staff to move rapidly, in light of Council’s expressed desire. In response to a suggestion from Councillor Davis, Chair Munter agreed that other members of Council could be canvassed to ascertain whether or not they wish to be part of the Selection Committee.

Councillor M. McGoldrick-Larsen expressed support for Councillor Loney’s amendment. She posited that the approach proposed by staff is similar to what the Province of Ontario is doing with a number of programs, that is, divesting and distancing itself from accountability for the decisions it makes. She felt that, in this situation, Council has to make the decisions and be accountable for making them.

Councillor D. Holmes said she did not want to be approached by all the groups interested in accessing the funds, nor go over the heads of people who are familiar with every detail of the applications. She pointed out that, through the current Project Grants process, the funders ensure there is equity and that all the information is presented to the Allocations Committee. Councillor Holmes added that Council has agreed that certain properties are to be made available and she did not want the Selection Committee’s decisions undermined by those of Council.

Councillor W. Byrne agreed that the Allocations Committee process is thorough and time-consuming and she did not envision Council undertaking such a process. The Councillor said she was satisfied with the composition of the Selection Committee, noting it has a good balance of representatives from various sectors. Councillor Byrne said she would not want to make decisions as to where the funds should be allocated without having seen the detailed submissions from community groups.

Councillor C. Doucet asked whether Councillor Loney could elaborate on his concerns. The latter responded that, ideally, Council should let the Selection Committee do its job, however he felt strongly that Council should be very much aware it has the responsibility for the Social Housing portfolio and deal with the matter on that basis. Councillor Loney expressed the belief there will be ongoing programs of this nature, but, at this time, solid recommendations should be made for approval by Council. He added that he had no qualms about the composition of the proposed Selection Committee, nor about adding the name of Councillor R. van den Ham to this group. Councillor Doucet agreed it would be beneficial for Council to have to wrestle with this debate.

Moved by A. Loney

That the Community Services Committee recommend Council approve the appointment of the following members to a Selection Committee authorized to make recommendations regarding the allocation of funding for the implementation of the Community Action Plan on Homelessness:

- **Councillor Alex Munter, Chair, Community Services Committee**
- **Barb Flint, United Way of Ottawa-Carleton**
- **John Doran, Domicile Developments**
- **Jamie Burr, Federal Homelessness Secretariat**
- **Steve Shapiro, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing**
- **Bill Rooney, Manager, Initiatives to End Homelessness**
- **Bonnie Dinning, Manager, Health Department**
- **Diane Martin, Social Services Department**
- **Joyce Potter, Special Advisor on Social Housing**
- **one member of the Alliance to End Homelessness (who is not part of any proposal submission).**

CARRIED, as amended

YEAS: L. Davis, C. Doucet, H. Kreling, A. Loney, M. McGoldrick-Larsen 5
NAYS: D. Beamish, W. Byrne, D. Holmes, A. Munter 4

Moved by A. Loney

That Councillor R. van den Ham be invited to be a member of the Selection Committee.

CARRIED, as amended

OTHER BUSINESS

4. NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

The Committee Chair, A. Munter, advised that, because of a lack of agenda items, the meeting scheduled for 18 Nov 99 will be cancelled.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

Thursday, 2 December 1999

CHAIR

CO-ORDINATOR