

REGION OF OTTAWA-CARLETON  
RÉGION D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT  
RAPPORT

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DATE                        1 April 1999

TO/DEST.                 Co-ordinator, Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP.                Special Advisor on Social Housing

SUBJECT/OBJET         **SUPPORTIVE HOUSING**

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**DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Community Services Committee recommend Council receive an update on actions being taken with respect to Supportive Housing.**

**BACKGROUND**

***What is Supportive Housing***

Supportive housing embraces a range of housing options combined with support services designed to meet the daily living requirements of people with special needs in our community. Clients include the frail elderly, persons with long-term health care requirements, youth, women who have experienced violence, ex-offenders, people living with mental illness or who have physical or developmental disabilities and those with substance abuse problems, HIV/AIDS and acquired brain injury. Also included are the homeless or those vulnerable to homelessness.

Physical settings for supportive housing include semi-institutional boarding homes, congregate living, group homes, self-contained apartments with on-site and/or off-site personal support services and units leased with non-profit or private landlords that include case management services. Supportive housing can be 100 percent dedicated, that is, the project is entirely occupied by tenants who require support services to live independently in the community or the units can be integrated into a larger building or portfolio. Support services can be 'linked' (that is, housing and support provided by the same organization) or 'de-linked' (separate landlord and support service provider). Services may be provided on-site or through visiting personal support workers.

The supportive housing model has been used for over twenty years and is essential if people are to be supported in communities rather than in hospitals and other institutional settings. It is also a major response to the problem of homelessness in keeping people off the streets and in more permanent community based settings than hostels and shelters can provide.

### ***Demand for Supportive Housing***

There is no consolidated waiting list for supportive housing clients. However, most indicators suggest that there is not enough supportive housing in Ottawa-Carleton. Turnover is low and no new housing is being developed. In 1986 there were over 400 people with developmental and physical disabilities on waiting lists for supportive housing.

Social Services reports that, in 1997, 4600 single people used the shelter system in Ottawa-Carleton, an estimated 40 percent of those having a mental illness. There were also 378 families with 901 children. Many of these occupants in the shelter system could potentially be better served through supportive housing.

### ***Links to Homelessness***

Supportive housing to meet the needs of the homeless has been given much attention in recent months. Last fall, the Community Services Committee requested that the Social Services Department prepare a report for Ottawa-Carleton similar to that of the Golden Task Force in Toronto, that contains specific recommendations for action. Social Services is developing their report on homelessness in collaboration with the Health Department and with member organizations of the Alliance to End Homelessness. The department has undertaken a phased approach to the study of homelessness in the region. The initial report will describe the state of homelessness in Ottawa-Carleton and a subsequent report will outline recommendations and service priorities.

As was the case with the Golden Report, clearly one of the main responses to the problem of homelessness is to make available more supportive housing. This perspective will be considered in the course of the community consultation on homelessness which will occur in April-May of this year.

### ***Golden Report Recommendations Pertaining to Supportive Housing***

The Mayor of Toronto's Homelessness Task Force, chaired by Dr. Anne Golden, was initiated in February 1998. Its objectives were to develop ways to reduce the amount of homelessness in Toronto and to develop specific strategies to prevent people from losing their housing. The final report, released in January of this year, has a total of 105 recommendations grouped into five broad themes reflecting a broad definition of homelessness: simplifying and co-ordinating the service system, specific strategies for high-risk sub-groups, prevention strategies, comprehensive health strategy for homeless people, supportive housing and affordable housing. Twelve recommendations related to supportive housing, a number of which may be pertinent to Ottawa-Carleton.

In particular, the Golden report recommended that the province should fund 100 percent of supportive housing and reassume the costs of any supportive housing devolved to municipalities. It should fund all capital costs, rent supplements and support services of supportive housing.

The report also specifies a role for the City of Toronto to contribute to developing supportive housing through advocacy, policy development, co-ordination, strategic top-up funding and facilitating new supply.

Golden's report also identifies the need for a co-ordinated access system for supportive housing which would be centrally administered but accessible through multiple entry points.

### ***Supportive housing in the context of social housing***

Approximately 35 social housing providers in Ottawa-Carleton provide supportive housing. Many provide 100 percent dedicated supportive housing. Others are integrated projects and designate a portion of their units to those with special needs.

The province is in the process of downloading administrative responsibility for provincial social housing programs to municipalities. However, in July, 1998, the Province announced that dedicated supportive housing projects would not be transferred to municipalities, but rather would go to the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) or the Ministry of Health (MOH). In Ottawa-Carleton, this involved 32 dedicated supportive housing projects (with a total of 299 units) which are to be transferred to MCSS or MOH.

In Ottawa-Carleton, dedicated supportive housing projects which did not meet the provincial criteria for transfer to MCSS or MOH and are being devolved to the Region include:

- Options Bytown: two projects serving approximately 160 clients, the priority being for single residents of shelters seeking permanent semi-independent living;
- Cornerstone: one project serving approximately 20 single women, some with psychiatric disabilities;
- Daybreak: one project serving 7 clients, single persons including some with psychiatric disabilities or with other support requirements; and
- Emily Murphy: one project of 39 units serving young single women and single parent families.

There are also an estimated 250-275 supportive housing units integrated into social housing through leases to community-based agencies or to individuals receiving agency support. Social housing providers are responsible for the shelter costs of these units, while the support component is borne by MOH or MCSS. In many cases, these agencies also operate dedicated supportive housing projects.

There is, in addition, dedicated supportive housing which is under federal administration and therefore not part of current transfer or downloading activity. This includes 16 projects serving approximately 160 clients. A number of the providers in this category also operate provincially-administered dedicated supportive housing and units integrated into larger social housing projects.

## **SUPPORTIVE HOUSING STRATEGY**

## 1.0 Supply of Supportive Housing

While precise estimates of need are not available, it is apparent that there is a requirement for additional supportive housing in this community. Additional supportive housing can be provided through the construction or acquisition of additional social housing, or through the expanded use of existing social housing.

### 1.1 Ottawa-Carleton Housing

In Ottawa-Carleton Housing (OCH), there is some capacity to house low-income single individuals in one-bedroom apartments in buildings which have housed senior citizens. Over the past several years, OCH has been converting a number of senior citizen buildings to age-mixed accommodation.

However, the conversion of seniors-only public housing buildings to age-integrated housing is challenging. A frail elderly, predominantly female population mixed with low-income single persons, many of whom have disabilities including mental illness, can create serious social concerns. The provision of support services in buildings experiencing this change is essential.

OCH has developed several proposals to partner with Ottawa Salus Corporation, Causeway Work Centre, Pinecrest-Queensway Health Centre, the Royal Ottawa Hospital and Options Bytown, to provide a Residential Support Worker to support the housing environment in age-mixed apartment buildings. This Worker would not replace the provision of case management services to individual tenants provided through mental health agencies, but rather would complement these services. The partnerships would include some referral units in the buildings for singles who could benefit from a supported environment.

OCH proposes to introduce this Residential Support Worker concept in one or more of its buildings and then evaluate its outcomes. Should the project succeed, it could facilitate consideration of the conversion of additional units for low-income singles from any under-used seniors stock.

OCH is working with its partners on funding proposals that may go to the Ministry of Health, or, on an interim basis, the Trillium Foundation. In addition, they will be submitting a proposal to the Region for funding from the Homelessness Initiatives on-going funding which will be provided in June, 1999. Given the potential for this type of support to make available additional housing units to meet the needs of the homeless and other single individuals in Ottawa-Carleton, the Region's Social Housing staff are taking steps to assist OCH in obtaining the necessary funding for this pilot project.

## 1.2 Creating Additional Housing

Neither the federal nor provincial government is providing new funding for additional supportive housing which is integrated in social housing.

On 23 March, the Minister of Community and Social Services announced a number of initiatives to help persons who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. These preceded the Toronto Symposium on Homelessness, held on 25-26 March. A number of the initiatives are positive though relatively minor expenditures in view of the magnitude of the homelessness problem. These include initiatives to promote more rental construction (for example, eliminating the PST on affordable multi-unit residential construction and making public lands available to create 500 units of affordable rental stock across the province) and increasing contributions to community support programs (for example, \$6 million to the Provincial Homelessness Initiatives Fund, \$2 million to Community Start Up Benefit and \$1 million to the Ontario Multi-Faith Council).

The announcement of the transfer of funding and administrative control to the municipalities for the Community Partners and Supports to Daily Living Programs (\$8.4 million for the Province, estimated \$1.2 million for Ottawa-Carleton), does not involve new funds. It does however, suggest that the Province is further downloading responsibility for supportive housing to municipalities rather than making it a provincial responsibility as the Golden Report recommends. This downloading and associated increase in administrative costs are of concern to the Region.

The Province has also announced the reallocation of \$2.5 million over the next three years from expiring rent supplement contracts to help house 300-400 people with special needs. Municipalities have been funding rent supplements since January 1998. It is not clear whether provincial or municipal funds are involved in this announcement.

As well, the Province committed to spending, in partnership with municipalities, all of the estimated \$50 million that will come from the federal government as part of the signing of a new federal-provincial agreement to rent supplements. Municipalities have argued that all money transferred from the federal government for housing should flow directly to municipalities to be used at their discretion to meet local housing needs. The Golden Report recommended federal funds not required for existing projects be used as a capital and rent supplement fund to support new projects.

The Region will continue to monitor and analyze the implications of these Provincial initiatives as program details become available.

The Social Housing group is developing a report dealing with the Region's role in housing which will be presented to Community Services Committee and Council by May 1999. This report will provide options to Council for a role for the Region in the development of social housing in the absence of funding from the senior levels of government. Supportive housing will be included in this assessment.

Staff are also engaged in discussions with the Alternative Provider Network, which is a community-based group looking for options for the development of new social housing. The provision of supportive housing is one type of housing which can be considered in this regard.

## 2.0 Provincial Supportive Housing Reform

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has initiated a consultation process for supportive housing which is being devolved to municipalities. This is to be a two-phased process involving firstly providers and then representatives of Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs). Initial meetings were held in January -- one session for providers housing the homeless, the hard to house and victims of abuse and a second for agencies who provide services and operate programs integrated into regular housing projects -- providing participants an opportunity to identify key issues to be addressed.

It is proposed that the following issues be submitted as regional input to the provincial consultation process:

- **Security of funding.** The devolution of some supportive housing to municipalities, with dedicated supportive housing transferred to MCSS or MOH has the potential to create “have” and “have-not” supportive housing projects. Clearly, it is more affordable for the Province to provide funding for both support services and housing than it is for the Region. Currently, there are no long-term funding commitments from the Province for the support services which they provide to supportive housing which will be devolved to municipalities. It is proposed that Council endorse the Golden report recommendation that the Province retain full funding responsibility for all supportive housing. Failing this, the Province must at least provide for security of funding for support services following devolution to municipalities.
- **The Impact of a New Funding Model.** The reformed social housing funding model will have a different impact on supportive housing than it will have on other social housing. Higher maintenance and administrative costs associated with supportive housing need to be reflected in the establishment of separate benchmarks. The lack of market comparables, the difficulty in attracting an income-mixed clientele in many cases, and the impact of this on repayment of operating loans and project viability need to be considered separately for supportive housing. It is critical that supportive housing providers and CMSMs be explicitly involved in the reform of the supportive housing program and the development of a new funding model.

**A Lack of Co-ordination/Simplification of Program Administration.** With differences in the devolution of different types of supportive housing, there is a need to co-ordinate and simplify the administration of programs across different levels of government. Service providers who are also housing providers will now have to report to municipalities for their integrated units, the province for their dedicated units and CMHC for their federal unilaterally funded units. They would like to see consistency in reporting requirements for the different levels of government.

Next steps in the provincial consultation process have not been identified. The Region's Social Housing staff have sought to be part of this process as it evolves.

### 3.0 Co-ordinated Access

Currently, there is not a co-ordinated access system for those who have a need for supportive housing. The Housing Registry, which provides a centralized waiting list for most of the Region's social housing, would not likely work effectively for the majority of supportive housing clients. Many of these individuals have specialized needs for services or require a significant level of outreach to prompt them to access supportive housing.

The Supportive Housing Network is developing a proposal to create a common application form and increased co-ordination among supportive housing providers. The Region will support this initiative in order to improve access to supportive housing among those in need of services.

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Social Housing Working Group, a representative body of the housing community in Ottawa-Carleton, has reviewed this document and concurs with its contents. Meetings of the SHWG are attended by members of the local Supportive Housing Network whose comments have been incorporated into the report.

## CONCLUSION

The Region is pursuing the following initiatives in order to increase the availability of supportive housing in Ottawa-Carleton:

1. Social Housing staff are working with Ottawa-Carleton Housing to obtain funding for support services in mixed-use public housing projects;
2. Supportive Housing has been identified as a key requirement for additional new supply of Social Housing, options for which will be considered by Council in the context of the Region's overall role in housing;
3. Supportive Housing may be a key response to the problem of homelessness, to be addressed in the Social Services report to Community Services Committee and Council in June 1999;
4. The Region will participate in the reform process of the Provincial Government with respect to Supportive Housing and Social Housing in general, to ensure that the particular needs of Supportive Housing providers are reflected in the reform model;
5. The Region will monitor senior government actions with respect to homelessness and supportive housing and assist local supportive housing providers in accessing available programs; and

6. The Region will assist the Supportive Housing Network with the development of a common application form and co-ordinated access for supportive housing clients.

*Approved by  
Joyce M. Potter*

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