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Information Previously Distributed
To Be Listed on Community Services
Committee Agenda 19 Feb 98

DATE 6 January 1998

TO/DEST. The Chair and Members of Council

FROM/EXP. Commissioner, Social Services Department

SUBJECT/OBJET **CITY OF TORONTO INITIATIVE TO RELOCATE
HOMELESS FAMILIES (FOR INFORMATION)**

Recently there were reports in the media that the City of Toronto has initiated a process to assist homeless families, now residing in shelters within the new City of Toronto, to relocate to other parts of Ontario into permanent housing.

The Social Services Department recently received the attached memorandum from the Community Services Department of the City of Toronto providing background and an explanation of this initiative.

To this date, we are not aware of any families who have been relocated to Ottawa-Carleton under this initiative.

Approved by
Dick Stewart
Social Services Commissioner

copy to:

Chief Administrative Officer



**METRO
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

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December 24, 1997

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COUNCILLOR'S OFFICE

Dear Social Services Administrator:

Re: Housing Connections Program

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with some background information about the Toronto Housing Connections pilot which has recently received significant media attention.

Hostel Services Division of Toronto Community Services Department began this new initiative in October. Housing Connections is a very modest program intended to assist families in our shelters to broaden their housing search beyond Toronto. We describe it as modest because we expect that no more than 1% of the 30,000 people who use our shelters annually would participate in this initiative.

While we are aware of jurisdictional sensitivities surrounding such an initiative, we do not accept criticism that it is unfair to other municipalities. Surveys of hostel clients that we have conducted over a 5 year period show that the number who have arrived from other regions of Ontario ranged from 11.3% to 15.2% of our caseload. These numbers are likely low given that we only counted those who had arrived in Toronto less than a year ago.

The Housing Connections program was conceived over the summer months when media stories reported on the frustrations of families staying in motel overflow arrangements. Many of these families had stayed in these motels for several months and were beginning to despair in their search for housing. The media publicity prompted calls from several landlords from other communities searching for tenants. It was clear to hostel staff that for some families this might be the answer.

Other facts about the Housing Connections program are listed as follows:

1. The program is entirely voluntary and families are under no pressure or inducement to participate.
2. Any community start-up or rent allowances these families receive is the same whether they are searching for housing locally or afield.
3. Only clients in shelters are invited to participate, those who are on general assistance and already have housing are not included.
4. Rental vacancy rates in Toronto are now 0.7% and falling, and three-bedroom apartments which many families need are even more difficult to find.

5. We estimate that Toronto now has about 70% of all of Ontario's homeless and growing. We added 781 new beds to our hostel system in 1987 alone. These do not include motel rooms.
6. Housing Connections is still considered to be a pilot project and we will be doing an evaluation and report after 6 months.
7. Every effort will be made to connect families to housing in as many communities as possible across Southern Ontario and not just to a few major centres.
8. We believe that transporting people in our own directly operated van is the most cost-efficient way to facilitate their housing search. Firstly, only the adult heads of families are included in these inspection visits. Secondly, all trips are same day returns which avoids costly overnight and children care arrangements.

Staff have been directed to advise you of any families that may settle in your area. We will be following-up with these families at regular intervals to try to assess how well they have settled and integrated in the community. We will also contact your Department with respect to any support you may have provided so that this information can be included in our evaluation report.

More information can be obtained by contacting the writers below or Joe Brinkos, Manager of the Greenfield Family Centre (416-397-5628).

Yours sincerely,



 Heather MacVicar
General Manager,
Social Services Division



John Jagt
Director,
Hostel Services Division

Distribution List Attached