

MINUTES

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON

CHAMPLAIN ROOM

20 FEBRUARY 1997

1:30 P.M.

PRESENT

Chair: M. Meilleur

Members: M. Bellemare, R. Cantin, D. Holmes, A. Loney, B. McGarry, A. Munter, D. Pratt

Regrets: L. Davis

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

That the Community Services Committee confirm the Minutes of the Meeting of 6 February 1997

CARRIED

INQUIRIES

1. Update on Nelson House

Councillor D. Holmes asked for an update on the Nelson House situation. The Social Services Commissioner, D. Stewart, referred to a Memorandum circulated to all Members of Council on 19 Feb 97. Therein he reports the department is reviewing the proposals received and discussing these in some details with the proponents. He posited this review would continue until the end of February, possibly a bit longer, and he expressed the hope a report would be available for the 6 March 97 Committee meeting.

Notes: 1. Underlining indicates new or amended recommendations approved by Committee
2. Reports requiring Council consideration will be presented to Council on 12 March 1997 in Community Services Report 44.

Councillor Holmes indicated that, from the beginning, one of her major concerns was that Nelson House would never re-open once closed. She asked for a reassurance that a positive recommendation will be made for a group to manage the facility. Mr. Stewart replied there will be recommendations that will result in the service being restarted as soon as possible after the 28 Feb 97 deadline approved by Council. Replying to a further question from Councillor Holmes, Commissioner Stewart admitted this process has been the target of much, unsolicited, input. He assured Committee members that the Community Advisory Committee, departmental staff and Ministry of Community and Social Services colleagues have been working to the deadlines imposed by Regional Council.

2. Water Standards, Public Swimming Pools

Councillor A. Munter raised the following Inquiry:

What are the standards for and health concerns about water in public swimming pools? Are pools regularly tested by the Health Department or other authorities? Are there means for improving water quality? Munter will provide further information to Department.

3. Economic Impacts of Mega-Week Announcements

Councillor A. Cullen asked when Council could expect a report on the financial implications of the off-loading of General Welfare Assistance (GWA) onto municipalities. He also wanted to know whether the RMOC was participating in the work being done by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) on this matter.

Commissioner D. Stewart said there are no regional staff members on AMO's Social and Health Policy Committee, however he indicated the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) has done some work in this area. Social Services Department staff were directed to review data regarding previous recessions and to note where the GWA caseload actually built-up over a period of time. The department is also reviewing work done in the early 90s in collaboration with Carleton University. At that time, a model for projecting costs based on economic conditions for social assistance was developed, and the department's work should assist in putting together a picture as it might unfold. Commissioner Stewart cautioned Committee members there are still many unknown factors therefor the findings will be speculative. He indicated an information report could be available in time for the next Committee meeting.

POSTPONEMENTS AND DEFERRALS

1. CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING
FEDERATION OF EASTERN ONTARIO INC.

- Commissioner Planning & Development Approvals report dated 4 Feb 97
- Deferred from Meeting of 16 January 1997

The Committee heard from Ms. Ellen Lougheed, President, Co-operative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario, Inc., and Mr. Nick Sidor, President, Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, Ontario Region.

Ms. Lougheed indicated that people living in co-op housing are becoming increasingly alarmed at the prospect of the federal government handing over responsibility for non-profit and social housing to the Provinces, especially in Ontario. She pointed out that, locally, over 2,500 people live in co-operatives; the Association represents over 35 co-operatives, therefore, clearly, there will be a large local impact. Ms. Lougheed asked that the Committee seriously consider the request put forward by the Co-operative Housing Federation.

Mr. N. Sidor began by saying the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada, Ontario Region, represents approximately 115,000 people who live in 550 co-ops throughout the Province. Approximately half the co-ops are sponsored solely by the Government of Canada, and administered under an operating agreement with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Mr. Sidor added that federally sponsored co-ops have a better track record than provincial housing programs and co-op residents want to keep it that way.

Mr. Sidor went on to say the federal government wants to sever its relationship and download the administration of agreements to the Provinces. Ontario co-op members have indicated they want no part of provincial administration since funding to provincial housing co-ops was slashed to the point where they are teetering on the edge of failure. In response to the federal government's statement that it would consider proposals from third parties to administer co-op housing agreements, the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada has put forward such a proposal.

Mr. Sidor expressed the view that co-operatives should have the autonomy to manage their own affairs. He added it is a matter of public record that the Province of Ontario intends to "harmonise" social housing. Furthermore, Ontario has no plans to turn 8,000 units of Ontario Housing in the Region and 80,000 across the Province into co-operatives, notwithstanding the fact this is what they should do. "Harmonizing" means taking away the legal rights and privileges co-op housing members now enjoy and turning co-ops into government-administered housing.

Mr. Sidor described an information campaign directed at persuading the federal government it should support third party proposals. He pointed out that every Member of Parliament contacted, including local MPs, supported the Federation's proposal. The Minister is also being asked to slow down negotiations with the Province as there are indications that co-op housing will be damaged and people's lives will be harmed by the downloading. He called on Committee members to support the Federation's proposal: failing this, he asked that they support their constituents' wish not to be downloaded to the Province. In addition the federal Minister should be asked to suspend negotiations with the Province of Ontario until the latter's intentions are clarified and can be addressed by the Federation and its members. Mr. Sidor said research is currently underway on what impact mortgage rates will have on municipal and/or regional tax bills, province-wide. While this work is incomplete, it is estimated the impact would be in the hundreds of millions of dollars in operating costs if mortgage rates increased by one point.

In reply to questions from Councillor A. Cullen, Mr. Sidor indicated the Federation could be the third party, however it would not accept administering the provincial program unless it were substantially changed. Committee Chair M. Meilleur asked what were some of the differences between federally and provincially administered co-operatives. Mr. Sidor said that provincial operating agreements have a much higher level of bureaucracy, there is more bureaucratic intrusion into co-operatives' processes, and they have a total lack of replacement reserves for capital projects.

Anna Galon, a member of Yule Manor Co-op, expressed grave concerns about the present danger to co-operative housing. She asked that the Committee keep in mind the human factor and the implications of destroying this type of housing. She cited homelessness, increases in the number of social assistance recipients and the need for additional policing as some of the consequences of this destruction. Marilyn Legault, a member of Yule Manor Co-op, said she was disappointed with the recommendation put forward. She asked whether staff felt the appropriate time to debate this matter would be after co-op owners have lost their homes.

Councillor D. Holmes quoted from a number of newspaper articles on the costs associated with "downloading" social housing, onto municipalities. It is estimated that costs could be as high as \$70 million for provincial downloading only, and \$110 million for federal and provincial downloading. She posited that neither amount is affordable and she put forward a Motion asking for support of the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada's Motion. In addition, she proposed the RMOC urge the federal government not to download its responsibilities to the Province until the latter's intentions are made clear, or, to slow down the process until municipalities can evaluate costs and participate in the discussion.

Councillor A. Munter spoke in support of both Motions. He said he had found the staff recommendation timid, given the fact all the Federation's Motion does is ask the federal government to give serious consideration to the idea and work with co-operatives to find a better way to operate the federal social housing stock.

Councillor Munter pointed out this approach is better than the alternative, which is to dump social housing on municipalities that do not have enough money to operate the programs and put them at risk. He thought governments at both levels should be encouraged to consider the Federation's proposal.

Councillor B. McGarry asked if staff had any additional comments on this matter, in light of the presentations made to Committee.

Marni Cappe, Manager, Policy Planning Branch, Planning and Development Approvals Department, began by saying staff were surprised by the provincial announcement that social housing would be downloaded. She noted there are many more questions than answers at this point. She added staff continue to try to obtain the best information it can and this perhaps precipitated the comment any decision would be premature at this point. Ms. Cappe told the Committee there is little agreement among housing providers about the nature of the current stock. Efforts are being made to reach a common understanding of how many units of co-op housing there are, how many units of private, non-profit housing and under what programs they would be funded.

In reply to a question from Chair Meilleur, Ms. Cappe agreed that supporting the Federation's Motion would not preclude Council from making other recommendations in the future. She pointed out that administering the federally sponsored program one way could lead to requests for different models for all other programs operating in the RMOC. Departmental staff have not had time to look at all the ramifications, therefore they are not working from a sound basis.

Councillor R. Cantin said the argument could be made that all co-operative housing programs should be run using the federal model. He spoke in support of asking the Government of Canada not to move on anything until a model can be developed that will bring all programs together. He expressed the view it is shortsighted to have programs that do not allow accumulating reserves for capital expenditures.

Moved by D. Holmes:

That Community Services Committee recommend Council:

- Support the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada's suggested Motion to: "call upon the federal government to give serious consideration to the proposal put forward by the co-operative housing sector to administer the federally assisted co-operative housing portfolio through a new, non-profit non-governmental organisation established for that purpose.**

CARRIED

YEAS: M. Bellemare, D. Holmes, B. McGarry, A. Munter, M. Meilleur 5

NAYS: R. Cantin, A. Loney, D. Pratt 3

Moved by D. Holmes

That Council urge the Federal Government not to download the jurisdiction for social housing to the Provinces until the Ontario government's intentions towards municipalities are made clear.

CARRIED

REGULAR ITEMS

2. POTENTIAL IMPACT ON REGION OF MEGA-WEEK ANNOUNCEMENTS CONCERNING FUNDING OF LONG TERM CARE
- Homes for the Aged Commissioner & Medical Officer of Health
joint report dated 7 Feb 97

That Community Services Committee recommend Regional Council:

1. **Ask the Province of Ontario, in light of the announcement that municipalities fund 50% of long term care, to rescind the decision to create an independent Community Care Access Committee in Ottawa-Carleton and transfer responsibility for the management of the Home Care and Placement Co-ordination Services to the Region;**
2. **Ask the Province to recognize the full partnership role of the Region in decision- making and approval of any changes in the long term care system for which the Region has funding responsibility.**

CARRIED

3. CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCIES (ALPHA)
- Committee Co-ordinator report dated 10 Feb 97

Committee Chair M. Meilleur asked that anyone interested in attending the ALPHA Conference notify her office.

RESPONSES TO MOTIONS/INQUIRIES

4. RESPONSE TO CSC MOTION #3 - CONVALESCENT CARE FOR MEN WHO ARE HOMELESS
- Commissioner, Social Services Department report dated 4 Feb 97

That the Community Services Committee receive this report for information.

RECEIVED

COUNCILLORS' ITEM(S)

5. IMPACT OF CHANGES TO WORKERS' COMPENSATION ON REGIONAL TAXPAYERS

- Committee Co-ordinator report dated 7 Feb 97

Ms. Marg Harbert, vice-president, Local 34, Communications Energy and Paperworkers' Union, and member of the Ontario Federation of Labour Workplace Safety Committee

Ms. Harbert said the proposed changes to Bill 99 will affect a wide cross-section of the community and will have a drastic impact on working people, the unemployed and the future work-force. If these reductions are approved, injured workers will be forced to turn to other sources for income to make ends meet, most likely welfare assistance, thereby putting increased strain on an already stretched system. The proposed changes warrant full public hearings with participation from all stakeholders, including regional government.

Mr. Doug Perrault, President, Ottawa and District Injured Workers Group

Mr. Perrault pointed out that the fact the Government of Ontario is proposing massive legislative change without public hearings is unprecedented in Ontario and in Canada. The changes are based on the myth of an unfunded liability. In 1995, the Workers' Compensation Board (WCB) made the top-ten list of profitable corporations. A review of the WCB's Financial Statement reveals a surplus of \$510 million dollars and an asset fund of \$8 million.

Mr. Perrault pointed out that only 65% of employees are included in compensation payments while 700,000 workers in financial institutions, governments, large corporations and in the expanding field of home-based workers are excluded. Employer collectivism, which was the basis for compensation, has been ignored. Injured workers have become targets of the blame-the-victim mentality. While the government professes to make health and safety in the workplace a priority, it has at the same time disbanded the Workers' Health and Safety Agency. This body oversees the delivery of health and safety education in the Province. The government has also cut, and plans further cuts to the Occupational Health and Safety Act and has proposed capping the cost of administering the Act. Repetitive Strain Injuries and stress will be non-compensable injuries. Workers who reach 65 years of age will see pensions cut by half; cost-of-living allowances will be implemented at a reduced rate; individuals injured before 1990 will receive \$200 less per month.

Councillor A. Munter asked whether the speaker was aware of any studies relating to the impact of these changes on municipalities. Mr. Perrault said he would suggest that governments have costed savings to themselves, and believe they can save money. He posited this is only "smoke and mirrors", as WCB is funded by workers, not by the government.

In reply to a question from Committee Chair M. Meilleur, Mr. Perrault said the last figures available indicate that the WCB's unfunded liability is \$10.5 billion. He added that, at the current rate, this amount will have been paid off by the year 2014. This amount is based on the premise every claimant will be paid until he/she reaches age 65, whereas the majority of claimants remain on the system for three to six months. He posited this should not be the sole reason for changing the compensation act.

Mr. Jeff Bennie, Member of the Executive, Ottawa and District Labour Council and National Representative of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers,

Mr. Bennie said Bill 99 proposes severely restricting claims for chronic stress unless trauma is involved. Other proposals include limiting claims for chronic pain injuries and making significant changes to the way workers are rehabilitated back at work or accommodated at work. In the present-day work-place, 50% of injuries are Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSI). Bill 99 does not recognise the modern work-place. Many medical insurance plans do not recognize work-related injuries. Workers denied compensation apply for long term disability: this, in turn, is denied because it is work-related, therefore workers are left in a catch-22 situation. Mr. Bennie asked that the provincial government study the social costs to municipalities of changes to Bill 99. He added this is a serious piece of legislation and hearings must take place in other major centres in Ontario. He asked why the property tax system should pick up the cost of injured workers.

Mr. Ken Clavette, Co-ordinator, Labour and Community Services, echoed the sentiments expressed by previous speakers. He posited there is no need to add to the 96,000 men, women and children currently receiving welfare assistance in Ottawa-Carleton.

Moved by A. Munter

WHEREAS the Ontario government has introduced Bill 99, legislation which rewrites the Workers' Compensation Act; and

WHEREAS Bill 99 limits or outlaws compensation for certain disabilities compensated under the current Act; and

WHEREAS traditional sickness and accident insurance programs view these disabilities as work-related and are thus not likely to take responsibility for them; and

WHEREAS the health care system and social assistance programs will be expected to provide care and income for those workers whose work-related disabilities are not recognized by either workers' compensation or private insurance plans; and

WHEREAS Queen's Park's downloading means regional government will have an expanded role to play in funding these programs, including social assistance disability payments, home care and long-term care; and

WHEREAS previous changes by senior governments have had dramatic impacts on local budgets -- for example, tightened eligibility for Unemployment Insurance led to increases in regional welfare costs;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT before changes are enacted to workers' compensation legislation, the provincial government commission a comprehensive study to examine the impact on municipal expenditures and guarantee to provide local government with the necessary funding to cover all expenses which may be downloaded to regional property taxpayers; and

FURTHER THAT public hearings on Bill 99 be held in Ottawa-Carleton in order that municipalities, citizens and community organisations have an opportunity to address these changes; and

FURTHER THAT copies of this resolution be circulated to all Ottawa-Carleton MPP's, the Minister of Labour and all provincial party leaders.

CARRIED as amended

INFORMATION PREVIOUSLY DISTRIBUTED

1. ACCREDITATION AWARDS - RMOC HOMES FOR THE AGED
- Commissioner, Homes for the Aged memorandum dated 7 Feb 97

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

NEXT MEETING

6 March 1997

CHAIR

CO-ORDINATOR