

MINUTES

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON

THURSDAY 20 MAY 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 6 May 1999 meeting.

CARRIED

INQUIRIES

HOMELESSNESS SITUATION NEAR THE CANAL

Councillor W. Byrne made reference to an article which appeared in the Ottawa Citizen on 20 May 99, describing a recent situation with homeless persons near the Rideau Canal, and she made the following Inquiry:

Can the Commissioner, Social Services Department and the Medical Officer of Health ensure that their street workers, public health nurses and other staff involved in addressing the needs of the homeless are in contact with the police and regional security to determine more appropriate methods of dealing with the most severely disadvantaged homeless people?

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- Notes: 1. Underlining indicates new or amended recommendations approved by Committee.
2. Items requiring Council approval will be presented on 9 June 1999 in Community Services Report No. 31.

The Committee Chair, A. Munter, informed the Committee he has written to the Chief Administrative Officer, asking why the actions described in the article took place, and to clarify the Region's policies on homelessness. He noted that the Region invests money into shelters for the homeless and participates in the street health network to provide homeless persons with resources. He also inquired why Regional Police and the Region's security staff responded as opposed to representatives from the Health and Social Services Departments.

Councillor D. Holmes commented that such a "knee-jerk" reaction should not have taken place when there are numerous agencies available to assist in a more holistic manner. Councillor H. Kreling indicated he would be forwarding Councillor Byrne's Inquiry to Regional Police Chief B. Ford for immediate action.

PRESENTATION(S)

1. YOUTH SERVICES BUREAU CENTRAL YOUTH ADVISORY TO THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVE YOUTH FORUM
 - Co-ordinator, Community Services Committee report dated 6 May 99
 - Report, "Action Manual II", Spring 1999, issued separately

The Committee heard from Ms. Susan Kennedy, Chair, Young People's Perspective (YPP), a coalition of twenty youth and youth oriented agencies. She introduced Mr. Chris Manning, Ms. Patty Pace, Co-ordinator of youth programs at the YMCA and Mr. Tom Nichols of the Boys and Girls' Club.

S. Kennedy spoke about the YPP's celebration of National Child Day with the second annual Regional Youth Forum on Parliament Hill on November 20, 1998. Tom Nichols drew Committee's attention to the Action Manual II, saying this document summarizes the comments from the youth forum. Patty Pace provided additional details about the day, and she expressed the hope that National Child Day in 1999 will be as successful.

In response to a question from Councillor D. Holmes about youth living on the street surviving and having to pay for their basic needs, Ms. Kennedy indicated that making things such eliminating activities such as "squeegee-ing" is more likely to lead youth to illegal activities.

Councillor W. Byrne asked what the Region could do to support YPP's efforts. T. Nichols stated that Council support was needed to make YPP a better organization, and to provide the necessary resources. Replying to a further question from the Councillor, S. Kennedy indicated the first Youth Forum was funded by the Trillium Foundation; this year, organizers hope to present a Youth Rock Fair to raise money to fund subsequent youth forums.

Councillor M. McGoldrick-Larsen suggested that corporate sponsorship was another possibility and that music companies, high tech firms may be interested in helping out. She said she had found the Action Manual informative, user-friendly to youth, and she encouraged organizers to continue their involvement in this area. She expressed the view it was important that youth from rural townships be involved and she asked whether the last forum had a good cross-section from throughout the Region. S. Kennedy said there were approximately 25 youth from North Lanark out of the 375 in attendance at the last forum. Funds had been earmarked for transportation purposes, but this could become an issue if the number of attendees keeps increasing.

Subsequent to this, the Committee considered the report recommendation:

That the Community Services Committee receive the presentation from the Youth Services Bureau Central Youth Advisory for information.

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2. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC TRENDS IN OTTAWA-CARLETON
- Co-ordinator, Community Services Committee report dated 11 May 99

Mr. Michael Allan, President and Executive Director, United Way/Centr'aide Ottawa-Carleton and Dr. David Welch, President, Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton presented the report entitled "A Tale of Two Cities: Socio-Demographic and Economic Trends in Ottawa-Carleton". Mr. Allan began by saying the report presents a snapshot of Ottawa-Carleton, specifically, what it was and what it is becoming, from a relatively affluent, government town to an example of a knowledge-based community. He added that, as the latter, Ottawa-Carleton will be more shock-sensitive to the to the global economy, and the transition will bring challenges and social issues that will need to be addressed.

Mr. Allan made reference to other national and international reports that show similar trends to those illustrated in "A Tale of Two Cities". He spoke about the United Nations' Human Development report which indicated that, overall, Canada is the best country in the world in which to live. The most notable exception was the gap between the rich and the poor, a trend which the joint report describes. This trend has also been identified in the Growing Gap report recently released by the Toronto-based Centre for Social Justice and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities is monitoring this trend in municipalities across the country.

Mr. Allan continued by saying the United Way will use the report to guide its thinking, its work, its funding and fund-raising activities, and it will be shared with other decision-makers such as Regional Council. The United Way's mission, to build a strong, safe and healthy community for all, cannot be accomplished without solid information about what is happening in the community. Mr. Allan expressed the hope that, together with community

stakeholders and elected representatives and through partnerships with agencies such as the Social Planning Council (SPC), the United Way will be better able to respond to the needs of an aging population and those of a more ethnically-diverse community.

Dr. D. Welch said researchers examined the findings of previous reports and combined these with the results of the 1996 Census. He added that, while the report cannot answer all questions, it points to the need for additional research and investigation into key areas. He highlighted a few interesting aspects of the findings:

- ◆ Population growth: there are far greater increases in the suburban areas, and decreases in Vanier and Rockcliffe;
- ◆ household incomes are growing: the percentage of persons earning \$80,000 per annum has gone from 13 to 25%, but the traditional middle class has gone from 69% in 1985 to 57% in 1995;
- ◆ the percentage of people who make under \$20,000 per year has remained at 18% during the past decade; the actual number of low income households has steadily increased;
- ◆ the federal government remains the number one employer, with approximately 83,000 jobs, followed by the service industry and the high tech sector; 12.3% of the workforce are self-employed individuals. This number is gradually increasing partly because of federal government restructuring and contracting out in the high tech sector;
- ◆ Employment Insurance: approximately 80% of people were able to get Unemployment Insurance, but with the introduction of Employment Insurance, that number has decreased to 36% in Canada and 17.7% in Ottawa-Carleton. This has direct implications for the social service and education sectors, because many programs are tied to people receiving Employment Insurance.
- ◆ Changing demographics: the National Capital region is third largest francophone community in Canada, with 345,000 listing French as their mother tongue. While there is still a heavy concentration of francophones east of the Rideau Canal, the trend is changing because of job development in the high tech sector, mainly concentrated in the west. The number of bilingual persons is roughly 37%, compared to 11.6% for Ontario and 17% for Canada. Approximately one-fifth of the population consists of immigrants, with 50% of recent immigrants living in Ottawa and the more established immigrant communities living in the surrounding areas;
- ◆ Aging population: the percentage of homecare clients increased by 23.9% in the 1996-97 period; this will have an impact when developing policies and implications for health care services.

Dr. Welch concluded his presentation by saying the report will be circulated to all Ottawa-Carleton politicians and to local councils, and will be forwarded to community organizations and social service groups. Approximately 2000 copies will be distributed.

In response to a question from Chair A. Munter, Dr. Welch clarified the apparent discrepancy between the number of low income families, which has increased, and the number of people with income of \$20,000 which has remained stable. Dr. Welch said an important question to ask is the following: if the number of low income families has actually increased over this period, what will happen now that the local economy is more closely linked to the high tech sector and to outside factors, and what will be the effect on the low income population of any future slowdown.

Councillor D. Holmes congratulated the report authors for what she called a very legible document. She said it would be helpful for the Region to use the statistics related to persons under and over 35 years of age and their employability, to pressure the Province into investing more money into training programs for these individuals. Dr. Welch pointed out that the Regional Chair's Task Force on Employment is looking at how to deal with a sector of people who are under and semi-employed to help them get into the job market. He agreed with Councillor Holmes that Ottawa-Carleton presents obstacles to employment for persons with less schooling, because of the requirements of both the federal government and the high tech sectors.

Councillor W. Byrne asked whether there is any information about where people who lose their primary income supports (employment insurance, social assistance) are going. She also wanted to know what it means for Ontario Works that labour force participation rates are not growing. Dr. Welch responded by saying some people leave the Region when they lose their job. He noted that Social Services Commissioner D. Stewart has investigated the matter of what happens to people who lose their benefits, and the findings were varied. Councillor Byrne posited that, instead of addressing the need and re-training and re-employing people, they are effectively being chased away.

Councillor C. Doucet commented that, not only is the francophone population moving westward, it is also moving across the river to Hull and Gatineau. Dr. Welch agreed this was the case, there is displacement and a lot of coming and going between both shores, as has been the case in the area for the past 150 years. Councillor Doucet said that, to stem the flow of francophones, it was important to increase the number of activities in French in Ottawa-Carleton. He made reference to comments at the end of the report about agencies facing reductions in grants and volunteer agencies having to play an increasing role, and about the fact that the Region, as the area of last resort, has less and less funding to respond to emerging needs. Councillor Doucet wondered why the report does not reach this conclusion. Dr. Welch responded by saying the report was written to allow people to draw their own conclusions, and he reiterated that further research is needed to better understand certain problems.

Chair Munter pointed out that, within the context of a booming economy, the number of low income families and low income individuals is increasing. He referred to the statistic which says that only 17% of people in Ottawa-Carleton are eligible for Employment Insurance when the national average is 36%. He said this fact, coupled with the fact the local economy is increasingly susceptible to swings, illustrates that Council is at a very high level of exposure, as those persons have nowhere else to go but on social assistance, a regional responsibility. Chair Munter wondered what this will happen for Ottawa-Carleton if and when a recession occurs.

That the Community Services Committee receive the presentation for information.

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3. SOCIAL HOUSING REFORM SUBSIDY FORMULA: FINANCIAL IMPACT
- Special Advisor on Social Housing report dated 5 May 99

The Special Advisor on Social Housing, Joyce Potter, gave a presentation on the subsidy formula proposed by the Province as part of its social housing reform package. She reminded Committee members that the Region has been funding the Province's share of social housing since January 1998 and this represents approximately 18,000 units in Ottawa-Carleton. The units have been built over the past decades under eight different funding programs, with different subsidy formulas attached to them and, prior to downloading social housing to the Region, the Province decided it would try to simplify the package of programs. Ms. Potter noted that, in 1998, social housing costs were \$60.3 million and regional staff want to ensure that any formula developed by the Province will not increase subsidy costs.

Ms. Potter summarized the findings of the consultant engaged to analyze the Province's model compared with the eight different funding formulas in place.

Provincial Reform

The Social Housing Committee formed in 1998 presented its final report to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing in November 1998. Nothing has happened since that time, however there are indications the Province may be speeding up the negotiating of a new federal/provincial agreement, a necessary condition for program reform and the downloading of administration.

Study Methodology and Findings

The consultant was asked to look at current programs and proposed reforms and 19 projects were selected for analysis, representing approximately 13% of the total number of projects. In most cases, the subsidy costs were higher under program reform than under existing program designs. Under program reform, subsidies would be tied to market rents and continue to be paid even when the provider earns an operating surplus. The latest provincial proposals

suggest that 50% of any surplus would be returned to the municipality and the other 50% would be retained by the providers, with conditions about they can dispose of it.

Ms. Potter said another area of concern is that at the end of the agreements (the earliest in Ottawa-Carleton occurring in year 2006), almost half the projects would be unable to maintain the same level of rent supplement they currently provide through internal subsidies. She said this will become the Region's problem, with groups saying that having to maintain the same level of low income clients will require additional subsidies from the Region, including the federal government's share. Given the magnitude of the social housing budget, even a small increase in the subsidy would mean a significant amount of money, for example, a 5% increase would represent an additional \$3 million.

Ms. Potter continued by saying the subsidy formula is something the Region can influence, but there will still be risks associated with social housing budgets, and other factors will influence requirements year after year. At the very least, the Region wants the Province to provide a subsidy formula that is not going to mean higher costs than what it is currently paying as part of its arrangements with providers.

Next Steps

Ms. Potter indicated that copies of the report have been circulated to other Regions and to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. The Province should be pressured to undertake further analysis to ensure municipalities have a clear sense of what they will get prior to social housing being downloaded. Ms. Potter said the Province has indicated municipalities will be involved as it works out reform details. Ultimately, municipalities will have to ensure social housing providers can meet their costs, and, if there are surpluses, that these can be used to meet the demand for social housing.

Councillor C. Doucet alluded to the fact the report before Committee does not address the need for growth in the social housing portfolio. Ms. Potter indicated staff are working on a report on the Region's role in social housing, as well as working closely with the Homelessness Task Force on a number of housing-related recommendations. It is anticipated these reports will be coming forward as part of the presentations on homelessness, scheduled for 17 June. Councillor Doucet said he did not feel that addressing the status quo of social housing was good enough, and that the report should paint a very clear picture for Council about the seriousness of the situation.

In reply to questions from Councillor D. Holmes about Regional Development Charges (RDC)s, Ms. Potter said a number of groups have recommended that non-profit housing be exempted from RDCs and this has also been a recommendation of the Social Housing Working Group.

Councillor A. Loney cautioned there is a need to address the issues outlined in the report before moving to expand the Region's housing portfolio. The Councillor added it is important to know how any expansion would be financed and who would pay the subsidies. He added these considerations do not preclude staff from examining the issues, looking at the impact of growth, and at other possibilities. Ms. Potter pointed out that the Province is not currently

funding any additional housing, therefore municipalities can be creative in finding ways to help groups develop new units. She added there may be ways of doing this in a more cost-effective manner than was done in the past through long-term subsidy agreements.

That the Community Services Committee recommend Council receive this report for information.

CARRIED

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3: 00 p.m.

CHAIR

CO-ORDINATOR