

February 4, 2013

Regional Councillors, Area Municipality CAOs, Clerks and Planning Directors

RE: **Housing and Homelessness Action Plan, Update**

PURPOSE

To provide an update on the development of Niagara's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP), including information about the opportunities for public input into the draft HHAP.

BACKGROUND

Niagara Region is the Service Manager for housing programs and planning, homelessness and social services. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) under the Housing Services Act, 2011 (HSA) requires all Service Managers to develop a HHAP THAT will establish priorities for housing and homelessness services based on targeted consultations and research.

The HHAP project is being managed by a cross-departmental team from Community Services, Niagara Regional Housing, Public Health and Integrated Community Planning.

A draft of the HHAP will be reviewed by Niagara Regional Council by June 2013, submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for review and comment, and approved by Regional Council in late 2013. The HHAP will be reviewed every five years with annual public reporting of results. The HHAP will be consistent with legislation, Ontario Regulations and the provincial Housing Policy Statement, and meet the following objectives:

- Identify current and future housing needs
- Set out objectives and targets (goals) relating to housing needs
- Propose actions to meet the goals
- Establish a process to measure and report progress towards meeting the goals

The HHAP will include an implementation plan to focus on the most immediate phase of detailed activities to affect change, maximize service improvements and funding efficiencies. Key plan components must meet specific provincial directions which include:

- Establish increased accountability and outcomes
- Goal of ending homelessness
- Engage and support of Non-Profit, Co-operatives, and Housing Corporations
- Engage the private market including promoting and supporting secondary suites
- Improve integration of housing and homelessness plans and services with other human services planning and delivery resulting in better outcomes for individuals and families
- Allow for a range of housing options to meet a broad range of needs
- Promote environmental sustainability and energy conservation
- Have, adequate, affordable and suitable places for people to live

The Ontario Housing Policy Statement notes that “responsibility for housing and homelessness is shared among multiple partners including federal, provincial and local governments, as well as non-for profit service providers, the private sector, volunteers, individuals and families.” The HHAP will identify the role that each can have in achieving the actions to be recommended in the HHAP.

WHAT WE HAVE HEARD

Phase one of the consultation process took place between October and December 2012. This included a community workshop attended by 66 community agency representatives, 11 facilitated sessions with community stakeholder groups, 11 community agency-led meetings with key stakeholders and priority populations, and 113 responses to a consultation workbook. In all, more than 2,800 statements from over 400 individuals were collected, compiled, analyzed and themed.

Six theme areas emerged from the consultation process, with many sub-themes underneath them. These are:

- 1) To assist Niagara residents who do not have a permanent place to live find a home
- 2) The services and/or supports most important to help people find, afford and keep their home
- 3) The financial supports most important to help people find, afford and keep their own home
- 4) Actions with the greatest potential to provide more housing opportunities
- 5) How to better encourage action on housing and homelessness priorities
- 6) The things community and service agencies need to focus on to improve housing opportunities and prevent homelessness

A follow-up workshop was held on January 23, 2013 to prioritize actions under these six themes, and begin work on the development of Action Plans for the priority actions.

CURRENT RESOURCES AND ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

1. Technical Report

A technical report has been developed that contains a broad range of facts and figures about housing and homelessness issues in Niagara. The information provides background information to support development of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan. The technical report is available at <http://www.niagararegion.ca/social-services/technical-report/default.aspx>

2. Online Survey

Niagara Region has launched an online survey asking residents for their views and ideas on how to best increase access to adequate, suitable and affordable housing. The public input will be used to develop the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan for Niagara.

The survey is located at

<http://www.niagararegion.ca/social-services/action-plan/default.aspx?shorturl=1>

3. Town Halls

In February, there will be a series of town hall meetings regarding the HHAP. The goal of these meetings is to learn about concerns that might be specific to certain areas of the region, and to provide another opportunity for engagement for local communities. The following is a list of locations, and times for these town halls.

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| Beamsville | Community Living, 5041 King St. | Tuesday February 19, 2013 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. |
| St. Catharines | Seymour-Hannah Sports and Entertainment Complex, 240 St. Paul St. West | Wednesday February 20, 2013 7 – 9 p.m. |
| Fort Erie | Bridges Community Health Centre, 1485 Garrison Rd. | Tuesday February 26, 2013 1 – 3 p.m. |
| Welland | City Hall Community Room 60 East Main St. | Tuesday February 26, 2013 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. |
| Niagara Falls | McBain Centre 7150 Montrose Rd. | Wednesday February 27, 2013 6:30 - 8:30pm |

REQUEST TO LOCAL MAYORS, REGIONAL COUNCILLORS, CAOs, PLANNING DIRECTORS AND CLERK's OFFICES.

- Provide input for the HHAP by completing the online public survey that will be available on the Niagara Region website at <http://www.niagararegion.ca/social-services/action-plan/default.aspx?shorturl=1> between Jan. 30 and Feb. 22, 2013.
- Attend one of the five town hall meetings being planned for Niagara Falls, St. Catharines, Welland, Fort Erie and Niagara West.
- Share the information about the survey and Town Hall Meetings with local Councillors and others you feel might be interested in participating. i.e. Add a link to Housing and Homelessness Action Plan website <http://www.niagararegion.ca/social-services/action-plan/> from your Municipal website to encourage your residents to share their views and ideas on housing and homelessness issues in Niagara and review the background information available through the Niagara Housing and Homelessness Statistics document available online <http://www.niagararegion.ca/social-services/technical-report/default.aspx> .



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