

# Report to Council



**Date:** November 9, 2015  
**File:** 0155-01  
**To:** City Manager  
**From:** Community Policing Coordinator  
**Subject:** Homelessness - Municipal Strategies-Working Models

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## **Recommendation:**

THAT Council receives, for information, the Report from the Community Policing Coordinator dated November 9, 2015 with respect to municipal strategies/working models addressing homelessness and homelessness-related issues;

AND THAT Council directs staff to include, for consideration in the 2016 Financial Plan, funding for a Municipal resource to work with other agencies to advance homelessness strategies through advocacy, collaboration and education.

## **Purpose:**

To seek Council's endorsement for a resource to allow the City of Kelowna to take a leadership role in the advancement of homelessness strategies using best practices.

## **Background:**

Currently in Kelowna, a multitude of agencies work collaboratively to address the many social issues facing citizens of Kelowna. The City of Kelowna is interested increasing its' participation with these partners through the addition of a full-time position to advance ideas, liaise with other levels of government and to increase awareness of the issues of homelessness to the community.

Municipalities across the country have addressed homelessness in a multitude of ways. Two methodologies that have emerged as best practices are, the Continuum of Care or supportive housing methodology and the Housing First strategy.

## **Continuum of Care Model**

The continuum of care model involves outreach, intake, assessment, and referral services to identify a client's needs and link them to appropriate housing and/or services (CMHC 2003). In addition, the model relies on emergency shelters and transitional housing as well as supportive services to assist the client in the transition from homelessness to permanent, independent living. Continuum of care places an emphasis on public housing and government funding. An indication of housing readiness must be displayed by the client.

In recent years, many municipalities throughout BC and across Canada have shifted from the continuum of care model to a philosophy called Housing First.

## **Housing First Strategy**

Housing First also referred to as rapid re-housing is an overarching philosophy with a core set of principles that have implications for systems approaches to ending homelessness and for program models (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2014). In contrast to the continuum of care model, Housing First houses clients immediately without preconditions; housing and clinical services are separated. Once placed in housing, the individual would be connected to additional services and supports as needed (Homeless Hub, 2013).

The core principles of Housing First include:

1. Immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements.
2. Consumer choice and self-determination.
3. Recovery orientation to services.
4. Individualized and client-driven supports.
5. Social and community integration.

Housing First focuses on chronically and episodically homeless persons. Chronically homeless refers to individuals, often with disabling conditions, who are currently homeless and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year (i.e. have spent more than 180 nights in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation), (Central Okanagan Foundation, 2014). Episodically homeless refers to individuals, often with disabling conditions, who are currently homeless and have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year (of note, episodes are defined as periods when a person would be in a shelter or place not fit for human habitation for a certain period and after at least 30 days, would be back in the shelter or place). (Central Okanagan Foundation, 2014).

Introduced in April 2007, and renewed in 2013, the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), a federal affordable housing and homelessness program provides support and funding to 61 designated communities across Canada. In 2013, the Federal government committed nearly \$600 million over 5 years to the renewal and refocus of the HPS a Housing First Approach. The refocused program seeks to address homelessness by working in partnership with communities, provinces and territories, other federal departments and the private and not-for-profit sectors.

## Summary

With no commitment identified past 2018 from either the federal government or the province, it is recommended, that the City of Kelowna, along with its partnering agencies, develop a made in Kelowna model for addressing homelessness and related issues

The addition of a staff member who possesses knowledge of affordable housing strategies, homelessness issues, and has the ability to work with partnering agencies, businesses and the development community, will assist in achieving mutually agreed objectives. Furthermore, the staff member will foster collaboration with government agencies, seek funding and actively promote community awareness of a made in Kelowna strategy to address homelessness. It is recommended that this position be funded for a three year term with further review prior to the end of 2018.

More information on the details of the research conducted by staff is attached as Addendum A for Council's review and consideration.

### Internal Circulation:

- Divisional Director Active Living and Culture
- Divisional Director Corporate and Protective Services
- Grants and Partnership Manager
- Director of Financial Services

### Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

A request for the funds necessary to support this position over three years will be included in the 2016 Financial Plan.

### Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Existing Policy:

Personnel Implications:

External Agency/Public Comments:

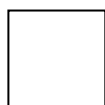
Communications Comments:

Alternate Recommendation:

Submitted by:

C. Cornock, Community Policing Coordinator

Approved for inclusion:



R. Mayne, CPA, CMA  
Divisional Director, Corporate and Protective Services

## **Addendum A**

### **Research:**

#### **City of Medicine Hat:**

In 2009, Medicine Hat became one of the first Canadian cities to commit to end homelessness using a Housing First approach (At Home in Medicine Hat, 2014). The Social Development department works in conjunction with the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society (MHCHS) to provide Affordable Housing in Medicine Hat. Through a partnership with and funding from Alberta Urban and Municipal Affairs, the City is involved in the creation of additional affordable housing units that will be managed and maintained by the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society. The City is represented on the MHCHS Board of Directors by one alderman and one staff person. The primary role of the municipality is political advocacy within the community and intergovernmental.

In addition, the City of Medicine Hat has 4 Community Resource workers (provincial and municipal funded positions) who assist individuals to find services, housing and community resources. These employees work within the Community, Seniors and Social development department. The City owns 4-5 affordable housing units which are managed by the Medicine Hat Community Housing Society. Federal and provincial funds were obtained for the development of the units.

To date, Medicine Hat has not ended homelessness; rather they have developed a working model to address the homelessness, affordable housing and related issues.

### **Responses - British Columbia Municipalities**

#### **City of Abbotsford:**

In March 2014, City Council struck a Task Force to identify short, medium and long-term strategies to address homelessness issues in Abbotsford. Working in collaboration with community partners including BC Housing, the Fraser Health Authority, the service community and the business community, the Task Force identified five strategic objectives:

1. Facilitating a Housing First approach
2. Advocating for housing and wrap-around support
3. Initiating a prevention program
4. Promoting a culture of awareness, inclusiveness and respect
5. Fostering collaboration between agencies, community and government

These key objectives would serve to guide Abbotsford's Homelessness Action Plan. Furthermore, the Task Force recommended hiring an experienced Housing and Homelessness Coordinator to implement the Plan. Hired in the spring 2015, the Homelessness Coordinator, serves as the connection between non-profit agencies, government, and the community. The Coordinator fosters collaboration with government agencies, seeks funding, and actively

promotes community awareness of the Homelessness Action Committee and its Housing First approach.

#### **City of Kamloops:**

In 2013, the City of Kamloops in partnership HomeFree (the Community Advisory Board or CAB, which determines the direction of federal HPS funds for Kamloops) held an Affordable Housing Development Forum. Research for the Affordable Housing Developers Package for Kamloops began at the forum. This package provides useful information to persons interested in becoming involved in the affordable housing sector in Kamloops.

The package includes information on the following:

1. Affordable Housing Reserve Fund
2. Development Cost Charge Exemptions
3. Downtown Revitalization Tax Exemption - intended to increase stock of rental housing in the City Centre
4. Reduced Parking Requirements
5. Below Market Real Estate Sales or Long-term Leases
6. Processing Support and Expedite Application processes
7. Support Site-specific Variances and Zoning Changes
8. Assist in Public and Neighbourhood Consultation

The City provides administrative support to HomeFree, the community advisory board that determines the allocation of federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy Funds to homelessness projects in the community. In addition, the City serves as the Community Entity for the CAB, providing a link between the federal government and the community for the HPS and administers HPS funds.

#### **City of Prince George:**

In 2009, City Council struck the Beyond Homelessness Standing Committee modeled after the Housing First initiative in Portland, Oregon. In 2014, after a 3 year hiatus, the committee reconvened to discuss revised terms of reference and a name change to the Select Committee on Homelessness and Affordable housing. The new committee was to facilitate the provision of interagency advocacy in support of a Housing First approach to ending homelessness and providing affordable housing.

The terms of reference for the Select Committee on Homelessness and Affordable Housing identify the role of the municipality as follows:

- Develop and enhance partnerships with all forms of government and forge new relationships across sectors to further affordable housing objectives.
- Support development of a full range of housing types and tenures so that people of all ages, income levels and abilities have housing choices throughout the community.
- Support development of new affordable housing along the housing continuum.
- Support preservation of existing affordable housing in good condition.