



Administrative Report

Office of the Manager, Community Services

To: Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

From: Jeanie Diamond-Francis
Manager, Community Services

Date: Wednesday, April 05, 2023

Subject: Increase to Housing with Supports Per Diem

Report #: 2023-0405-LCS-R03-JDF

Purpose

To inform County Council Members of a proposed per diem increase for the Residential Services Homes Program.

Background

The Residential Services Homes Program, formally known as the Housing with Supports Program, offers supportive housing for eligible low-income individuals through service agreements with Residential Services Homes in both the City of Windsor and County of Essex and is currently funded at a \$55 per diem rate which took effect on April 1st, 2019. The per diem rate is set by the City of Windsor which is the designated Consolidated Service Manager for the Windsor-Essex region.

The Residential Services Homes Program is primarily funded by the provincial Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP), as well as municipal funding from the City of Windsor, for the Homes located in Windsor, and the County of Essex, for Homes located within the County. As the Consolidated Service Manager, the City of Windsor is legislatively responsible for managing the HPP funding stream for the Windsor-Essex region and provides an annual allocation within the City budget, to the County of Essex to administer the Residential Services Homes Program in the County.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Service Manager received additional provincial funding under the Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) and provided additional funding allocations to the Residential Services

Homes to assist them with pandemic related expenses such as additional staffing and needed supplies. However, this stream of funding significantly decreased throughout the 2022 year and completely ended on December 31st, 2022.

Discussion

During the summer of 2022, County Administration was approached by some Residential Services Home Administrators and owners who indicated that an increase in the per diem rate was required to continue providing the same level of care and services to residents living in their homes. They indicated that the current per diem was insufficient and that they were feeling extreme financial pressures from the rising cost of food, staffing and other supplies required to operate their homes. Some homes also expressed the fear of no longer being able to operate, should additional funding not be available.

Furthermore, in the past year, seniors received several income increases through OAS (Old Age Security), CPP (Canadian Pension Plan) and GAINS (Guaranteed Annual Income System) to address the rising cost of living. These income increases resulted in many seniors no longer being eligible for the Residential Services Homes Program as their income was greater than \$1854 (\$55 per day x 31 days plus \$149 personal needs allowance). County administration flagged this issue to the Service Manager and began advocating for a per diem increase as this would, in turn, increase the financial eligibility to the program and seniors would be able to continue being supported by the Residential Services Program. County Administration estimated that an increase of \$5 per diem would be required to maintain the majority of seniors in the program. Without this per diem increase, approximately 70 seniors residing in the County Residential Services Program would be at risk of being discharged from the program and most would be unable to afford a private pay bed in their existing home, being that private pay beds mainly fluctuate between \$2250 and \$3500 per month. As a solution to this issue was being explored, County Administration kept subsidized seniors in the program until more information was available to determine next steps.

In addition, City Administration was experiencing similar concerns and their Residential Services Home administrators and owners were also advocating for an increase in per diem. Several home administrators, from both the City and County, sought support and advocacy from their elected officials for additional funding to operate their Residential Services Programs.

For several months, City and County Administration have been working together to try to find a solution where seniors could remain in the program and for homes to receive an increase in funding to maintain an adequate level of care. The only solution that would address both issues was to increase the per diem rate and being that the HPP funding was already stretched, Administration was faced with needing to seek additional municipal contributions from both City and County Councils to compensate for the additional cost of raising the per diem rate.

However, on March 24th, following the release of the Provincial Budget, the City of Windsor was advised that they would be receiving an increase in HPP funding and the increase would be in effect for the 2023-2024, 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 fiscal years. On March 27, 2023, County Administration was advised of the HPP funding increase and was informed by the Service Manager that the increase would be sufficient to address several pressures within the HPP funded programs, including a \$5 per diem increase to the Residential Services Homes Program. The Service Manager will include the proposed per diem increase in their investment plan to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing which is due on May 1st, 2023 and if approved, the \$60 per diem will take effect with a retroactive payment going back to April 1st, 2023.

Financial Implications

Being that our Service Manager received an increase in HPP funding from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), the cost of increasing the per diem rate to \$60 per day will be completely funded by HPP funding, providing MMAH approves the Service Manager's investment plan. At this time, it is believed that the County contribution to the Residential Services Program will remain the same as previously approved in the 2023 Community Services budget. However, should County Administration be informed otherwise, or if the investment plan is not approved by the MMAH, a report with recommendations will be brought forward to County Council.

Consultations

The following individuals were consulted during the completion of this report:

- Mary Birch, Interim CAO, Director, Legislative and Community Services
- Sandra Zwiers, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer
- Jennifer Tanner, Manager of Homelessness and Housing Support, City of Windsor

Recommendation

That Essex County Council receive Report 2023-0405-LCS-R03-JDF Increase to Housing with Supports Per Diem as information.

Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeanie Diamond Francis

Jeanie Diamond-Francis, Manager, Community Services

Concurred With,

Mary Birch

Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix Number	Title
N/A	N/A