



## Committee Report

HS-24-02

**To:** Chair and Members of the Social Services Committee  
**From:** Mark Poste, Director of Housing Services  
**Date:** Wednesday, March 13, 2024  
**Subject:** **Reaching Home: One-Time Winter 2023-24 Unsheltered Homelessness Response Funding**

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### **Background:**

The Reaching Home programme is a federal initiative under the National Housing Strategy, which provides funding to communities across Canada to support outcomes-based programmes that prevent and reduce homelessness. This funding supports many goals outlined in the National Housing Strategy, particularly its goal to reduce chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by fiscal year 2027-2028. Oversight of Reaching Home is delivered on a national level through Infrastructure Canada.

Locally, Reaching Home funding is used to support the development of housing first programming, coordinated access systems, data collection and case management systems. The funds are also used in our community to better understand and respond to Indigenous experiences of homelessness.

The County of Wellington is the local Community Entity for Reaching Home funding for the Wellington and Guelph area which is a role similar to the County's role as Consolidated Municipal Service Manager with the Province of Ontario. As the Community Entity for the Reaching Home programme, the County enters into funding agreements with the federal government.

As Community Entity, the County is responsible for overseeing the local delivery of federal Reaching Home funds in a way that meets the programmes stated goals and objectives. In addition, the County is also responsible for establishing and collaborating with a local Community Advisory Board.

Community Advisory Boards are made up of a variety of local organizations and have a role in helping to guide the development of community plans, set local priorities in addressing homelessness, as well as review and make recommendations to the Community Entity about projects/ applications for Reaching Home funding.

### **Update:**

On December 22, 2023, Infrastructure Canada informed the County that it would receive a one-time top allocation \$633,318 to its current 2023-2024 allocation of Reaching Home programme funding.

This one-time funding, referred to as Winter 2023-24 Unsheltered Homelessness Response Funding, aims to help people find a safer and more stable place to stay and to respond to the increased demand for services and supports during the winter of 2023-24.

Throughout January, staff worked with Infrastructure Canada to complete an investment plan for the one-time funds and signed a contribution agreement by the end of January.

The investment plan includes:

- Temporary expansion of shelter spaces.
- Storage of belongings for up to 3 months.
- Transportation to access emergency shelters, food banks, community health centres, showers, laundry facilities, and to their home community.
- Provision of tangible supplies such as clothing, footwear, blankets, personal hygiene items, sleeping bags, mittens, and toques – especially for those who continue to stay in unsheltered locations.
- Time-limited rent assistance to stabilize individuals and families at risk of becoming homeless, as well as short-term rental assistance to support rapid re-housing efforts.
- Increase service availability (e.g., meals, warming spaces)

Staff estimate providing temporary shelter spaces will be the highest expenditure of this funding given the priority to ensure as many individuals as possible are supported to get out of the cold.

Shortly after signing the agreement with Infrastructure Canada, staff began reaching out to unsheltered community members and to multiple temporary accommodation sites in our area to explore options. The intake process and eligibility criteria for this funding is being organized through the Housing Services Stability team. Staff worked with 9 agencies in the City of Guelph and 4 agencies in the County of Wellington to help bring unsheltered community members indoors and support them. Next, staff and community partners continued to work together to develop a plan to provide continued support to the temporarily housed community members. This plan provides the foundational structure for ongoing support that is essential to creating opportunities for previously unsheltered community members to stabilize in their temporary space.

As of February 22, sixteen (16) community members who were previously experiencing chronic homelessness and living unsheltered have moved into new temporary accommodations. All these individuals have been informed that the temporary accommodation supports being provided are time limited and are subject to available funding. Staff are working with community partners to look for other housing options within the system to support these individuals once the funding expires in April 2024 or has been exhausted.

The staff will continue to work on intake for this programme and continue to work with the numerous community partners supporting those in receipt of temporary accommodations.

The availability of these one-time funds is an important opportunity for community partners to work collaboratively to support unsheltered community members during the cold winter months in addition to providing services to help them potentially stabilize their housing situation with longer term housing solutions.

Staff will provide a summary report to Committee in June 2024 that will include a financial summary and data on the following project indicators:

- # of households supported in temporary shelter
- # of households accessing transportation to stable shelter
- # of tangible items supplied
- # of individuals supported at unsheltered locations (tangible supplies, offered shelter, offered transportation to medical appointments etc.).
- # of households supported with time limited rent supports

**Financial Implications:**

This is 100% federal funding and expenditures completely offset funding resulting in no municipal tax levy impact.

**Recommendation:**

That the report, Reaching Home: One-Time Winter 2023-2024 Unsheltered Homelessness Response Funding, be received for information.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Poste  
Director of Housing Services