



COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

Committee Report

To: Chair and Members of the Joint Social Services and Land Ambulance Committee
From: Mark Poste, Director of Housing Services
Date: Wednesday, April 10, 2024 **HS-24-04**
Subject: **Reduction in Reaching Home Funding**

Background:

[Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy](#) provides funding to urban, rural, remote, and Indigenous communities across Canada to prevent and reduce homelessness. This funding supports the goals of the National Housing Strategy (2019) to support vulnerable community members to maintain safe, stable, and affordable housing, and to reduce chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by fiscal year 2027-2028. At a local level, this funding is intended to support the development of housing first programming, coordinated access systems, data collection, case management systems, and 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 like the County's role as Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for Housing Services with the Province of Ontario. As such, the County enters into service agreements with Infrastructure Canada for Reaching Home funding allocations.

As Community Entity, the County is responsible for overseeing the local delivery of these funds in a way that meets the programme's stated goals and objectives. It is also responsible for establishing and collaborating with a local Reaching Home Community Advisory Board that helps guide the development of our community plan to address homelessness, set local priorities, and makes recommendations to the Community Entity about projects/applications for Reaching Home funding.

Update:

In late Fall of 2023, the County received an email from Infrastructure Canada which outlined our community's incremental funding being delivered through a four-year agreement from April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2028. While a total of \$1.394 billion in Reaching Home funding is being allocated to communities across Canada over the next four years, all communities will experience a significant reduction during the term of the agreement.

The Reaching Home allocation for our community in 2023 was \$1,755,407. The chart below identifies a reduction to \$1,644,126 for 2024/25 and 2025/26 which then falls substantially to \$325,283 annually for the last two years of the agreement. This represents a 6.3% percent decrease in the first 2 years of the agreement and a further reduction of 80.2% in the final two years of the agreement. This results in an annual reduction of \$1,430,124 as of April 2026 from the 2023/24 funding level.

2024-2028 Agreement Funding Details	
2024-2025	\$1,644,126
2025-2026	\$1,644,126
2026-2027	\$325,283
2027-2028	\$325,283

Since the announcement, County staff have been in discussions with Infrastructure Canada and other Reaching Home Community Entities who have confirmed that this funding reduction is being made across Canada. Infrastructure Canada notes that “the focus around funding allocation changes were based on consideration of historical and existing funding levels to minimize service disruptions at the community level; and, leverage census population statistics, recognizing comparability across all communities in Canada and that there is a high correlation between population and various community-level homelessness indicators.”

The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness hosted a survey with Community Entities across Canada to help measure the impact of this funding reduction. The survey found that the reductions had a similar pattern across the Country, however some communities saw larger reductions than others. Of the 37 communities that participated in the survey, there was a smaller reduction in 2024-2026 (average 3% ranging from a 0% to 15% reduction) and a more drastic reduction for 2026-2028 (average 58% ranging from 6% to 84% reduction).

County staff have also been working with representatives from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, and work is being done to coordinate consistent messaging for municipalities to share with the Federal government. This messaging is expected to be released in early April. Staff are also working with our partners to develop a letter for Council to endorse, which will request that the Federal government sustain the 2024 Reaching Home funding level on an annualized basis.

Over the course of this year, staff will be working with the local Community Advisory Board to support the delivery of Reaching Home funding and to plan for this pending funding decrease. This work will also include developing an advocacy plan for the Community Advisory Board to engage with the Federal government and Infrastructure Canada to reverse this reduction in Reaching Home funding. Additionally, Social Services will plan to make recommendations as part of the 2025 budget process.

The following local organizations and initiatives are currently supported through our community’s Reaching Home funding. These unique positions are extremely important elements of our community’s housing stabilization system as they work closely with our most vulnerable citizens on a daily basis:

Wyndham House: Total: \$239,260

Housing First Worker (1.0 FTE), Housing Stability Worker (1.0 FTE), and Shelter Diversion Worker (1.0 FTE)

Stepping Stone: Total: \$391,004

Diversion and Rapid Rehousing Worker (1.0 FTE), Housing Stability Workers (2.0 FTEs) and Street Outreach Workers (2.0 FTEs)

The Diversion and Rapid Rehousing Worker at Stepping Stone and the Shelter Diversion Worker at Wyndham House have played a key role in significantly reducing the pressure on our emergency

shelter system and in finding permanent housing solutions for people experiencing homelessness. Annually, these positions divert approximately 250 people from the emergency shelter system, while also finding permanent housing for over 140 additional people who are experiencing chronic homelessness.

Housing Stability and Housing First Workers are responsible for supporting mid-high acuity individuals (approximately 60 per year) to secure and retain their housing, and support access to income, employment, education, and job training.

Street Outreach Workers are dedicated to engaging with individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness in encampments. Annually, these outreach workers visit approximately 70 locations where individuals are or have been reported to be living unsheltered to offer housing focused support.

Southern Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre: Total: \$229,030

Indigenous Led Housing Focused Outreach Workers (2.0 FTEs)

Indigenous Led Housing Focused Outreach workers are our system's primary investment for providing culturally appropriate services for the 23% of individuals on our community's By-Name List that are of Indigenous background.

County of Wellington: Total: \$784,832

Rent supplements (approximately \$590,000)

This funding annually supports approximately 80 households with rent affordability.

Administration (2 FTEs) to achieve core Reaching Home funding goals - local capacity building, data analysis support, and supporting the community coordinated access infrastructure. These positions support both system planning and coordination efforts for the Housing Stability system and housing focused planning efforts for individuals experiencing homelessness.

All positions noted above are contracted annually once Reaching Home funding for the year is confirmed.

As the potential loss of these positions and programmes will put at risk our community's ability to prevent and respond to experiences of homelessness, staff recommend that the County of Wellington and City of Guelph engage with municipal associations such as the Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO), Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), to support coordinated advocacy plans for Community Entities to receive their 2024 Reaching Home funding allocations on an annualized basis.

Financial Implications:

The County's 2024 Housing Services budget and 10-year plan assumes that expenditure levels have been reduced in each year to match the amount of Reaching Home Funding that has been committed. As Housing Services staff work to develop a plan for this funding reduction, any recommendations will be included in the 2025 Budget process.

Recommendation:

That the report, Reduction in Reaching Home Funding, be received for information.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mark Poste".

Mark Poste
Director of Housing Services