



## MEMO / NOTE DE SERVICE

To / Destinataire Mayor and Members of Council

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From /  
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General Manager, Community and  
Social Services Department

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Subject / Objet COVID-19 Response:                      Date: April 20, 2020  
Update on the Human Needs Task  
Force

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Community and Social Services staff continue to assess local needs during the COVID-19 pandemic and enhance the City's response in collaboration with community partners. The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on the Human Needs Task Force as part of the City's Emergency Management response.

### **Social Services Funding Supports**

On April 9, the City received \$6.6 million of a \$13.3 million commitment from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing through the Social Services Relief Fund for 2020-2021. This funding is in addition to the \$4.8 million previously received through the federal Reaching Home funding under Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan, bringing the total immediate funding to \$11.4 million. This funding is intended to support the needs of vulnerable people during this crisis including: people at risk of or experiencing homelessness; people living in community or supportive housing; people with low incomes; social assistance recipients; or others who require social services.

To further strengthen our response to the homelessness community, \$8.4 million in funding will be used immediately to support:

- emergency sheltering need;
- COVID-19 Isolation Centres and hotel rooms for self-isolation;
- physical distancing centres and hotels for individuals and families experiencing homelessness; and
- housing and homelessness outreach, basic needs, and day programs.

In addition, \$3 million will be allocated to non-profit community organizations to address persistent and immediate needs. This funding will be allocated to agencies that provide "essential supports and services" in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the following categories:

- Homelessness service providers and Residential Services Homes; and
- Agencies providing "essential services and supports" for "at-risk residents and equity-seeking communities" with a focus on Indigenous communities and women,

who are among the most negatively affected by the current social isolation requirements.

For the purpose of this funding, “essential services and supports” include food security; service coordination to meet extraordinary needs; and direct services for isolated seniors, other at-risk residents and equity-seeking communities.

Within this criteria, at-risk residents and equity-seeking communities include:

- Indigenous people (Métis, First Nations and Inuit)
- Other equity-seeking communities such as:
  - People who are homeless or at risk of housing loss
  - Low income households
  - Seniors
  - Women, including those fleeing violence
  - Youth
  - People living with disabilities
  - Immigrants/newcomers
  - Rural residents

The Human Needs Task Force has developed a proposed funding framework to distribute the \$3 million of funding among eligible community agencies.

We are inviting applications from established, local non-profit agencies that focus specifically on serving individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness, or who provide essential services and supports to other at-risk residents and equity-seeking communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The complete Social Services Relief Fund Terms of Reference and simplified Application Package can be found on the City of Ottawa’s [COVID-19 Supports and Assistance](#) page. We will continue to work closely with community agencies to ensure that all Social Services Relief Fund related inquiries are appropriately triaged and responded to in a timely fashion to enable a smooth and effective funding allocation process. We are targeting to have these funds distributed by early May.

The distribution of funds through the federal Reaching Home and provincial Social Services Relief Fund (through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)) are within the accountability and delegated authority of the General Manager of Community and Social Services department as the designated Community Entity and Service System Manager. The results of the funding allocation process will be reported to Council in a future Human Needs Task Force update. The City anticipates the next installment of the Social Service Relief Fund in July. The next installment of the \$13.3 million city allocation is expected to be \$3.3 million, which will continue to address the evolving needs of the community.

## **Food Security**

The Human Needs Task Force (HNTF) created a Food Security Subgroup to identify ongoing needs and gaps within Ottawa's food network and coordinate approaches to address these needs. The Subgroup meets weekly and includes members from the City of Ottawa, Ottawa Food Bank, Champlain Community Support Network, Good Companions, and many other community agencies that provide essential food services.

The Human Needs Task Force created and distributed [Food Resource Fact Sheets](#) to provide residents with information on key pick-up and delivery food service options in their communities. A shorter fact sheet specifically for seniors is also available. The Food Resource Fact Sheet has been translated into English and French and is being translated into six other languages.

The Ottawa Food Bank is providing food banks with grocery store gift cards for clients until April 20; over \$550,000 in gift cards are expected to be distributed. This strategy enables food banks the time necessary to replenish their reserve food stores and secure a reliable supply chain. In mid-April, the Ottawa Food Bank will supply food banks with four weeks of provincially funded food hampers and then return to a regular supply of food to food banks in May. The Ottawa Food Bank will also continue working with other food service partners to distribute the hampers to isolated and vulnerable households.

### **Wellness Checks**

Over the past week, Ottawa Community Housing (OCH) has completed check-in phone calls to the 1,451 residents on their emergency call list. In addition to the check-in phone calls that OCH has already conducted, they have begun calling the most vulnerable of their 6300 seniors.

The Human Needs Task Force has partnered with the Red Cross to conduct door-to-door wellness checks for all OCH residents who were not reached by check-in phone calls. Multi-language resource and support kits were created as a handout for residents during these wellness checks. The wellness checks, which begin Tuesday, April 21, will ensure that all vulnerable residents are reached, regardless of their access to phones.

At the end of April, following the door-to-door wellness checks within OCH, the Human Needs Task Force will devise a plan to address the needs of those more isolated and vulnerable in our broader communities. This will include:

- Working with school boards to reach out to priority families that have not yet been reached;
- Connecting with other service providers that support vulnerable residents within the City to see how we can support outreach;
- Working with Councillors' offices to reach out to isolated populations in each ward;
- Working with Community Associations to find out which supports are missing; and
- Determining how best to connect with residents in each ward.

### **Support for Rural and Isolated Seniors**

The Human Needs Task Force collaboratively worked with Councillors from West-Carleton, Cumberland, Osgoode, and Rideau-Goulbourn to identify the current gaps and needs among rural seniors. The largest gap identified was a lack of knowledge of the supports and services available. A resource postcard with ward-specific supports and services, which was distributed by mail to each ward, is expected to arrive in mailboxes this week. Going forward, the Human Needs Task Force and the Red Cross will continue to work with rural community partners to identify residents who could benefit from wellness phone calls.

The Champlain Community Support Network developed a [centralized community support website](#) for seniors and adults with disabilities that includes links to Ottawa Public Health and the City of Ottawa website.

### **Community and Family Shelters**

Physical distancing remains one of the best ways to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Overcrowding in shelters, coupled with a tendency for clients to congregate, increases the risks of rapid spread should an outbreak occur. Housing Services and its community partners have been working to mobilize new facilities to support this particularly vulnerable population by enabling this important prevention strategy.

#### ***Supporting homeless families***

Our family shelter system serves more than 500 families, many of which have shared bathrooms and kitchens (shared by up to 15 families). Due to the risks associated with communal living at this time, the City has secured facilities outside of the current family shelter system to help families practice physical distancing, including hotels/motels/post-secondary institutions and more rooms with kitchen facilities.

To date, the City has secured 70 hotel rooms and has moved 70 families to accommodate physical distancing requirements; with an additional 70 rooms secured that people will move into over the next week. An additional 50 hotel rooms are required to move another 50 families to meet physical distancing requirements that will mitigate the spread of COVID-19. These families are provided personal needs supports including food, wellness checks and are supported by a team of Housing case workers and community agencies.

The City is working with the hotel industry, colleges and universities, and other residential housing organizations to support the temporary housing of these at-risk homeless families through individual room rentals and facility leasing options.

The funding the City has received to-date from the provincial and federal governments is helping us to respond to current and emerging needs in the community. Additional funding is required to sustain our response over an extended period, and the current funding we have received is insufficient to cover the cost of purchasing a hotel. Housing Services will continue to reach out to determine whether there are current hotels or motels for sale in the city to better understand the costs associated with this option and potential lease, lease/purchase, and purchase options for the future.

The City continues to look at all options that are available for permanent housing options to increase the affordable housing supply for use in the long term. Through rent supplements and housing allowances, Housing Services is working with social housing providers to determine market and rent geared to income units that can be made available for people experiencing homelessness. In May, the City will roll out the new Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit, targeting single women and lone female led households, with a focus on Indigenous households, to help find housing in the private market. During this current environment of physical distancing and need for ongoing personal protective equipment to view units, unit move-ins have slowed.

Families living in temporary housing situations face an elevated risk of contracting COVID-19 and the needs of a family infected with COVID-19 are complex. To support these needs, a 28-unit building has been secured from uOttawa for families (21 units will be used) that have tested positive. Four families are currently self-isolating in the building. Another 28 units with a hotel provider are being secured for the same purpose. The City will work with Ottawa Public Health and the local Community Health and Resource Centre to support this centre. The City will continue to monitor the need for family isolation spaces, recognizing that there will be ongoing turnover as people recover.

### ***Supporting individuals experiencing homelessness***

There are approximately 860 individuals living in the community shelter system on any given night and an estimated 90 that continue to live rough on the streets. These individuals face greater risks of contracting COVID-19 and face higher rates of having poor outcomes. As such, the City has:

- Immediately implemented enhanced screening and infection control and social distancing practices within our shelter system in partnership with Ottawa Public Health;
- Addressed immediate basic needs;
- Created dedicated isolation centres for homeless individuals testing positive for COVID-19; and
- Created additional physical distancing capacity within our shelter system.

### ***Enhanced Screening and Infection Control***

All family and community shelter facilities follow the direction of Ottawa Public Health and implement OPH's Infection and Prevention Control Guide for Homelessness Service Settings. The Family Shelter system is actively screening for symptoms both within the Carling shelter and any new requests for placement. All community partners and overflow spaces (hotels/motels) are informed of any revised or updated requirements around screening and infection prevention and control.

Ottawa Inner City Health has played the key role in the singles emergency shelter system, identifying and implementing screening and assessment protocols for front line staff to follow. The Ottawa Inner City Health mobile assessment van can respond to any suspected case and test within the singles shelter system. Nursing supports and case conferencing are available through Ottawa Inner City Health, 24/7. Any symptomatic individual is isolated at the Salvation Army while waiting for test results, pending transfer to the Routhier isolation centre.

### *Supporting Basic Needs*

The urgent need for shower and washroom facilities for homeless and other at-risk population groups is being addressed. Five portable washrooms have been installed in the downtown core to address immediate needs and a longer-term solution to permanently address needs is being developed. The Human Needs Task Force is working with day programs and community health and resource centres to re-open services while also respecting new OPH COVID-19 physical distancing guidelines. In the interim, the McNabb Recreation Centre's shower and washroom facility will be opening this week to provide people experiencing homelessness access to showers.

### *Isolation and treatment of individuals experiencing homelessness*

In partnership with Ottawa Inner City Health and the community shelter system, a 40-bed isolation and treatment centre was opened at the Routhier Community Centre on March 23. The centre is for those within the shelter system requiring self-isolation, are symptomatic, or have tested positive for COVID-19. Currently there are 11 individuals using the centre, although the numbers fluctuate daily.

### *Isolation and treatment of individuals in Residential Services Homes*

In partnership with Shepherds of Good Hope, the Royal Ottawa Hospital, and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and in collaboration with Inner City Health, a 40-bed isolation centre at the Le Patro d'Ottawa Recreation Centre will open the week of April 27. The centre will support Residential Services Homes and the provincial Homes for Special Care program. It will serve individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 or who have mild symptoms or have been in direct contact with individuals who tested positive.

### *Enhancing Physical Distancing in the single shelter system*

Anticipated to open the week of April 27, the Jim Durrell Recreation Center will provide immediate physical distancing space for the men's shelter system. The City's Housing Services Team, supported by community homelessness partners, will manage the up to 140-person centre.

Up to 50 hotel rooms are being secured for women and youth in the emergency shelter system to enhance physical distancing capacity. Medium and longer-term shelter capacity options are being explored for single men and women to reduce crowding and overflow situations.

The Youth Services Bureau, in partnership with the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, will soon open isolation capacity for 16 to 21-year-olds in the emergency shelter system who are symptomatic, waiting test results or confirmed COVID-19 positive, but are not ill enough to require hospitalization.

## **Financial Support to Individuals and Families**

All levels of government continue to support low-income households directly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis. A significant number of income and wage support programs have been introduced by both the federal and provincial governments since Tuesday, March 17

to support those that have faced either a reduced or a total loss of employment earnings. The Provincial Ontario Works changes have been implemented immediately through our local Employment and Social Service offices. Most federal programs have been up and running since mid-April. All individuals requiring financial assistance should be directed to call 3-1-1 and press 4 for social assistance.

Additional information and links to these programs are available at [canada.ca](https://canada.ca).

On April 9, the province made a new simplified online application for emergency assistance available to the public. Individuals can apply through <https://www.ontario.ca/page/apply-emergency-assistance>. This application will be more user friendly and is intended to help individuals apply for emergency assistance on their own without completing a full application for Ontario Works income assistance, and to support Case Workers to make timely determinations about emergency need.

### **Long Term Care**

The City's Long Term Care service is taking measures to protect some of our most vulnerable residents. Some of the proactive measures include:

- Asking all employees who work for City-operated long-term care homes to only work at City facilities for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic (this was in advance of a provincial directive issued this week asking long-term care homes to ensure that their staff work for only one health care facility, effective April 22);
- Ensuring that staff who have recently worked at care facilities with COVID-19 positive residents or patients outside of City-operated homes or hospitals are self-isolating for 14 days before returning to work;
- Enhancing cleaning of high-touch surfaces and high-traffic areas in the homes;
- Providing additional training to staff on effective sanitization and preventative hygiene, specifically hand hygiene techniques;
- Screening for staff, both at the start and end of their shifts, including a temperature check;
- Screening of residents twice daily for symptoms. Any resident showing symptoms will be isolated and tested for the virus;
- Isolating newly admitted or re-admitted residents for 14 days and testing them for the virus;
- Working to ensure there is enough personal protective equipment for our staff;
- Providing surgical/procedure masks for all staff to wear throughout their shifts; and
- Working closely with the unions to ensure that both our staff and residents are protected.

If a case is confirmed in one of our long-term care facilities, the homes have a pandemic plan to follow, along with directives from the Province and guidance from Ottawa Public Health.

Staff will use protective equipment, including gloves, masks, face shields or goggles and gowns, before interacting with a suspected, presumed or confirmed COVID-19 positive

resident. In the event of positive cases, staff and resident cohorting will be implemented to limit the spread of the virus in the home.

Our number one priority is to keep all our residents, including those who live and work at City long-term care facilities, safe.

## **Children's Services**

### ***Current funding to child care agencies***

As shared with Council on April 10, the Ministry of Education issued a [provincial order](#) on that day, immediately prohibiting child care service providers from collecting parent fees for child care services that are not being provided during the COVID-19 outbreak. It also ensures parents will not lose their space or be penalized as a result of not paying fees during this closure.

The Province referred child care providers to seek supports under the federal government's [Canada Emergency Response Benefit \(CERB\)](#) for individuals and Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy for businesses. The Ontario government will continue to work with the child care sector and federal, municipal and First Nations partners on a plan to ensure the sustainability of the sector during the outbreak.

Based on initial direction from the Province, Children's Services committed to maintaining quarterly child care and early years funding to local service providers as per the contribution agreements. This funding commitment will help stabilize funding for service providers until the Province provides more direction on funding and further information on the supports available to help the sustainability of the sector. To ensure measures can be put in place to support parents/guardians, children and local service providers during and after the COVID-19 situation, it is anticipated that funding may need to be redistributed based on Provincial direction and community needs. To ensure funds are available for redistribution to meet local needs, the fee subsidy payments for programs not currently providing care to children are on hold.

Once further direction is received from the Province, the City will work in collaboration with our sector partners to identify local needs and the measures required to further support parents, guardians, children and local service providers. This will include re-establishing our Child Care and Early Years System Planning Advisory Group through an online platform, surveying providers on their needs, and further Q&A documents answering funding questions from the sector.

### ***Emergency Child Care***

The Ministry of Education approved Ottawa's initial plan to open three licensed municipal child care centres for children of health care workers and other essential frontline workers. The centres will care for children aged 18 months to 5 years old at no cost to families. A registry that allows eligible parents/guardians to apply for emergency child care was launched on April 3, on [ottawa.ca/emergencychildcare](http://ottawa.ca/emergencychildcare).

On April 17, the Province announced the expansion of [the provincial list of essential workers](#) who can access emergency child care. With the support of Human Resources and



in consultation with other departments, Children's Services also identified a list of City of Ottawa essential workers that will be considered eligible to apply for emergency child care for their children.

The City first prioritized health care workers for emergency child care on a first come, first served basis. Verification of the eligibility of parents/guardians who have registered for emergency child care is an on-going process as not all registered families meet the Provincial criteria for essential workers. When contacted, some families declined the space once informed of the risks or reported that their need for child care was not immediate and requested to remain on the waitlist for a later start date.

To date, 33 children have been placed or are in the process of being placed at the three municipal child care centres, which started opening last week to provide child care to essential workers. Each centre strictly follows the OPH guidelines and has access to Personal Protective Equipment including gowns, masks, gloves, and goggles. Hours of operation are being adjusted to better meet the needs of families placed at each centre.

There are currently 58 eligible children on the waitlist who have an immediate need for emergency child care. This includes 6 infants, 27 toddlers/preschoolers (18 months to 5 years old), and 25 school-age children. The parents of 20 children indicated, when contacted, that they did not have an immediate need for care. A detailed review of the waitlist identified an enhanced care need for school-age children and children with special needs. To meet these local needs, the City is continuing to work with community licensed child care providers to increase capacity and identify additional solutions. The City is also working with the Ministry of Education to explore amending the license in Municipal Centres and partnering with the Recreation, Cultural, and Facility Services Department to provide emergency care for school-age children.

## **Closing**

The Human Needs Task Force continues to work with community partners to address the emerging needs of Ottawa's most vulnerable individuals and communities facing the greatest needs. The Task Force continues to adapt and change and has begun planning for the longer-term. We will provide regular updates to all members of Council as this work continues. You can expect to continue receiving regular updates via memo as well as through a series of Fact Sheets and FAQs.

As always, 2-1-1 is available for information on the full range of community, social, government and health services and programs available in Ottawa, including how to access those services.

We will work closely with our service areas to ensure COVID-19 constituent inquiries are appropriately triaged and responded to in a timely fashion with consistent messaging.

Sincerely,

Donna Gray  
General Manager

Community and Social Services

cc. Steve Kanellakos, City Manager

Senior Leadership Team

Dr. Vera Etches, Medical Officer of Health, Ottawa Public Health

Community and Social Services Department Leadership Team