

Clause No. 2 in Report No. 5 of Committee of the Whole was adopted, without amendment, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting held on March 27, 2014.

## **UPDATE ON HOME REPAIRS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING PILOT PROGRAM — PHASE 1**

**Committee of the Whole recommends adoption of the following recommendation contained in the report dated February 19, 2014 from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services:**

### **1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that Council receive this report for information.

### **2. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the outcomes and observations of a program launched in 2013 under the title: *Home Repairs for Independent Living*. The program gives grants for minor repairs and helps lower income seniors and disabled individuals remain in their homes.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

**Both federal and provincial governments have cancelled programs that assisted low and moderate income households with home repairs and renovations**

On March 31, 2012, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation discontinued its longstanding Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program. In July 2012, the Province announced the cancellation of the repair-funding component of the Ontario Disability Support Program.

The 2012-2015 federal/provincial Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) program includes an optional repair program called Ontario Renovates. The Region did not take-up this Ontario Renovates component as it was too administratively complex and onerous for the Region to implement. Instead, the Region committed its share of the IAH funding to the creation of new affordable rental housing and to a housing allowance program for applicants on the Region's waiting list for subsidized housing.

## **The Region allocated \$500,000 towards the implementation of a Home Repairs for Independent Living Pilot Program**

On November 15, 2012, Council received Clause No. 5 of Report No. 9 of the Community and Health Services Committee and approved a \$500,000 Home Repair and Rehabilitation Pilot Program. The Pilot Program provided grants of up to \$5,000 to low and moderate income seniors and people with disabilities, for minor home repairs/modifications that enable them to continue to live independently in their homes.

The Pilot Program was planned to start in 2013 (Phase I) and run through 2014 (Phase II) with the intention of fully expending all available program funds. The pilot was developed to be as simple as possible for applicants to understand and use; the following items comprise its eligibility criteria:

- The applicant owns and occupies the home in need of repair
- A member of the household has a disability or diminished ability brought on by aging that causes difficulty with daily activities
- The repair or modification requested would increase accessibility and/or is critical to bring the home to acceptable standards or improve safety
- The home has an assessed value of \$400,000 or less as per the most recent Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) notice. (This threshold was selected to align with the income based affordable ownership calculation defined by the Provincial Policy Statement and as incorporated in the Regional Official Plan.)
- The total household income was lower than moderate income thresholds defined in the Human Services Planning Board's Making Ends Meet initiative
- Work would be completed by December 31, 2013 and was not a repair or modification completed prior to receiving approval from the Region

The Pilot Program launched in the summer of 2013 with advertisements in community newspapers and on the Region's website. In addition, Regional staff mailed out over 150 applications to homeowners who had previously inquired about the program. In total, the Region received 105 applications by the August 31, 2013 deadline.

#### **4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS**

##### **Phase I of the pilot awarded over \$250,000 to over 60 households**

Phase I of the Home Repairs Pilot Program awarded \$257,219 to 63 low to moderate income households with an average household income of \$28,247 as outlined in Table 1. On average, applicants were awarded \$4,083.

**Table 1**  
Home Repairs Pilot Program Take-up

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Number of Applications Received</b>	<b>Number of Applications Awarded Funding</b>
City of Vaughan	19	6
Town of Markham	10	7
Town of Richmond Hill	10	6
Township of King	2	1
Town of Aurora	7	5
Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville	2	1
Town of Newmarket	11	8
Town of East Gwillimbury	5	3
Town of Georgina	39	26
Totals	105	63

A team of Regional staff with different areas of expertise (e.g. financial, technical, program administration) reviewed the applications and made funding recommendations. Households applying for the grants were asked to complete and submit a simple application form which required the applicant to outline the type of repair, the reason(s) for it and an explanation of how the repair will allow them to remain in their home. In addition, supporting documents required with the application included: written quotes for the work, verification of household members' income and age, and a copy of the most recent MPAC assessment. As part of the application and award process, the applicants were informed that the Region reserved the right to inspect the property for audit and compliance purposes. Properties have been randomly selected for inspection and the process is underway. A variety of projects were funded under the program. Examples include:

- Ramp installations
- Installation of interior stair lifts
- Installation of porch lifts
- Accessibility enhancements such as: grab bars, raised toilets, bathtub conversion to walk-in showers, lighting improvements, handrail installation for interior and exterior stairs, etc.
- Furnace replacements
- Urgent repairs to roofs, windows and septic system repairs

Of the 105 received applications, 42 applications were denied funding. These fell into three main categories:

1. The work type was ineligible for funding (e.g. routine maintenance, cosmetic renovations, modifications or repairs were completed prior to the grant approval, work not directly related to occupant's disability)
2. Home value was in excess of \$400,000
3. Incomplete applications (e.g. failure to provide income verification)

The applicants who did not qualify for funding were referred to the Region's Outreach Workers for follow-up and additional supports as appropriate.

### **Phase II of the Home Repairs for Independent Living Pilot Program will be implemented in 2014**

Phase II of the Pilot Program will launch in the second quarter of 2014. Based on the experience with Phase I, the application period will be extended to allow for more extensive communication of the program. Staff continues to receive and track home repair funding enquires and applications will be mailed to everyone who has requested information about the Program. Upon completion of Phase II the program will be evaluated to inform future program recommendations. Specific areas of consideration will include income and asset eligibility criteria and whether successful applicants can reapply in subsequent years.

### **Link to key Council-approved plans**

The Pilot Program advances Council's approved housing related goals. Vision 2051's goals include "appropriate housing for all ages and stages" and specifically identify the need to support specialized housing for people with disabilities and seniors living independently. Similarly, the *Regional Official Plan*, the *10 year Housing Plan* and the *Corporate Strategic Plan* speak to the need for a range of housing choices to meet the diverse needs of York Region residents.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

On November 15, 2012, Council received Report No. 9 of the Community and Health Services Committee and approved \$500,000 for a Home Repairs for Independent Living Pilot Program. Phase I of the Pilot Program was delivered in 2013 and awarded \$257,219 to eligible households. The remaining funds were re-budgeted in 2014 as well as an additional \$250,000 funded by tax levy, as outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
Home Repairs Pilot Program Allocation Summary

<b>Pilot Program Allocation</b>	<b>Budget</b>
2012 Council approved Home Repair Allocation:	\$500,000
Plus: 2014 Home Repair Budget Enhancement (Tax Levy funded):	<u>+\$250,000</u>
Total Home Repair Pilot Program Funds:	\$750,000
Less: 2013 Phase I Application Awards:	<u>-\$257,219</u>
Total Funds Available for 2014 Phase II Pilot Program:	\$492,781

It is anticipated that the 2014 Home Repair for Independent Living available funds will benefit approximately 100 households.

## **6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT**

The Pilot Program provides low and moderate income seniors and people with disabilities across all nine municipalities with financial assistance for home repairs to enable them to remain in their homes.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

Phase I of the Pilot Program provided low and moderate income seniors and people with disabilities with home repair funding needed to enable them to remain in their homes. Phase II of the program will be delivered in 2014. Staff will evaluate the Program and report back to Council with program recommendations.

For more information on this report, please contact Sylvia Patterson, General Manager, Housing and Long Term Care at Ext. 72091.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.