

# **Update on Toronto Housing Allowances Programs**

**Engagement with Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH) Forum**

**October 7, 2020**

# Purpose

- Share an overview of Toronto's Housing Allowance Program
  - Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB)
  - Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI)
- Engage with the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness on expansion of housing allowances and implementation plan for next steps

# Council Motion

On July 3, 2019 the Planning and Housing Committee requested:

- The Executive Director, Housing Secretariat and the General Manager, Shelter Support and Housing Administration to consult with the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness on the implementation details of the expanded Housing Allowance Program.

# What is a Housing Allowance?

- A fixed-amount housing benefit provided directly to eligible households, usually in the private rental market
- Paid directly to household so it moves where they move and allows flexibility in choice of housing
- An important tool to address homelessness and increase flow out of the shelter system
- Often provided with a bridging grant to assist with first and last month's rent to secure the unit

# Toronto's Housing Allowance Program

- Approximately 6,200 households in Toronto are currently receiving a housing allowance.
- There are plans to assist an additional 1,900 households through Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) until March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022.
- Implementation of the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) provides funding for new housing benefits between 2020 and 2029. It is projected that COHB will assist an additional 900 households in 2020/2021.

# Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit Program (COHB)

# Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit Program (COHB)

- COHB Year 1: April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021 **\$7.5 mil**  
Year 2: April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022 **\$9.9 mil**
- Jointly funded by the federal and provincial governments through the National Housing Strategy (NHS) Multilateral Framework.
- A portable housing benefit (PHB) program where funding is paid directly to low-income households that are on, or eligible to be on, a social housing waiting list, and to households in financial need living in community housing.
- The program begins in April 2020 and ends on March 31, 2029.

# COHB Program Guidelines

- COHB program guidelines are set and administered by the Province of Ontario.
  - Province sets the formula for the subsidy level
  - Province outlines that COHB must target clients on or eligible to be on the waiting list
  - Province requires that COHB recipients consent to be removed from the social housing waiting list
- Service Managers (City of Toronto) identify and select eligible households and assist with the application submission to the provincial Ministry of Finance (MOF).



# Challenges with COHB & Intergovernmental Requests

## 1. Insufficient funding

- Can only assist 1% of waiting list
- Advocating to Provincial and Federal governments for increased investment to scale up of COHB program to assist more households

## 2. Administrative difficulty

- Advocating to Province for increased flexibility in the program

## 3. Don't know future allocations

- Only know allocations until 2022
- Advocating to Province for information/certainty on future allocations

# Other housing allowance programs

# Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI)

- OPHI provides a total of approx. \$31 million in housing allowances in Toronto from 2019-2022.
- Toronto launched OPHI housing allowances in November 2019.
- OPHI is a fixed-amount housing benefit that is provided to eligible households as a monthly benefit, ranging from \$250 to \$600/month
- OPHI funding has provided housing allowances with focus on people experiencing chronic homelessness.

# Proposed Expansion of Toronto's Housing Allowance Program

- Continuation of chronic homeless stream
  - Adopting new federal definition of chronic homelessness
- Expansion of homeless stream to the following groups (no chronic homelessness requirement):
  1. Indigenous people experience homelessness (specific allocation for Indigenous agencies)
  2. Youth experiencing homelessness (ages 16-24)
  3. Clients in COVID-19 temporary response sites that have leases expiring (e.g. Regent Park Shelter)

# Questions and Comments