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## REPORT TO HOSPITALS AND HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2025

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**SUBJECT**     **Reaching Home Contribution Agreement Extension**

### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

To support the continued delivery of the Reaching Home Program (RHP), the Capital Regional District (CRD) and the Government of Canada must negotiate and execute an amending agreement that enables the CRD to continue as the Community Entity (CE) responsible for administering the program through to March 31, 2028.

### **BACKGROUND**

The CRD is currently administering approximately \$18.7 million (M) in Designated Communities (DC) funding between 2019 and 2026 on behalf of the Government of Canada through the RHP.

The RHP is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness across Canada. This program provides funding to urban, Indigenous, rural, and remote communities to help them address their local homelessness needs. The RHP aligns with the goals of the National Housing Strategy to support the most vulnerable Canadians in maintaining safe, stable, and affordable housing and to reduce chronic homelessness nationally by 50% by 2028.

Local priorities are outlined in a Community Plan, which is approved by the Community Advisory Board (CAB). Appendix A contains the recent *2024-2026 Capital Region Community Plan – A Guide to Achieving the Reaching Home Program Requirements*, which was approved in December 2024. Appendix B provides a summary overview of the various sub-projects currently supported through the RHP. The CAB supports the CRD, as CE, in implementing the RHP by undertaking a range of activities critical to community-based program delivery. Appendix C, attached, is the CAB Terms of Reference.

In January 2024, the Federal Government outlined five milestones in a 'Critical Path towards Homelessness Individuals & Families Information System (HIFIS) and Coordinated Access (CA) Implementation' that would enable two-year extensions of Reaching Home agreements for CEs in British Columbia, to March 31, 2028. These milestones were:

1. Configuration of the HIFIS sandbox by BC Housing for each DC CE, so that it includes the Community Administrator role and related functionalities.
2. Sign-off on the HIFIS Project Charter by the Ministry of Housing, BC Housing, DC CEs, and Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities Canada (HICC).
3. Approval of the overall critical path in BC and its timelines by the Ministry of Housing, BC Housing and HICC.
4. Agree on response to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner recommendations related to the provincial Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA).
5. Updated local critical paths for each DC CE that align with the overall critical path.

All five milestones have now been completed. As a result, in November 2024, the Government of Canada notified the CRD of its intention to amend the RHP Contribution Agreement for an additional two years – from April 1, 2026 to March 31, 2028 – with approximately \$9.16M in

additional funding. This amendment includes \$7.78M for a two-year funding extension (2026-2028), and \$1.38M in incremental funding for the 2024-2026 fiscal years. The RHP Contribution Agreement amendment is attached as Appendix D.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

### *Alternative 1*

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That Edward Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer, or their duly authorized delegate, be authorized to negotiate and execute agreements with the Government of Canada and receive funds through the Reaching Home Program and do all things incidental to finalize such agreements and deliver the program.

### *Alternative 2*

That this report be referred to staff for additional information based on Hospital and Housing Committee direction.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### *Social Implications*

The RHP directly supports vulnerable Canadians through the work of sub-projects within the community. While the CRD does not directly provide social and/or clinical services in support of vulnerable populations, the funding is allocated to local service providers for initiatives that advance these efforts. Projects are identified through a Call for Proposals with funding priorities guided by the Community Plan and specific recommendations from the CAB. Upon receipt of applications for funding, CE staff screen applications for eligibility and then distribute to CAB members for evaluation and scoring which results in a list of project recommendations. This process helps better align the needs of individuals experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness and the requirements of the RHP.

### *Legal Implications*

In addition to the general administrative and program delivery obligations of the RHP Contribution Agreement, there are three distinct projects that are also required under the amended agreement:

#### Coordinated Access (CA)

In partnership with the Indigenous Homelessness CE, the CRD will be required to have a CA system in place by March 31, 2026. The minimum requirements, as prescribed by Canada, include expectations related to governance, access points, triage, vacancy matching and referrals.

#### Homeless Individuals & Family Information System (HIFIS)

To support the successful implementation of CA, communities must implement HIFIS to achieve the minimum requirements for CA.

#### Point-in-Time Count and Enumeration

To further data collection activities, the Government of Canada requires Point-in-Time Count surveys be completed every three years, starting in Spring 2025 (while originally planned for Fall 2024, the timeline was extended by Canada to Spring 2025). This activity will include both an enumeration and survey of people experiencing homelessness in the community to standards set out by the Government of Canada. Additionally, future enumerations are required to be conducted annually.

*Financial Implications*

The 2025-2028 CRD Provisional Financial Plan included an estimate of RHP funding. When the 2025-2028 CRD Final Financial Plan is updated in March 2025, it will be updated to include the revised funding amounts. Table 1 shows the total RHP funds expected from the Government of Canada for the next two years. Note that the Government of Canada’s fiscal year cycle is April 1 – March 31.

**Table 1: Designated Communities (DC) Funding by Year**

<b>Designated Communities</b>	<b>2024-2026 Incremental Funding</b>	<b>2026-2028 Funding</b>	<b>Total</b>
Funding for Initiatives	\$1,173,530	\$6,609,447	\$7,782,977
Administration	\$207,094	\$1,166,373	\$1,373,467
<b>Sub-Total</b>	<b>\$1,380,624</b>	<b>\$7,775,820</b>	<b>\$9,156,444</b>

The RHP oversight responsibilities include financial administration, reporting and record keeping as well as review of eligible expenditures. The RHP is subject to an annual audit of the program’s activities conducted by a third party. These conditions remain unchanged in the amending agreement.

*Service Delivery Implications*

All costs associated with the delivery of the RHP are recovered through the administrative allocation as permitted by the program. Therefore, there is no additional cost associated with program delivery.

While the *2024-2026 Capital Region Community Plan – A Guide to Achieving the Reaching Home Program Requirements* was recently approved in December 2024, the program requirements stipulate that CEs in BC must develop their 2026-2028 Community Plans in early 2025. A CAB endorsed plan will then provide a framework to guide the development of future local priorities for the RHP, ensuring alignment with overarching goals and objectives.

*Intergovernmental Implications*

Entering into these agreements will sustain an ongoing partnership that has proven effective in addressing the Government of Canada and CRD’s mutual interests in working to better address the challenge of homelessness in Canada. Since the CRD’s most recent extension of the RHP in February 2024, there has been progress towards the implementation of HIFIS and CA throughout BC.

For several years, federal and provincial partners have heard from BC Housing staff, RHP CEs, and broader community organizations that a more effective approach to addressing homelessness requires a renewed and aligned partnership across different levels of government. In response, BC Housing, the Ministry of Housing, and HICC have spent the past year developing a coordinated, data-driven approach to homelessness, focusing on alignment between all parties to better support individuals at risk across the province.

In June 2024, a new working-level partnership was established between BC Housing, the Ministry of Housing, HICC, and CEs in BC. Since then, CRD staff, as representatives of the CE for the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area, have actively participated in the BC Trilateral Open Forum.

Their contributions have led to several key milestones, including:

- Conducting a comprehensive alignment process to assess data needs and resources regarding homelessness across BC communities.
- Completing the ‘Critical Path towards HIFIS and CA Implementation’ thus enabling the extension of the RHP through 2028.
- Sign off on a HIFIS Project Charter and development of a CA Project Charter.
- Providing feedback on BC Housing’s provincial PIA.

The continued delivery of the RHP through a community-based approach positions the CRD in an influential role working with the federal and provincial government and other partners to address homelessness.

**CONCLUSION**

The CRD can sustain its partnership with the Government of Canada to address issues related to homelessness by continuing to administer the RHP. To better position itself to execute the agreements in a short timeframe, staff recommend the CRD Board delegate the finalization and execution of the agreements to the CRD’s Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). In total, this will represent an additional \$9.16M for RHP funds into the community with all costs for delivering these funds to eligible community-based projects being covered through the administrative allocation as permitted by the program.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That Edward Robbins, Chief Administrative Officer, or their duly authorized delegate, be authorized to negotiate and execute agreements with the Government of Canada and receive funds through the Reaching Home Program and do all things incidental to finalize such agreements and deliver the program.

Submitted by:	James Proctor, BSS, MA, Manager, Housing Planning, Policy, and Programs
Concurrence:	Don Elliott, BA, MUP, Acting General Manager, Housing, Planning & Protective Services
Concurrence:	Nelson Chan, MBA, FCPA, FCMA, Chief Financial Officer, GM Finance & IT
Concurrence:	Ted Robbins, B. Sc., C. Tech., Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Appendix A: 2024-2026 Capital Region Community Plan – A Guide to Achieving the Reaching Home Program Requirements
- Appendix B: Current Reaching Home Program Sub-Projects 2024-26
- Appendix C: Reaching Home Program Community Advisory Board Terms of Reference
- Appendix D: Reaching Home Program Amendment Agreement No. 5 – 2024-2028