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REPORT TO CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT BOARD MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 2020

SUBJECT **COVID-19 Additional Reaching Home Funding Update**

ISSUE SUMMARY

An information report is being provided to update the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board on the allocations of the \$1.3 million (M) in additional funding from Reaching Home – the Government of Canada’s Homelessness Strategy, to support the region’s COVID-19 response capacity for those experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness.

BACKGROUND

On March 18, 2020, the Prime Minister announced the Government of Canada would be providing Reaching Home with an additional \$157.5M to support people experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 outbreak. The CRD is designated by the Federal Government as the Community Entity to administer this funding and provides financial contributions through sub-project agreements to non-profit organizations based on a Community Plan, which is approved by the Community Advisory Board (CAB), whose membership is the Board of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness.

The 2020-2021 incremental funding allocation in the Victoria Census Metropolitan Area is \$1,312,852:

- \$917,880 allocated under the Reaching Home Designated Communities funding stream; and
- \$394,972 allocated under Reaching Home Indigenous Homelessness funding stream.

This funding is being administered through statutory agreements rather than amendments to the CRD’s current Reaching Home agreements which has already allocated \$758,511 in Designated Communities and \$285,861 in Indigenous Homelessness funding in 2020. The funding can be used for a range of needs such as purchasing beds and physical barriers for social distancing and securing accommodation to reduce overcrowding in shelters.

On April 28, 2020, the CAB approved the Reaching Home Program COVID-19 Funding Strategy (Appendix A) which addressed three key priority areas for action.

1. Short-term sheltering and support programs for people currently without shelter and at risk of infection from the COVID-19 virus;
2. Keeping individuals stably housed and/or sheltered during the emergency response period; and
3. Ensuring individuals and households in Reaching Home Program funded programs have short-term access to goods and/or services to meet basic needs to which access may have been disrupted due to the emergency response to protect against COVID-19 contagion.

In order to allocate the funding in a timely manner, the Strategy supports a contracting approach to distributing the funding and CRD staff have been working with local coordinating bodies to identify programs and or projects requiring funding to address these priorities.

CRD staff have been engaged with Reaching Home funded programs as well as organizations and groups in four geographic areas (Victoria, Sooke, Sidney and Salt Spring Island) and local First Nations to identify needs and has subsequently received and will be funding the eight requests found in Appendix B.

CRD Regional Housing, through the CRD's Regional Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), is facilitating a Regional EOC Vulnerable Populations Working Group to support a coordinated response with local government, other levels of government and community agencies. As well, CRD Regional Housing is facilitating a Sheltering and Housing Task Force to help address the needs of people who are unsheltered on Salt Spring Island.

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative 1

That the COVID-19 Additional Reaching Home Funding Update report be received for information.

Alternative 2

That the COVID-19 Additional Reaching Home Funding Update report be referred back to staff for further information based on Capital Regional District Board direction.

IMPLICATIONS

Intergovernmental Implications

Provincial Government

Staff is working closely with BC Housing, Social Development and Poverty Reduction (SDPR), and Island Health to coordinate the use of the Reaching Home COVID-19 funds in accordance with the *COVID-19: Joint Provincial Program Framework for Emergency Response Centres*.¹

First Nations

The CRD has reached out to the nine First Nations within the CRD boundaries and CRD staff are working with a number of these communities to look at possibilities for supporting initiatives that are not covered by other Government of Canada funding available to First Nations during the emergency.

Social Implications

Engagement within various coordinating bodies have helped identify opportunities to address the social needs of people in four key areas within the region.

Financial Implications

The CRD, in its role as Community Entity for the Reaching Home Program, has the capacity to effectively manage these funds.

¹ <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-joint-povincial-program-framework-for-ercs.pdf>

Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities

This work aligns with Board priorities related to community wellbeing and corporate priorities related to housing and homelessness.

Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies

This work aligns with the goals and objectives of the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy.

CONCLUSION

The CRD is receiving \$1.3M in additional funding from Reaching Home – the Government of Canada’s Homelessness Strategy, to support the region’s COVID-19 response capacity for those experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. CRD staff are working with the CRD EOC, CAB and community and government partners to implement a Strategy for equitable distribution of this funding where people have been identified as experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

RECOMMENDATION

That the COVID-19 Additional Reaching Home Funding Update report be received for information.

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Concurrence:	Christine Culham, Senior Manager Regional Housing
Concurrence:	Kevin Lorette, P. Eng., MBA, General Manager, Planning & Protective Services
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ATTACHMENT(S)

- Appendix A: Reaching Home Program COVID-19 Funding Strategy
- Appendix B: Reaching Home Program COVID-19 Contracts Listing