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## **REPORT TO HOSPITALS AND HOUSING COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, APRIL 07, 2021**

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**SUBJECT**     **Reaching Home and Canadian Medical Association Foundation COVID-19 Funding**

### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

An information report is being provided to further update the Hospitals and Housing Committee and the Capital Regional District (CRD) Board on the allocations of COVID-19 emergency response funding from both the Government of Canada through Reaching Home – Canada's Homelessness Strategy and the Canadian Medical Association Foundation (CMAF), to support the region's pandemic response capacity for those experiencing or at-risk of homelessness.

### **BACKGROUND**

The CRD is designated by the Government of Canada as the Community Entity (CE) 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 a Community Advisory Board (CAB). Through an agreement with the Government of Canada, the CRD is currently administering \$870,753 in the Designated Communities funding stream and \$337,256 in the Indigenous Homelessness funding stream in 2020-2021.

In March 2020, the Government of Canada allocated \$1,312,852 through Canada's Economic Response Plan funding to the CRD and subsequently entered into an agreement to have the CRD, as CE, administer the funding through the Reaching Home COVID-19 Emergency Response Program.

In October 2020, the Government of Canada allocated an additional \$1,918,197 to the CRD to sustain and add to efforts to respond to the pandemic's impact on vulnerable populations in the region. The agreement with the CRD was subsequently amended to bring the total amount administered under the COVID-19 funding to \$3,231,049. In consideration of the Reaching Home Program COVID-19 Funding Strategy approved by the CAB and to minimize the amount of funding needed to cost-recover the administration of the program, the following funds have been made available to community initiatives:

- \$2,125,491 allocated under the Reaching Home Designated Communities funding stream.
- \$912,520 allocated under the Reaching Home Indigenous Homelessness funding stream.

In addition to this funding, the CRD was also awarded \$61,500 of funding through the CMAF to be administered according to the Reaching Home policies and directives.

This funding can be used for a range of needs that have emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as purchasing beds and physical barriers for social distancing, providing services to people forced to shelter outdoors and securing accommodation to reduce overcrowding in shelters. Communities have flexibility to use the new funding to meet local needs and priorities. This funding is focused on three priorities:

1. Extend COVID-19 measures for those experiencing homelessness;
2. Find permanent housing for those temporarily housed; and
3. Help communities to reduce the inflow into homelessness, including homelessness prevention and shelter diversion activities.

On April 28, 2020, the CAB approved the Reaching Home Program COVID-19 Funding Strategy 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 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 including the CRD's Emergency Operations Center (EOC), the CAB as well as community and other government partners to identify programs and/or projects requiring funding to address these priorities. This approach does not require time consuming call for proposals processes while, at the same time, providing an appropriate level of external review of proposed funding initiatives. The CRD has informed the CAB that this approach be sustained to support use of the new funding.

CRD staff have been engaged with Reaching Home funded programs as well as organizations and groups throughout the region as well as local First Nations to identify needs and has subsequently received and has allocated almost all of the funding to a number of community based initiatives (see Appendix A - COVID-19 Contracts Summary). Staff continue to work with local communities to determine needs and is confident that all of the funding will be allocated and utilized by the end date of the current agreement, June 30, 2021.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

### *Alternative 1*

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board: That the Reaching Home and Canadian Medical Association Foundation COVID-19 Funding report be received for information.

### *Alternative 2*

That the Reaching Home and Canadian Medical Association Foundation COVID-19 Funding report be referred back to staff for additional information based on Hospitals and Housing Committee direction.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### *Intergovernmental Implications*

Staff work closely with BC Housing, Social Development and Poverty Reduction, 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.<sup>1</sup>

The CRD has reached out to the nine First Nations within the CRD boundaries and CRD staff entered into contracts with three communities to support initiatives that are not covered by other Government of Canada funding available to First Nations during the emergency.

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<sup>1</sup> <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>

*Social Implications*

Engagement within various coordinating bodies has 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 CE for the Reaching Home Program, is utilizing \$193,000 of the funding to cover administrative costs related to the delivery of the COVID funding. The Government of Canada has announced that additional funding has been allocated to continue to provide a COVID response to vulnerable populations and will be made available to CEs through Canada's Economic Response Plan in the coming fiscal year, once the federal budget has been approved.

*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 has received \$3,231,049 in funding from Reaching Home – the Government of Canada's Homelessness Strategy and was awarded \$61,500 of funding through the CMAF to support the region's COVID-19 response capacity for those experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. CRD staff have worked with the CRD EOC, CAB and community and government partners to implement a strategy for distribution of this funding where people have been identified as experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This funding will help extend these efforts into next year and will facilitate the funding of new responses needed as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves.

**RECOMMENDATION**

The Hospitals and Housing Committee recommends to the Capital Regional District Board:  
That the Reaching Home and Canadian Medical Association Foundation COVID-19 Funding report be received for information.

Submitted by:	Don Elliott, MUP, Senior Manager, Regional Housing
Concurrence:	Kevin Lorette, P. Eng., MBA, General Manager, Planning & Protective Services
Concurrence:	Robert Lapham, MCIP, RPP, Chief Administrative Officer

**ATTACHMENT**

Appendix A: 2020-21 Reaching Home and Canadian Medical Association Foundation COVID-19 Contracts Summary