

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: January 14, 2025
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
John Ritz, Homelessness and Housing Stability Supervisor
Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Report Number: SOC25-003
Attachments: None

Title: Optimism Place Outreach Worker Service Agreement

Objective: To consider approval to enter into an updated 3-year agreement with Optimism Place, Women’s Shelter, and Support Services to provide housing-based case management services across Stratford, St Marys, and Perth County.

Background: The City of Stratford has partnered with the Optimism Place, Women’s Shelter, and Support Services (herein referred to as Optimism place) for the delivery of housing-based case management services since 2018. Optimism Place was a founding partner of the Home For Good funded Supported Housing of Perth Program (SHOPP), now known as the Intensive Case Management program (ICM), and has been an active partner during this time. Optimism Place provides essential services to members of the community, including both on-site services for women accessing shelter as well as outreach services for women living in community. They are a leading expert in the community on intimate partner violence and continue to support agencies and clients alike with education, support, and services that better the lives of women living in Perth County.

Analysis: The updated agreement replaces an agreement of the same name, signed in 2023 after the SHOPP program concluded and was replaced with the ICM program. The agreement is updated with more measurable outcomes, clearer program delivery expectations, updated program activities and the addition of discretionary program funding. The updated agreement will take effect January 1, 2025, and run until December 31, 2027. There are termination clauses built into the agreement and the agreement will be subject to regular review to ensure financial responsibility and program delivery expectations are being met.

The agreement is related to the scattered site component of the Intensive Case Management program. The agreement provides \$75,000 for one FTE case manager who will carry a caseload comprised of the individuals facing the most complex barriers in our community, with the caseload ranging between 12 and 15 participants. The services offered begin when the individual is experiencing homelessness and continue after they are housed, ensuring an appropriate level of housing stability is achieved before the individual is discharged from the program. The caseloads at Optimism Place will be targeted to individuals who identify an experience of intimate partner violence as a challenge to acquiring or maintaining their housing where possible.

Intake for the program will be provided by the City of Stratford Social Services Department, utilizing the local by-name list as well as other factors such as interactions with emergency services and interactions with local service providers. The City of Stratford will maintain oversight over the program by completing regular file reviews and data will be submitted to the Social Services Department on a yearly basis, allowing for evaluation and review of the services being provided.

Within this updated agreement, a further \$5000 is being provided that was not part of the initial agreement. These funds are detailed as discretionary program funding and will be utilized to support housing stability and housing attainment challenges that cannot be addressed through the existing programs in the community. The funds will be tracked on a case-by-case basis with details being provided around what was obtained using these funds, helping to better inform program development and changes that may need to be made to the Housing Stability Bank program operated by Social Services.

Due to their unique and exclusive capabilities, Optimism Place has been sole sourced for this agreement in accordance with the requirements set forth in Section 37 of Policy P.5.1 "Purchasing and Materials Management" and approved by the Manager of Financial Services as well as the Director of Social Services.

This agreement will be funded through the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) funding received from the Government of Ontario.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

This program is funded through the Government of Ontario Homelessness Prevention Program with an impact of \$23,750 in 2025, included in the 2025 Draft budget. Payment was made to Optimism Place through the existing agreement on October 1, 2024, and covered the period of October 1, 2024, until September 30, 2025. The remaining \$23,750 represents payment for the final quarter of the year, October 1, 2025, until December 31, 2025, and the \$5,000 discretionary program funding.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

The Outreach Worker Service Agreement is for three years, subject to no concerns related to finances or performance. The anticipated cost for 2026 and 2027 is \$80,000 per year. The total cost of the agreement, from 2025 until 2027, is \$183,750.

The program is funded through the Homelessness Prevention Program. There is a 90-day exit clause built into the agreement, in case of any financial or performance-related concerns, and the agreement can only continue if the funding from HPP continues and is included in the municipal budget.

There is no anticipated impact on the municipal tax levy in future years because of this program.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Build Housing Stability

This report aligns with this priority as the sole focus of the program is providing support with the attainment and maintenance of housing. The program focuses not only on housing stability but also on the supporting clients with accessing safe, affordable, and permanent housing in the community.

Work Together For Greater Impact

This report aligns with this priority as the program continues to enhance partnerships within the community and build upon long-standing relationships that provide support and benefit to clients within the service manager area.

Alignment with One Planet Principles:

Health and Happiness

Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing.

Equity and Local Economy

Creating safe, equitable places to live and work which support local prosperity and international fair trade.

Culture and Community

Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities, and promoting a culture of sustainable living.

Staff Recommendation: THAT Council authorize The Corporation of the City of Stratford to enter into an agreement with Optimism Place, Women’s Shelter, and Support Services for the provision of services defined in the Outreach Worker Service Agreement;

THAT the Mayor and Clerk, or their respective delegates, be authorized to sign the Outreach Worker Service Agreement with Optimism Place, Women's Shelter, and Support Services;

AND THAT the Director of Social Services be authorized to approve any contract amendments, subject to no changes to the financial considerations or identified performance concerns, for the duration of the contract and subject to a copy of any approved amended contract being provided to the City Clerk.

Prepared by: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
John Ritz, Homelessness and Housing Stability Supervisor

Recommended by: Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer