

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA CARLETON
 MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE D'OTTAWA CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf.
 Your File/V/Réf.

DATE 27 March 1998

TO/DEST. Co-ordinator
 Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Commissionær
 Social Services Department

SUBJECT/OBJET **REVIEW OF FUNDING FOR ACTION-LOGEMENT AND
 HOUSING HELP**

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **That the Community Services Committee acknowledge that a funding inequity exists between Action-logement and Housing Help resulting in a lack of core funding for the provision of primary services by Action-logement, and;**
2. **That should additional funding become available in 1998, that it be allocated to Action-logement up to the level currently allocated to Housing Help, in order to assist the agency to maintain core services at its current level.**

PURPOSE

The purpose of the report is to present recommendations regarding funding for housing services for 1998.

BACKGROUND

In May 1997, Regional Council approved the following motions: "That staff review the funding envelope for housing services for 1998 and provide recommendations regarding developing an objective funding formula for allocating funds to housing agencies based on criteria to include, but not limited to, number of clients served, area of service, language of clients and range of services

provided”; and “That neither housing agency’s funding be reduced from 1997 levels as a result of the staff review, given the dramatically increasing demand and dramatically decreasing public funding the agencies are experiencing.”

DISCUSSION

Funding History

Housing Help began in 1985 as a community development project of Dalhousie Health and Community Services (now Somerset West Community Health Centre). Meetings with tenants and a door-to-door survey of 604 rental units in the Dalhousie Ward revealed that many people in the ward needed more information about their rights as tenants and individual help finding affordable housing.

The City of Ottawa provided a start-up grant in December 1985 enabling the agency to begin the provision of services in February, 1986. One-Time Grants kept the program afloat until 1989, after which a tripartite agreement between the RMOC, the City of Ottawa and the Province provided more stable funding for a three-year pilot covering the period 1989 - 1991. The three funders agreed to a total budget of \$350,000 for the services which comprised of a \$200,000 contribution from the Ministry of Housing, \$100,000 from the Region, and \$50,000 from the City of Ottawa. The amount of \$110,000 was allocated to Action-Logement and \$240,000 to Housing Help. Each agency subsequently received \$39,500 through the provincial Access to Permanent Housing Program to hire a housing educator.

In 1989, participants from community services centres in Vanier, Overbrook-Forbes and Lowertown highlighted the need for a housing service in the eastern part of the Region and more accessible to the francophone community. The francophone based “Renseigne Toit” housing information service in Vanier had been forced to cease operations in 1988 when Provincial funding closed.

On June 14, 1989, Regional Council approved the establishment of a community-based Regional Housing Information Service funded jointly by the Region, the City of Ottawa, and the Ministry of Housing. Housing Help began operating under this funding in July, 1989 and Action-Logement, in December, 1989.

It was initially envisioned by the funding partners that a central office (Housing Help) would provide administrative functions for a western satellite office and Action-logement in the eastern portion of the region. At the request of francophone organizations, a separate board of directors and separate funding were established for Action-logement.

The Regional funding history of the housing services is as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Action-Logement</u>	<u>Housing Help</u>	<u>Total</u>
1997	\$23,931	\$93,165	\$117,096
1996	\$23,931	\$93,165	\$117,096
1994	\$24,320	\$94,680	\$119,000
1993	\$24,320	\$94,680	\$119,000
1992*	\$23,500	\$91,500	\$115,000
1989-1991	\$31,430	\$68,570	\$100,000

*In its funding recommendations for 1992, the Planning Department recommended an additional \$20,000 to the base amount of \$115,000 for new and expanded programs of which \$13,500 would be provided to Action-logement to upgrade its part-time position to a full-time and \$6,500 to Housing Help to support staff positions. Records indicate that this additional amount was not granted, as the total amount of \$115,000 was allocated to the housing agencies that year.

The total base funding in 1997 for Action-logement and Housing Help is as follows:

Base Funding source	Action-Logement	Housing Help
RMOC	\$23,931	\$93,165
Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing	\$142,457*	\$163,560*
City of Ottawa	\$23,500	\$44,500
Total	\$189,888	\$301,225

* this represents a decrease of 30% from 1996.

Housing Services

The housing services purchased as indicated in the three year purchase of service agreement with the Region covering the period 1996-1999 are:

- Assistance to individuals seeking housing (i.e., information, advocacy, mediation)
- Provision of landlord-tenant information (i.e., maintain vacancy listing, information of rights and obligations)
- Promotion of community awareness of issues (i.e., data base, policy development, education to service providers)

Due to a 30% reduction of provincial funding for 1997, the housing agencies target their services/resources primarily to individuals and families in search of affordable housing, to individuals and families which experience housing problems, and to the upkeep of vacancy listings.

Information and Referral

Approximately half of the people contacting the housing agencies are able to carry out an independent housing search once given information on housing availability and/or are able with limited support to resolve housing problems before they become a crisis. People may receive the required information by phone or may drop in at the agency.

Casework

The people requiring this service experience a degree of crisis that impedes their ability to resolve a housing problem. Consequently, their housing stability is at risk, or their ability to undertake an independent housing search is lacking. Further, a number of people requiring casework are isolated, show a lack of insight into their housing problem and therefore require intensive intervention and support in order to obtain and maintain housing. These are the people without a permanent address and, if not assisted, may require ongoing and additional institutional assistance in emergency shelters and hospitals.

100% of these two groups of people live in poverty. Their sources of income include General Welfare Assistance and Family Benefits Assistance, Employment Insurance and fixed limited pensions, or they have no income or are the working poor. The nature of housing crises occur around issues such as evictions, lease problems, high rent, discrimination, hydro arrears, unsafe conditions, abuse and health problems.

Outreach Services

Casework includes outreach services of which a component is the accompaniment of clients in housing searches as well as collaboration and networking with a number of related community organizations.

Action-logement provides services in satellite offices located in the Gloucester and Cumberland Community Resource Centres on the basis of one half day per week in each Centre.

Housing Help allocates one full-time caseworker for the provision of services to homeless families at emergency shelters including the Carling Avenue Family Shelter, Nelson House, a shelter for abused women and their children, and the emergency shelter for single women. In addition, the outreach staff person works closely with the Carlington Community Health Centre, the Pinecrest-Queensway Community Health Centre and the Nepean Community Resource Centre as well as participating in two networks of services from the Ottawa West End.

Vacancy Listings

Each of the housing agencies provide resources towards a continuously updated list of vacancy listings of inexpensive and adequate housing from the private market, social housing and co-ops and share the list with each other. Action-logement has over 700 listings and Housing Help over 800.

The vacancy listings are intended to supplement the newspaper and other services offered and are used extensively by the caseworkers to facilitate access to housing for clients. Sensitization occurs with the landlords concerning issues for people in their housing search (i.e. willingness to accept last month rent in instalments or guarantee from the Social Services Department.) The vacancy rate in Ottawa-Carleton is 4.9% and the average rent is lower than in 1995 (CMHC, 1996). There is, however, no increase in the quantity of new listings and the number of units below threshold rents has remained constant since 1994. The increase in the vacancy rate is at the higher end of the market. Vacancy rates do not reflect affordability. See Annex A for comparable data between Canadian Mortgage Housing Corporation figures and housing agencies listings on rental costs.

Additional Strategies

The two housing agencies are participants in the development of the Registry, Coordinated Access to Social Housing, with Housing Help assuming the role of Chair. Members of the Network come from all parts of the housing sector: municipal and private non-profit, co-ops, the provincial housing authority, special needs providers, and community housing assistance groups.

The two housing agencies were also participants in the 1996 Social Housing for Abused Women's Network (SHAWN) project, with Action-logement sponsoring and leading the project. The purpose of the project was to facilitate access to permanent housing for women leaving abusive partners.

Action-logement acquired a grant from Trillium Foundation which permitted the setting up of a computerized information centre. It is estimated that approximately 20% of the clients will be able to do their housing search and seek information on their own.

Housing Help has provided leadership since 1995 to the Alliance to End Homelessness in Ottawa-Carleton, a collaborative effort by over forty (40) community agencies, government representatives and individuals to develop a community based homelessness prevention program. A project (one-time) grant from Region has helped support this work.

Project Grants also enabled Housing Help to be a leader and sponsor of the Rooming House Information Exchange Network (RHIEN) since 1993. The purpose of RHIEN is to work towards improving living conditions of rooming house tenants, ensuring adequate rooming house stock in the region, and increasing public and political awareness of the need for rooming houses and the problems faced by rooming house tenants. The members include rooming house tenants and representatives of community organizations.

Funding Criteria

An evaluation of Action-Logement and Housing Help in October 1991 directed by a committee of the Region, the City of Ottawa, the Ontario Ministry of Housing, and the Social Planning Council of Ottawa-Carleton included the following criteria related to the service delivery model: region-wide accessibility through a network of service, community-based support, bilingual service, mechanisms to ensure communication and co-ordination within the network. The evaluation found that both agencies were experiencing an increased number of calls and visits, that the agencies dealt with complicated housing issues, landlord/tenant relations, reached the low-income tenant population they were designed to serve, were found helpful by both clients and referring agencies, and overall met regional criteria. It was recommended that the service continue to be delivered through two main offices in order to enhance access for clients and community-based support.

In 1993 the following Social Services Department funding criteria were approved by Community Services Committee for purchase of service funding: filling a community need, must be used to assist persons in financial need, should be accessible to all low-income clients from across the Region in need of services, must work collaboratively and co-operatively with other related service providers, must be accountable for its operation and performance to the community through a Board of Directors fairly elected by the general membership, consumers should be involved in the determination of services whenever possible. The agency must also adhere to the Human Rights Code in dealing with its clients and staff, be or be in the process of becoming incorporated as a non-profit organization and should be registered under the Canada Income Tax Act for the purpose of receiving charitable donations, demonstrate efforts to access other sources of funding, and operate efficiently and effectively.

A review of the housing agencies in 1994 provided sufficient assurance that the agencies were meeting the criteria (i.e. full boards, working committees, balanced budgets) and continuing service delivery to people on low income struggling to access and maintain affordable housing.

Funding Formula

The two housing agencies meet the basic funding criteria and perform a comparable volume of work. The difference in funding has enabled Housing Help to provide move/intensive casework primarily through its outreach work with the shelters and to provide core services out of its more stable funding base. Action-logement has compensated for insufficient core funding by assigning to its core functions students on placement and temporary employees hired through project funding (other than Regional project (one-time) grants).

As of 1997, the Housing agencies are required to submit performance targets to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, their main funder, in order to access funding. The method of collecting data has changed during this process and is different from the methodology of previous years.

The performance target for Action-logement in 1997 is to assist 839 cases out of 2,189 contacts access and maintain housing for a minimum period of three (3) months. For Housing Help, the performance target is to assist 738 cases out of 1206 contacts access and maintain housing for a minimum period of three (3) months. Data from 1996 indicate that Action-logement had an estimated 30,350 contacts (compare to 24, 280 recorded, with some unrecorded due to internal management changes) and Housing Help 34,947.

As of June 1997, Action-logement has opened 602 cases and Housing Help 327. These are the cases which are all experiencing some degree of housing crisis situations. Partly because of its work with the shelters, Housing Help is targeting a larger number of people with more barriers to maintaining access to housing and therefore devoting more resources to a smaller number of people as well as maintaining open a number of complex cases in need of ongoing housing support. Not counted in these numbers are the clients who need minimal support to carry a housing search or resolve a housing problem.

Action-logement serves an estimated equivalent number of people in French and English and Housing Help serves approximately 92% of its clients in English and 8% in French.

The clients accessing services from Action-logement are primarily from Ottawa (46%) Vanier (30%) and Gloucester (17%). Clients accessing services at Housing Help are primarily from Ottawa (57%), West of Ottawa (5%) and Gloucester (5%).

In addition to the above considerations, Action-logement indicates that non-urgent situations have to wait up to two weeks, occasionally three, for an appointment; the waiting period for services at Housing Help is approximately one to two days.

An analysis of base funding in 1997 indicates that Action-logement received 38.7% of the total base funding allocated by the three primary funders as indicated below.

<u>Action-Logement</u>	<u>Funder (total funding)</u>	<u>Percentage</u> (%)
\$ 23,931	RMOC	\$117,096 25.7%
\$ 23,500	City of Ottawa	\$ 68,000 34.6%
\$142,457	Ministry	\$306,017 46.5%
TOTAL	\$189,888	\$491,113 38.7%

The above information indicates that the two housing agencies serve a comparable number of people, concentrate their efforts in different geographic communities while both serving the entire region, and have developed unique working relationships with agencies in their respective area, and in the case of Action-logement, a particularly strong connection and development work within the francophone community.

It is acknowledged that both housing agencies provide much needed services to very vulnerable people in the region, and that they both function under stretched resources. However, indications are that Action-logement is lacking in core funding for its provision of primary services.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The housing agencies, Action-logement and Housing Help, were consulted for this report as well as documentation produced by the agencies and other sources.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATION

The Region allocated the total amount of \$117,096 to the two housing agencies in 1997. Funding recommendations will be based on this amount in 1998 unless directed otherwise by Committee. There are no additional funds in the Social Services Department budget to increase funding to either of the housing agencies.

CONCLUSION

Action-logement and Housing Help provide critical services to clients of the Social Services Department and other low-income people in need of affordable and adequate housing.

*Approved by
Dick Stewart*

DM/gb

ANNEX ACost of available shelter

Type of accommodation	CMHC \$	Housing Agencies \$	Difference \$
Bachelor	484	443	41
1 bedroom	601	518	83
2 bedroom	739	613	126
3 bedroom	892 *	767	125
4 bedroom	892 *	828	64
Rooms		333	
Shared Housing		318	

*3 and *4 bedroom combined