

Ministry of Seniors and Housing

Public Account Committee

Written submissions for May 12, 2020 appearance on
2018-19 Annual Report

Question 1: (HOP) Just based on the resources that you have, how many units are closed and remain closed and can't be used for households who need accommodations because you don't have enough funds to actually renovate them and do that? (MLA Sigurdson).

Affordable Housing plays a critical role in getting Calgarians in need back on their feet. Not only does it put a roof over the heads of those who could not otherwise afford a home, but developing, redeveloping and maintaining affordable housing creates much needed jobs. However, keeping existing affordable units operational and adding new units to the supply continue to be pressing needs for Calgary.

In 2018 CHC identified and closed 255 units of Provincially-owned housing due to insufficient funding to meet health and safety standards. The Province provided \$4.6M in emergency funding that enabled CHC to renovate and repair all the closed units to meet standards and to re-open these units by March 2019.

The provincial budget, announced on February 27, 2020 included significant funding reductions for affordable housing in Calgary. One of the most likely outcomes of the reductions will be the need to close units later this year. As we have had to do in the past, when capital maintenance funding runs out, we are not able to turn over vacated units and are forced to put them on hold. We are expecting this will result in at least 100 units being put on hold this year. We are working to continue to be financially prudent and creative to meet these challenges.

Question 2: (CHC) (CRH) I have questions for both housing management bodies, including as well the Deputy Minister, regarding our dedicated nonprofit agency that was a pilot project for one-window application processing. Is that something that both housing management bodies wish to pursue, and, if so, would it have the support of the ministry, and how long would it take to actually implement so that we get this process in place to streamline the application process? (MLA Dach).

Sarah Woodgate, Director of Calgary Housing, and President of Calgary Housing Company, is a member of the Community Housing Affordability Collective's Steering Committee. Between 2016 and 2019, The City of Calgary worked as a member of the Community Housing Affordability Collective (CHAC) to lead the One Window Initiative. The overall vision for One Window is to improve housing intake from a client perspective, so that more people can be efficiently and successfully housed. The recommendation of the One Window Steering Committee, comprised of 14 organizations who represent 80% of Calgary's non-market housing stock, is to establish a new non-profit entity, independently staffed and governed, that will provide a coordinated citizen-centric service for application and intake across 60 non-market housing providers in Calgary. This new entity will absorb responsibilities of various government-related housing organizations and will be solely focused on helping Calgarians search for safe and affordable housing through multiple channels, both online and in person.

Implementation

The proposed implementation plan is detailed on page 36 of the attached recommendation report PDF.

Timeline:

The new entity could be established and operational within three years using a phased approach.

Phase 1 (year 1) activities include: securing funding and project planning; establishing the new entity; and RFP and vendor selection.

Phase 2 (year 2) activities include: design, build and test IT system.

Phase 3 (year 3) activities include: implementation and stabilization.

Assuming funding is received in June 2020, One Window would launch in 2022/2023.

Cost:

One Window is ready for implementation contingent on securing funding. The Government of Alberta has been identified as the most appropriate funding source, given its existing role in regulating and funding intake for provincial housing programs. The City and CHAC has requested funding from the Government of Alberta.

The recommendation report shows that in 2019, based on a Class Three cost estimate, implementation would require \$7.75M over three years to establish the new organization and implement a technology system. The City had originally allocated resources to help with project transition, but this funding is no longer available. Once the new organization is established, its average annual operating budget would be \$3.0M.

Estimated implementation Costs (one-time funding for 2020-2021) = \$7.75M

Annual Operating Costs (ongoing funding beginning in 2023) = \$3.0M

Community Housing Affordability Collective (CHAC)

CHAC continues to support the One Window Initiative as it remains an integral part of its Action Plan. CHAC firmly supports the recommended operating model and creation of a new separate entity. At a recent CHAC steering committee meeting, leaders indicated an appetite for further extending the One Window solution for province-wide application, should the Calgary pilot prove successful. This would be particularly beneficial in light of COVID-19, by creating an online system that clients could easily navigate. It would also better utilize existing non-market housing stock as clients are more efficiently matched to the most appropriate housing unit for their needs across all non-market housing supply in Calgary.

If you have any questions or want to discuss anything further please reach out.

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