

Local municipalities to benefit from multi-million dollar federal initiative

Written By MIKE BAKER

Municipalities across Dufferin County will split almost \$3 million in emergency funding as the after effects of the Ontario-wide shutdown brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be felt.

Dufferin-Caledon MPP Sylvia Jones informed media last week that the Ontario government had secured up to \$4 billion in emergency assistance for municipalities, through the federal Safe Restart Agreement. Communities across Dufferin County will receive money to address a variety of municipal operating pressures brought on by the coronavirus. According to Ms. Jones, the funds will give municipalities the support and flexibility they need to protect the health and well-being of their communities, while continuing to deliver critical public services as the province continues on its road of recovery.

"I know that the municipalities in Dufferin-Caledon worked hard to maintain essential services to residents during the emergency order," Ms. Jones said. "Getting back to business and reopening has had its challenges locally, but this money provided under the Safe Restart Agreement will help our communities in their efforts to safely restart programs and services that were disrupted due to the pandemic."

The County of Dufferin leads the way locally in terms of dollars it will receive, with the regional municipality set to receive \$1.48 million in funding. Orangeville will be getting \$673,400, Mono will receive \$204,300, and Shelburne will get \$175,400. Elsewhere, Grand Valley will get \$106,200, Mulmur will get \$105,700, with Amaranth receiving \$88,300. Rounding out the group, Melancthon will receive a cheque for \$70,800, with East Garafraxa getting \$58,700.

On top of the emergency funding, Orangeville will receive just over \$96,000 in transit funding to cover added expenses the municipality has incurred by continuing to run its town-wide bus service during the pandemic.

Also in our riding, the Town of Caledon will receive \$1.46 million in funding. The municipality will also receive \$36,000 in transit funding as part of this first phase.

The money will be distributed to municipalities in September, and has been allotted on a per household basis. In total, Ontario's 444 municipalities will receive \$695 million in funding through Phase 1 of the project.

A further \$695 million in additional funding is expected to be made available during a second phase of funding that will be opened up to municipalities that have COVID-19 related financial impacts that exceed the initial per household allocation provided during Phase 1.

In total, the federal Safe Restart Agreement will provide \$19 billion to Canadian provinces and territories over the next few months to help municipalities emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. Across all streams of federal investment, the program will provide over \$7 billion in funding and in-kind supports to Ontario.

The County of Dufferin received further assistance through the joint federal and provincial Social Services Relief Fund. Now, the County is reaching out to all of its community partners, organizations and non-profit agencies to find out how they can help them continue to make a difference across the region.

"Phase two of the Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) will provide \$362 million in provincial and federal funding to help a diverse range of vulnerable people, create longer-term housing solutions for people in need, and ensure that the housing and homelessness sector has the tools and support that they need to safely and successfully transition to recovery," said County spokesperson Nanci Malek in a recent press release.

Funding through the SSRF is split into two components ? operating and capital. Eligible operating expenses include: building homeless shelter capacity, use of motels or hotels as isolation centres, rental assistance such as providing funding for rental arrears and short-term housing allowances, transportation costs, food and supplies, enhanced cleaning services, purchase of personal protective equipment, and minor retrofits, alterations or repairs to facilities under \$50,000.

Capital funding would enable to acquisition of new, or modifications to existing facilities such as emergency shelters, supportive housing, transitional housing and related facilities. The objectives under this component, according to Ms. Malek, are to provide longer-term housing based solutions to homelessness post-COVID 19; to better address the need to encourage movement toward client service models that are innovative, and seek to support client and organizational readiness in preparation for future outbreaks or emergencies; and to change the physical design of congregate care settings, such as emergency shelters, to permit elements such as physical distancing and self-contained bedrooms and washrooms.

?If you are providing new or enhanced support or services for vulnerable persons in Dufferin County as a result of COVID-19 in any of these areas, we would ask that you submit our case by Friday, Aug. 28,? Ms. Malek continued.

All requests are to be sent to Carol Barber, the County's Program Manager of Housing Services, at cbarber@dufferincounty.ca. For more information, call 519-941-6991 ext. 2020.