

County offering financial support for local agencies during pandemic

Written By MIKE BAKER

The County of Dufferin is asking for public feedback as it looks for ways to assist community service organizations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a release to media last week, County staff say they are looking into ways to financially assist some of the community's most vulnerable people during these trying times. This follows hot on the heels of recent announcements from both the federal and provincial governments, who themselves are making money available to those who need it most.

On March 18, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced the federal government would be making around \$157.5 million available to municipalities to support people experiencing homelessness during the COVID-19 outbreak. Ontario Premier Doug Ford followed that up with an announcement of his own on March 23, committing \$200 million in social services relief funding to protect the health and safety of the province's most vulnerable residents.

To access the new funding to address COVID-19, the guiding principle will be to assist with anything that would improve the capacity of service providers to serve the most vulnerable, the County release reads.

Money would be made available to residents looking to secure additional accommodation to reduce overcrowding in homeless shelters, seeking to purchase supplies and materials to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19, such as personal protective equipment, and enhancing cleaning services or increasing the frequency of cleaning with disinfectants in high traffic areas.

The County is also suggesting it will help individuals, or organizations, purchase beds and physical barriers to place between beds in newly purposed facilities, open up funds to maintain or increase staff hours to operate these new COVID-19 related facilities, and make money available for people to stay in motels and hotels, put towards transportation costs and help pay for food and supplies.

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 the areas (specified), we would ask that you submit your request by April 17, the release states.

To be eligible for funds, applicants must include the full name of their agency or organization, provide primary contact information, such as name, phone number and email address, submit a brief description of the community service or support provided, and state how much money they would like to receive, with a description highlighting how those funds would be utilized to address the organization's needs during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Submissions should be sent to Carol Barber, Program Manager for Housing Services at cbarber@dufferincounty.ca. For more information, call 519-941-6991 ext. 2020.