



Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of May 19, 2022

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** May 4, 2022
From: Karen Hoesel, Director, Sustainable Planning and Community Development
Subject: **Participation in the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) funded
*Housing Poverty and Affordability Solutions Project***

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council:
 - a. Support the City of Victoria's involvement as a Municipal Partner in the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) funded *Regional Household Affordability and Prosperity (RHAP) Project: Housing Solutions for Poverty Reduction*; and
 - b. Support the City of Colwood's role as lead municipality for the project, including applying for, receiving and managing the grant funding for the project.
2. That the above motion be forwarded to the May 19, 2022, daytime Council meeting for Council's consideration to align with the UBCM grant application deadline.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek Council direction for the City of Victoria to participate in a *Regional Household Affordability and Prosperity (RHAP)* project. The City of Colwood, with support from the Community Social Planning Council (CSPC), is leading a grant funding application to the UBCM *Poverty Reduction Planning and Action* program. The City of Victoria has been invited to participate in this project by the City of Colwood and the CSPC (see Attachment A: invitation letter).

The proposed RHAP project is an opportunity for local municipalities to collaborate on understanding the root causes and discuss best practices for supporting the large number of people struggling to find affordable housing in the capital region. The municipalities of Saanich and Esquimalt have already committed to partnering with the City of Colwood on this project.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council direction for the City of Victoria to participate in a *Regional Household Affordability and Prosperity (RHAP)* project.

BACKGROUND

The intent of UBCM's *Poverty Reduction Planning and Action* program (Attachment B) is to support local governments in reducing poverty at the local level and to support the Province's poverty reduction strategy. The first two intakes of the program in Spring 2020 and Spring 2021 awarded over \$2 million to more than 70 local governments across the province.

To qualify for funding, applications must demonstrate the extent to which proposed activities will reduce poverty at the local level, focusing on one or more of the six priority action areas:

- Housing
- Families, children, and youth
- Education and training
- Employment
- Income supports
- Social supports

The primary applicant submitting the application for a regional project is required to submit a resolution describing project activities, outcomes, and costs. Each partnering municipality, which in this case includes the City of Victoria, is required to submit a resolution that clearly states their approval for the primary applicant to apply for, receive, and manage the grant funding on their behalf. The total funding request for regional projects cannot exceed \$150,000.

In February of 2022, staff received an invitation from the City of Colwood and the CSPC to become a municipal partner in the *Regional Household Affordability and Prosperity* project being submitted for grant funding. Victoria's participation will help Colwood to access more UBCM funding for the project as the budget is linked to the number of municipal partners. The deadline for Colwood to submit all municipal resolutions of support is May 22, 2022.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

The RHAP project will profile local challenges and broaden the evidence base, supporting and informing municipal action to address them by:

- conducting a jurisdictional scan and case studies
- undertaking community engagement with municipal, business and community partners as well as individuals with lived experience
- recording and sharing of best practices from the CRD and beyond
- developing a vulnerability profile of affected households and associated risk factors
- hosting capacity-building workshops for participating municipalities to discuss local policy practices and shared learnings
- hosting a community of practice for local governments to share and learn from each other on housing poverty and affordability solutions with research support from the CSPC.

The CSPC have indicated their ability to support this project by doing the research, analysis, and engagement work, thus minimizing staff time commitment.

While Victoria is already committed to working with UBC on the *Housing Assessment Resource Tools* (HART) project to develop a detailed profile of housing need using 2021 census data, this new RHAP project led by the City of Colwood will provide an important regional perspective to the issue and an opportunity to collaborate with neighboring communities as they attempt to improve their understanding of the drivers of Core Housing Need and homelessness.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Should Council not wish to support the City's participation in the project, there is still an opportunity for staff to be involved in the proposed regional Housing Community of Practice that will be established by the CSPC.

Accessibility Impact Statement

The outcomes of this project will increase our understanding of accessibility needs faced by those living in housing poverty and improve our ability to integrate accessible housing objectives into future housing targets, strategies, and policy.

2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

The recommendations in this report align with Strategic Objective Three: Affordable Housing, by improving our understanding of the causes and profile of those living in Core Housing Need in Victoria, and across the CRD, and discussing solutions for how to support them.

Impacts to Financial Plan

This update report does not have any impacts to the Financial Plan.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

Participation in this project supports Official Community Plan *Housing and Homelessness* objectives.

CONCLUSIONS

The City of Victoria's participation in the RHAP project is an important part of working collaboratively and in coordination with community and regional efforts to address housing poverty and enable stable housing solutions.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew Cusack
Senior Planner – Housing Policy

Karen Hoesel, Director
Sustainable Planning and Community
Development Department

Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.

List of Attachments

- Attachment A: Invitation letter from the CSPC
- Attachment B: UBCM Poverty Reduction Planning and Action Program 2022 Application Guide.