

**Subject: Advisory Committee on Aging Recommendation -
Provincial Rent Supplement Program****APPROVALS:****Annette Antoniak**_____
Director_____
Chief Administrative Officer**Recommended Motion:**

THAT the Mayor be authorized to send a letter to the Minister of Seniors and Housing, Josephine Pon, requesting that the review process for the Rent Supplement Program be expedited and that the various municipalities impacted be provided information as soon as possible; and

THAT Administration request a meeting with the Minister of Seniors and Housing, Josephine Pon, during the upcoming Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) Spring Convention.

Summary:

The Advisory Committee on Aging (ACOA) is a Council-appointed committee whose mandate is to "provide a forum for stakeholder input on strategies and service delivery issues affecting seniors [including intergovernmental strategies and service delivery issues] and to make recommendations in respect thereof to Council. (Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo - Committees Bylaw No. 17/024).

During the ACOA meeting on January 16, 2020, the Committee discussed the provincial Rent Supplement Program, which is administered locally by Wood Buffalo Housing (WBH), and helps households find affordable rental accommodation by providing rent subsidies in eligible rental projects. The Committee passed a resolution to advise Council to lobby the Government of Alberta (GOA), on behalf of residents of the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB).

Background:

The provincial Ministry of Seniors and Housing began a review of the Rent Supplement Program in October 2019, and implemented a moratorium on new clients entering the program. Wood Buffalo Housing is expecting a resolution by late February or early March 2020, for the start of the next fiscal year.

Currently, the program assists 410 households (Direct to Tenant Rent Supplement and Private Landlord Rent Supplement) in the RMWB, which includes 14 households in the rural service area. There are 22 seniors (65 years and older) that receive assistance from this program. There are 176 applicants on the waitlist, which includes 25 applicants from the rural service area, and 17 seniors (in both urban and rural service areas). With the freeze of the Rent Supplement Program, WBH is unable to accept any new applications for subsidy; for this reason, it is difficult to estimate the number of applicants (actual demand) for the program at this time.

The total amount of the rent supplement in the RMWB for the last fiscal period was \$4.9M. The decrease that has been announced by the GOA is 24% over three years, or \$1.2M. The total rent supplements that may be available by the end of the three year implementation period is approximately \$3.7M.

Rationale for Recommendation:

The reduction of the Rent Supplement Program will have an adverse affect on many seniors living in the RMWB, as well as other individuals and families who depend on the program for accommodation. The uncertainty of the program due to the ongoing review is also creating hardship among those that may need to enter the program.

The Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) Spring Convention is March 16-18, 2020, in Edmonton.

Strategic Priorities:

Responsible Government