



Corporate *NO: R119*

Report *COUNCIL DATE: May 22, 2001*

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| REGULAR COUNCIL | | | |
| TO: | Mayor & Council | DATE: | May 18, 2001 |
| FROM: | General Manager, Planning & Development | FILE: | 0034-001/ 2104-015 |
| SUBJECT: | FCM - National Housing Policy Options Team - Request for Contribution | | |

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council:

1. Authorize a 1.5 cent per capita (\$5,100) contribution to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities National Housing Policy Options Team for 2001, and that the Affordable Housing Special Reserve Fund be the funding source for this contribution; and
2. Authorize the City Clerk to bring forward the necessary Expenditure By-law for the required readings.

PURPOSE

At the Regular Council meeting of April 30, 2001, Council received a letter from Jack Layton, First Vice President, Federation of Canadian Municipalities ("FCM") dated April 19, 2001, (copy attached) and referred the letter to staff for a report. This report responds to that direction of Council.

BACKGROUND

In the fall of 1998 the FCM Big City Mayors Caucus endorsed a resolution describing homelessness and the lack of affordable rental housing as a "national disaster". The City of Surrey is one of the member municipalities of this FCM caucus. In response, the National Housing Policy Options Team ("NHPOT") was established to document the scope of the crisis and to develop a framework for a comprehensive national housing strategy involving the federal government.

The work of the NHPOT is funded exclusively through voluntary contributions from member municipalities.

While the initial funding request in 1999 was intended to be a one time only request for an amount equivalent to 3 cents per capita, the NHPOT requested and received additional contributions in 2000 at 2.5 cents per capita from 38 municipalities across the country, including Surrey and 9 other participating municipalities from British Columbia.

In February 2001, the FCM Big City Mayors Caucus renewed their support of the work of the National Housing Policy Option Team and recommended a 1.5 cents per capita voluntary contribution from member municipalities, a reduced amount from previous years. On this basis, the FCM is now requesting Council to give consideration to this year's contribution, to enable the NHPOT to continue its discussions with the federal government and advance the policy options outlined in the proposed National Affordable Housing Strategy.

DISCUSSION

Since the inception of NHPOT in late 1998, the federal government has launched the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative to address homelessness across the country over the next three years, authorized the expansion of the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program, and included in the federal budget, a GST rebate for new rental housing. This year NHPOT will focus on the federal government's commitment to fund the development of 60,000 to 120,000 units of affordable rental housing over the next four years in partnership with provincial and territorial governments.

Over the past two years, Council has followed the activities of NHPOT and approved voluntary contributions in the amounts of \$9,000 in 1999 and \$6,600 in 2000 from the Council Initiatives Fund. Some Council members had the opportunity to participate on the NHPOT Steering Committee through conference calls and workshops at FCM conferences. Continued support of the NHPOT will enable the City to:

1. Retain its position on the steering committee of NHPOT; and
2. Maintain the profile of the City and position the City for favourable consideration in respect of obtaining funding and/or projects available through future affordable housing programs offered by the federal government.

Therefore, it is recommended that Council approve the requested voluntary contribution of 1.5 cents per capita, which amounts to \$5,100. Given that the requested contribution advances affordable housing issues, it is appropriate and recommended that the requested funds be allocated from the Affordable Housing Special Reserve Fund. An Expenditure By-law will need to be adopted to allow the Reserve Fund to be used as the funding source. Contributions for previous years were taken from Council Initiatives Funding.

SUMMARY

In February 2001, the FCM Big City Mayors Caucus, of which Surrey is a member, endorsed continuing support for the FCM National Housing Policy Option Team's work for the upcoming year in the form of a voluntary 1.5 cent per capita (\$5,100) contribution. Council has supported and followed the activities of the NHPOT over the past two years and Surrey's continued support will retain Surrey's position on the NHPOT steering committee and position Surrey for favourable consideration for future affordable housing programs or projects. It is therefore recommended that Council approve the requested contribution of \$5,100 and that the funds be allocated from the Affordable Housing Special Reserve Fund. An Expenditure By-law will need to be adopted in this regard.

Murray D. Dinwoodie
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Planning & Development Department

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Attachment

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