**Social Infrastructure Campaign Plan**

October 22, 2019

**Introduction**

In the fall of 2019, various non-profit social services in Ottawa will lead a campaign to encourage the City of Ottawa to prioritize social infrastructure services. The campaign will take place throughout the fall of 2019, to align with the 2020 budget process.

In support of the non-profit, social infrastructure sector in Ottawa, the campaign will engage the public to sign a petition asking Ottawa City Council for an increase in focus, and in funding for social infrastructure services.

**Social infrastructure definition**

Social infrastructure services are activities that help residents and communities to meet their basic needs, to maximise their potential, and to enhance community resilience and wellbeing.

While we value and seek to promote all social infrastructure services in Ottawa, for the purposes of this campaign, our focus is on getting additional focus and support for social services that are delivered by the non-profit sector in Ottawa. This includes both services that are currently funded by the City, and those that are not.

**Key Issues**

* The progress of the non-profit, social services sector is in danger from being stretched too thin. The sector is in critical need of adequate sustained funding.
* Non-profit social services in Ottawa are facing an increase of:
  + 87% in demand for services;
  + 77% in the number of people served;
  + 67% in the number of clients with complex needs; (Social Planning Council, 2018)
* This has lead to deep impacts on residents who turn to social services for help. The Community Wellbeing Report found that Ottawa residents are faced with services that are struggling with:
  + longer waiting lists (65%)
  + less access to long term support (54%)
  + less access to individualized services (46%)
  + reduced services (44%)
  + inconsistency or reduced quality of services (21%)
  + The non-profit, social services sector needs an increase in sustained funding to address these issues and to fulfill their central role as the foundation for wellbeing for individuals and communities in Ottawa.

**Campaign asks**

The asks for this campaign are for Ottawa City Council to:

* Create a 2019-2022 Term of Council Priority that includes expansion of non-profit social services, with clear targets for strengthening these services.
* Invest at least $5 million, over and above existing funding, for non-profit social services in Ottawa during the 2019-2022 Term of Council

The $5M would make up for the City of Ottawa’s elimination of a non-renewal project grant program (cancelled in the 2011 budget), and for the removal of a sustainability fund that allowed agencies to be funded on an ongoing basis (cancelled in 2012).

**Funding pressures**

* Within the City of Ottawa, the Community and Social Services department receives a third of the City budget, but non-profit social services only receive 3% of those funds, approximately $24M, divided by 96 agencies.
* Non-profit social services are grateful for these funds, and for the fact that the City has increased funding over the years in line with the cost of living (between 1.5% and 2% per year). In addition the City added $500K in 2017 as a one- time grant, $325K in 2018, and another $225K to support with things such as increased minimum wage.
* These investments have been welcome, and while they highlight the City’s history of recognizing the need to provide additional support for non-profit social services, adhoc funding supports are not sufficient to address the funding gaps.
* Funding from other sources for this sector is less available overall leading to fewer options.
* The non-profit social service sector is working with the City to promote efficiency and improve effectiveness of our sector. This sector is committed to finding ways to be more effective and to enhancing collaborations, but more funds are needed to keep up with the increasing demand for services and increasing complexity of needs.

**Allocation of funds**

While it is the City of Ottawa’s role to establish how to allocate funds, a collaborative process is needed where non-profit, social services collaborate with the City to make evidence-informed decisions about how to allocate funds to non-profit social services in Ottawa.

An initial analysis of funding gaps drawn from the Ottawa Community Wellbeing Report highlighted a need to build on existing services, to address critical pressures, and to address changes in population (Social Planning Council, 2018).

Additional funding would allow the non-profit social service sector to:

* **Hire service providers to reduce wait lists and increase access to essential services;**
* **Supply food banks with sufficient healthy food and the infrastructure needed to distribute food and provide basic support to the nearly** [**40,000 people per month**](https://www.ottawafoodbank.ca/) **who access these services;**
* **Invest in programming to prevent children in Ottawa from falling behind.**

**Campaign activities**

* This campaign will include several communications/advocacy tools geared to members of the public, and to city councillors. These include:
  + social media outreach
  + presentations in local wards
  + meetings with City Councillors
  + paper and online petition
  + Media event at City Hall

**Critical Path**

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| **Task** | **Timeline** |
| Meetings with City Councillors | September - November |
| Attend City Council, community and protective services committee, to learn more and talk about our priorities | September - November |
| Meetings with key influencers and community groups | September - November |
| Online campaign to raise awareness about our key messages | September- November |
| Media event at City Hall to share our key messages | TBD |

**Contact information**

Andrea Poncia

Coordinator, Coalition of Community Health and Resource Centres

[aponcia@swchc.on.ca](mailto:aponcia@swchc.on.ca)

613.325.2619