

**Community Services Report to  
Priorities and Finance Committee  
2019 March 05**

**ISC: UNRESTRICTED  
PFC2019-0096**

**One Window Update**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Since 2016 November, The City has been working as a member of the Community Housing Affordability Collective (CHAC) to lead the One Window initiative towards a community-based, made-in-Calgary solution to improve the housing system. The goal for this initiative is to create a coordinated intake process across over 60 non-market housing providers in Calgary. The project team has worked collaboratively with a Steering Committee, a Client Panel and the One Window Indigenous Collaboration (OWIC), to design the recommended operating model.

The proposed model is to establish a new non-profit entity, independently staffed and governed, that will provide a coordinated citizen-centric service for application and intake into non-market housing. This new entity will absorb responsibilities of various government-related housing organizations and will be solely focused on helping Calgarians search for safe and affordable housing through multiple channels, both online and in person.

One Window is ready for implementation contingent on securing funding from the Government of Alberta. The proposed implementation plan would require The City to continue leading the project transition until the new entity is operational.

**ADMINISTRATION RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Priorities and Finance Committee recommend that Council:

1. Advocate to the Government of Alberta, Ministry of Seniors and Housing by writing a letter requesting funding for implementation and ongoing operational funding for the One Window initiative; and,
2. Pending program funding and approval by The Government of Alberta, direct Administration to continue leading the implementation and transition of the One Window initiative with the non-profit housing community until the new entity is operational.

**RECOMMENDATION OF THE PRIORITIES AND FINANCE COMMITTEE, DATED 2019 MARCH 05:**

That the Administration Recommendations contained in Report PFC2019-0096 be adopted.

**PREVIOUS COUNCIL DIRECTION / POLICY**

On 2018 October 30, Council deferred Administration's One Window Update report to no later than Q2 2019 to allow additional time to gather stakeholder endorsement (PFC2018-1181).

On 2017 June 26, Council directed Administration to proceed with the next design phase of work for One Window and report back to Council through the Priorities and Finance Committee (PFC) by Q4 2018. Council also authorized an extension of remaining funds from the previously approved commitment to support the next design phase of work (PFC2017-0221).

On 2016 February 22, Council approved a one-time increase to Calgary Housing's operating budget from the Community Economic Resiliency Fund and directed Administration to report back to Council through PFC by Q3 2017. Of this budget increase, \$500,000 was committed for scoping and planning of the One Window initiative (PFC2016-0081).

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### BACKGROUND

From late 2016 to mid-2017, The City conducted scoping and planning of the One Window initiative. As part of this first phase, Administration completed an in-depth current state analysis, analyzed options for a future coordinated process, and recommended a long-term vision that would centralize all aspects of the housing application.

In 2017 June, Administration proceeded with the design phase of the One Window initiative, jointly funded by The City and the Government of Alberta. An integrated project team was formed to include City staff from Calgary Housing and Information Technology (IT), as well as an external consultant. The project team worked collaboratively with a Steering Committee (Attachment 1), a Client Panel, and the One Window Indigenous Collaboration to design the future state system. A comprehensive business process review, defining the end-to-end future processes, was completed to inform requirements for an IT system. Best practices within British Columbia and Ontario were also investigated. All results of the design phase of work are presented in the One Window Recommendation Report, available online at [www.calgary.ca/onewindow](http://www.calgary.ca/onewindow).

Concurrently, two “quick wins” were also implemented to make information more transparent and available to clients about their housing options and improve application processes in the short term. These included creating and distributing an Affordable Housing Guide that listed Calgary’s non-market housing options, and co-locating intake staff from different housing providers at the Safe Communities Opportunity and Resource Centre (SORCe).

### INVESTIGATION: ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

The Steering Committee considered various operating models for One Window based on detailed research, focus groups and workshops conducted with stakeholders. An analysis of the models considered is summarized in Attachment 2. The model that was unanimously recommended and supported in principle by the Steering Committee, who collectively represent over 80% of Calgary’s non-market housing stock, was for One Window to be incorporated as an independent non-profit entity. Under this model, a separate physical application centre, supported by an IT system, would be created to manage the client intake processes across participating housing providers. This model has been successfully implemented in Ottawa, where the Social Housing Registry has operated as an independent organization for over 20 years.

Should adequate, multi-year provincial funding be secured by April 2019, the One Window initiative is ready for implementation with an estimated launch date in 2021. Based on a Class Three cost estimate, \$7.5M over three years (2019-2021) is required to establish the new organization and implement a technology system, and \$3.0M of annual funding (beginning in 2022) is needed to support ongoing operations. The proposed implementation plan would require The City to provide project management, change management, organizational development, information technology and legal resources until the new entity is operational. Housing providers participating in One Window will also provide in-kind resources to support implementation.

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### **Stakeholder Engagement, Research and Communication**

The One Window initiative is a key outcome of the Community Housing and Affordability Collective (CHAC)'s Action Plan. A letter from CHAC is provided in Attachment 3. Letters from five community-based organizations and individuals are provided in Attachment 4.

Administration collaborated closely with the Steering Committee, housing providers, tenants and applicants of affordable housing, the One Window Indigenous Collaboration (a sub-committee of the Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness), social service agencies that assist Calgarians in finding affordable housing, and consultants with industry expertise to co-design the recommended model. Research was conducted to understand best practices from other Canadian jurisdictions. Focus groups and business process review workshops helped gather technical, business and functional requirements to inform model design. Administration also engaged with Government of Alberta representatives to understand how a One Window system could align with and advance provincial affordable housing objectives.

The project team hosted three open houses in 2019 February and leveraged communications through CHAC to share the recommendation report with stakeholders.

### **Strategic Alignment**

The One Window initiative is aligned with The City's Corporate Affordable Housing Strategy through Strategic Objective 6: "Improve the Housing System." It is also identified under the Implementation Plan as Strategic Objective 6, Initiative B, Action 1: "Investigate feasibility of a coordinated intake process to be implemented across all non-market housing providers."

The One Window initiative is also identified as a recommendation in many external strategies and plans, including:

- The Government of Alberta's Provincial Affordable Housing Strategy (2017)
- The Community Housing Affordability Collective's (CHAC) Prioritized Action Plan (2016)
- The Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative (CPR): Enough for All Poverty Reduction Strategy (2013)

The Calgary Homeless Foundation's Updated Plan to End Homelessness (2015)

### **Social, Environmental, Economic (External)**

Implementation of a One Window coordinated intake process will:

1. Provide better customer service outcomes by offering clients a single, accessible, dynamic application form for multiple housing providers, and increased transparency about options and eligibility through real-time analytics.
2. Better utilize existing non-market housing stock as clients are more efficiently matched to the most appropriate housing unit for their needs across all non-market housing supply in Calgary.
3. Provide new citywide data and analytics on non-market housing need and supply to support informed housing policy decisions and allocation of resources.

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4. Support sector collaboration through a formalized common intake process, providing opportunity for more efficient transfers within the housing system and coordination of housing options for existing tenants as needs change.
5. Create efficiencies for housing providers as staff currently focused on intake are freed to focus on other priorities, such as improving tenant support.
6. Replace outdated, paper-based and manual intake processes with modernized technology.
7. Support sector transformation by being flexible to accommodate new housing types and emerging markets as providers transition to new social and affordable housing models.

One Window will ultimately improve the housing system by transforming how Calgarians access non-market housing. However, it will not lessen the gap between non-market housing supply and demand in Calgary, nor change existing regulations governing prioritization of applications for social housing. This is one initiative of many needed to transform the entire housing system.

### Financial Capacity

#### ***Current and Future Operating Budget:***

One Window is proposed to proceed to implementation with no new requirements for City funding.

The City does not provide operational funding for non-profit housing entities. The Government of Alberta has been identified as the most appropriate funding source for this initiative, given its existing role in regulating and funding intake activities and monitoring compliance for provincially-owned and provincially subsidized housing programs. Should provincial funding be secured, it is recommended that The City offer an extension of Administrative resources to continue leading the transition to create the new One Window entity until it is established to ensure project continuity and momentum.

#### ***Current and Future Capital Budget:***

Current and future capital budgets are not impacted by the recommendation.

### Risk Assessment

Successful implementation of a coordinated One Window intake system depends on a number of factors outside the control of Council and Administration. Top risks are summarized below.

Risk	Likelihood / Impact	Description/ Mitigation
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<b>Lack of funding to create the new entity</b>	Medium/ High	Ultimately, the availability of Government of Alberta funding will determine if this project proceeds to implementation. It is recommended that multi-year funding be secured to leverage the existing Steering Committee and project team to carry forward sector momentum that has been built since project inception in 2016. Funding delays could result in a loss of community participation and disbandment of the project team. Additional time and resources would be required to bring One Window back to scale in the future. To mitigate funding risks, Administration has submitted three funding request letters and a business case to the Government of Alberta.
<b>Housing providers may not adopt One Window</b>	Medium/ High	Many organizations have indicated their strong support in principle for this recommendation and willingness to continue committing staff time toward this project. As autonomous organizations however, there is a risk that housing providers may revoke their future participation.  To mitigate this risk, the project team is recommending that engagement and change management activities be conducted on an ongoing basis throughout implementation. Updated project plans and timeliness should be prepared in advance to enable housing providers to best manage their resources and schedules.
<b>One Window does not improve the client experience</b>	Low/ High	To mitigate this risk, the One Window model has been developed with input from multiple stakeholders, including the client advisory panel. Concerns were addressed in the model development and clients will be involved in the implementation, design and testing phase. One Window will also develop an evaluation plan to monitor performance of the system and address issues.

**REASON(S) FOR RECOMMENDATION(S):**

One Window will ultimately improve the housing system by transforming how Calgarians access non-market housing. It will allow existing non-market housing stock to be used more efficiently, and provide new data and analytics to better inform policy and investment decisions. Furthermore, it will support sector collaboration and transformation.

Implementation of One Window and the creation of the new entity is contingent upon securing funding from the Government of Alberta. Advocacy from Council to the Government of Alberta will help reinforce the need for funding to ensure this project can move forward. Continuation of City resources to lead implementation until the new entity is established will ensure project continuity and sustained momentum.

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

1. Attachment 1 – One Window Steering Committee Members
2. Attachment 2 – One Window Operating Model Alternatives

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3. Attachment 3 – Letter from Community Housing Affordability Collective
4. Attachment 4 – Letters from Community Stakeholders