

Directed to: Mayor Joe Preston and Members of City Council

Meeting Date:
May 20, 2025

Department: St. Thomas Elgin Social Services

Authored By: Danielle Neilson, Housing Stability Services Manager

Attachment

Subject: Built for Zero Canada: Homelessness Reduction Innovation Fund Application

Recommendation:

THAT: Report SESS-12-25 relating to Built for Zero Canada: Homelessness Reduction Innovation Fund Application be received for information.

Background:

As part of the [Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness](#) (CAEH), Built for Zero Canada is an ambitious national change effort helping a core group of leading communities end chronic homelessness and veteran homelessness as a first step on the path to eliminating all homelessness in Canada.

In May of 2021, St. Thomas-Elgin Social Services (STESS) became a [Built for Zero Canada](#) (BFZ-C) community and has since emerged as a leading Canadian community in its local response to homelessness. This includes achieving significant milestones such as becoming Canada’s second community to achieve [Functional Zero on Veterans Homelessness](#), and [achieving and sustaining reductions in Chronic Homelessness](#) at a time when most Canadian communities are experiencing increases.



In February 2025, CAEH announced a new federal funding stream, the [Homelessness Reduction Innovation Fund](#) (HRIF), which forms part of [Reaching Home: Canada’s Homelessness Strategy](#). HRIF aims to support Canadian communities to measurably reduce homelessness through targeted, data informed projects that either prevent occurrences of homelessness or accelerate housing solutions.

In order to be eligible to apply for HRIF, organizations must be:

- A Reaching Home Community Entity; and/or,
- An Indigenous Homelessness Stream or Territorial Homelessness Stream; and/or,
- **The community lead organization participating in Built for Zero – Canada.**

As the community lead organization for St. Thomas-Elgin, STESS qualified to apply for HRIF and worked closely with BFZ-C to develop and submit a data driven HRIF application.

To date:

- An Expression of Interest was submitted on March 21st, 2025.
- An invitation to complete and submit a HRIF application was extended to STESS on March 28th, 2025; and,
- STESS completed and submitted its HRIF application on April 28th, 2025.

Using our local quality data, the HRIF application submitted by STESS aims to reduce the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness in St. Thomas-Elgin by increasing prevention efforts and housing stability supports. This project will support the communities goal of achieving [Functional Zero](#) (FZ) on all homelessness over the next three years, and begins paving a new way forward for our community where the focus is not only on achieving FZ, but also on building a robust and impactful system response that is designed to sustain it.

HRIF application decisions are expected early June. Subject to approval, the HRIF funding application submitted includes expanding the Housing Stability Services area through a request for:

- Two additional 12-month contracted Housing Program Coordinators; and,
- Additional funding to support housing stability outcomes such as move in costs and eviction prevention activities.

Strategic Priority:

Strategic Pillar: Excellence in All We Do - Priority #5: Housing for Everyone

Financial Impact:

Currently, there is no financial impact to the City of St. Thomas other than receiving the HRIF funding to support the proposed project.

Report Approval:

This report has been reviewed and approved by:

Heather Sheridan, Social Services Director

All reports are reviewed and approved by the City Manager.