

Staff Report 2022-0216

Meeting Date: May 17, 2022

Subject: Proposed Changes to the Low-Income Older Adults (65+) and Persons with Disabilities Property Tax Assistance Program

Submitted By: Hillary Bryers, Manager, Revenue / Deputy Treasurer, Finance

RECOMMENDATION

That a by-law be enacted to repeal and replace By-law 2015-019 being a by-law to reflect the proposed changes to the Low-Income Older Adults (65+) and Low-Income Persons with Disabilities Tax Assistance program, attached as Schedule A to Staff Report 2022-0216;

That Notice by way of the enactment of the new By-law be sent to the Region of Peel; and

That the Region of Peel be requested to support similar changes in the Region's program for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- The Town has a tax assistance program for low income seniors and low-income persons with disabilities where eligible owners can receive a \$525.00 grant each year towards their property taxes.
- This report recommends changing the name of the program from referring to Seniors to Older Adults to reflect current nomenclature.
- In addition, to support multi-generational housing of low income older adults (65+) and low income persons with disabilities as housing affordability becomes a growing challenge, it is being recommended to remove the requirement for eligibility for the program that the no other persons be on title to the property.
- This would expand eligibility for the program and support ageing-in-place within the Caledon community.

DISCUSSION

The Town offers a \$525.00 tax rebate on annual property taxes for low income older adults and low-income persons with disabilities who own and occupy their own home. The amount of the grant is increased each year as part of the annual budget process. The rebate is applied to the taxpayer's property tax account to offset their property taxes. It is a grant and does not require repayment. The Region and local School Boards share in the cost of the grant.

Program Name Update

This report is recommending that the program be changed from referring to those 65 years of age or more from "Seniors" or "Elderly" to "Older Adults". The age limit will still be a

minimum of 65 years or older for the Older Adults portion of the assistance program. Low-Income Persons with Disabilities of any age are eligible to apply. There is no change being recommended to the age requirements of the program other than the nomenclature of the program.

Ownership Requirement Change

Multigenerational housing continues to grow in our community. This allows young adults to stay close to their parents and older people can age-in-place and stay within their community. Multigenerational families include people with disabilities who can live together to offset the high costs of housing, childcare and/or long-term care. It supports housing affordability. Multigenerational housing can also support the cultural needs of racialized communities. Current housing plans by both the Federal government and the Province of Ontario support multigenerational housing.

Under the Town of Caledon's current property tax assistance program, multigenerational ownership of a home makes the otherwise qualified low-income older adult (65+) or low-income person with disabilities ineligible for the Town's program. Under the existing by-law, it is only permitted to have the eligible owner, or their spouse, be on title. If a third party or child is on title as well, they are deemed ineligible. The Region of Peel's property tax assistance by-law contains similar language.

In order to promote multigenerational housing, it is being recommended that the Town's by-law be updated to remove this ownership limitation. Now, at least one property owner or their spouse will have to be listed on title to the property. If another person or family member is listed on title, the low-income or person with disability will be eligible to receive the tax assistance grant. This will increase the number of people eligible for the program. This assistance will assist low income older adults and low-income persons with disabilities stay in the Caledon community. This change is also supported by the Age-Friendly Caledon Action Plan (2021-2031). The housing dimension of this plan strives to "advance policies and programs that expedite a full range of affordable housing options suitable to the needs of older adults across Caledon". Expanding the eligibility of the tax assistance program supports the goals of the Age-Friendly Caledon Action Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In the last three years, the Town has received approximately 10 applications from residents who wanted to apply for the grant but were ineligible for the existing program due to the ownership restrictions. Removing the ownership restrictions will increase the number of grants provided to low-income older adults and low-income persons with disabilities and will increase the cost of the program.

In addition, the Region of Peel still maintains this ownership restriction in their program by-law. As such, the Town will be responsible for covering the Regional portion of these grants until if and when the Region updates their by-law to support the Town's changes in their program. Currently, the Region covers approximately \$179 of the \$525 grant amount. The Town will be responsible for funding this portion of any grant provided that does not meet the Regional program's requirements. It is recommended that Council request support from the Region of Peel through an update in the Regional by-law to support multi-generational housing of families.

This program is funded through Corporate account 01-10-505-42250-365-62551 with a 2022 budget of \$54,355. This budget will be reviewed for 2023 in light of changes to the eligibility of the program.

The amount of the grant each year is presented as part of the annual budget process for consideration. In recent years, the amount of the grant has been increased to reflect inflationary pressures and property tax increases.

COUNCIL WORK PLAN

Subject matter is not relevant to the Council Workplan.

ATTACHMENTS

Schedule A: Proposed By-law