



**The Corporation of the
City of Sault Ste. Marie**

C O U N C I L R E P O R T

March 23, 2026

TO: Mayor Matthew Shoemaker and Members of City Council
AUTHOR: Tom Vair, CAO
DEPARTMENT: Chief Administrative Officer
RE: Emergency Treatment Fund Agreements

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide information on Federal funding from the Emergency Treatment Fund (ETF) and to seek Council approval of agreements with the project delivery partners, the Canadian Mental Health Association Algoma (CMHA) and District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board (Social Services).

Background

The City of Sault Ste. Marie and community partners, were successful in applying to the Emergency Treatment Fund delivered by Health Canada. This funding helps to address the mental health, addictions, and overdose crisis by creating a dedicated, 24/7 community outreach and wellness response team in Sault Ste. Marie.

The team will provide low-barrier access to medical, mental health, addiction, harm reduction, and housing support for vulnerable, high-needs populations both on the street, in supportive housing, and at key community locations.

The City was required to be the lead applicant on the project given the funding eligibility criteria. Staff worked closely with CMHA and Social Services to develop the application along with other community partners. The total funding is \$3,557,503 over the next two years.

The City was required to enter into an agreement with Health Canada to meet a funding deadline (Attachment A – Health Canada ETF Agreement). Staff subsequently worked with CMHA and Social Services, as the prime delivery partners for the funding, to finalize recipient agreements.

CMHA is responsible for most operational, administrative, and service-delivery components of the project. Social Services will assist with shared operational oversight and programming and oversee operational and administrative responsibilities relating to the fleet components of the project, including acquisition, maintenance, insurance, and the safe operation of the vehicles, as well as certain

staffing obligations, rents, and facility improvements, in compliance with the Contribution Agreement.

Analysis

The ETF funding provides a meaningful opportunity to improve community services with 24/7 capabilities and to help address one of the most pressing community issues.

Through strong collaboration with community partners, CMHA, and other addiction, mental health, and social service providers, have worked tirelessly over the past several years to launch and expand services for individuals facing complex challenges related to mental health and substance use disorders.

With rising levels of substance use, opioid toxicity, increasingly complex individual needs, and homelessness, the partners found it imperative to expand critical services via mobile outreach supported by extensive partnership agreements in order to ensure the community's most at-risk members receive the help they need.

In 2021, the Algoma Ontario Health Team and eight distinct community health organizations, with an executive committee led by CMHA Algoma and Sault Area Hospital, launched the Community Wellness Bus (Wellness Bus). Utilizing a repurposed ambulance, partner agencies provide access to 100% in-kind mobile services to improve health outcomes and reduce gaps in mental health and addiction care for at-risk community members. The ETF funding increases community capacity to continue this important work.

With dedicated ETF funding, CMHA, Social Services, and other community partners will support the entire community - those most marginalized, the professionals working within the system, and the broader community impacted by this crisis, including businesses and residents.

Using best practices, the project team will prioritize trust and relationship building with service users and community members while providing:

- On-demand community outreach in the Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario district;
- Culturally informed care;
- An accessible pathway to health and social services;
- Medical care, including:
 - First Aid, Health Education;
 - Traditional Indigenous Medicines; and
 - Follow up and connection to appropriate services ;
- Assessments and referrals to community-based programs;
- Community safety;
- Responses to wellness calls with appropriate interventions (rather than police or EMS);
- Harm reduction supplies (excluding needle exchange and safe use supplies);
- Necessities (refreshments and snacks, hygiene products)
- Naloxone, CPR, and First Aid; and

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- Transportation between care appointments and facilities (i.e., residential withdrawal management or land-based detox programs).

City staff are grateful for the funding and for the support from community partners in the application process and in the delivery of the ETF programs. Beyond CMHA and Social Services, project delivery partners include Sault Area Hospital, John Howard Society, and Algoma Public Health.

Financial Implications

The total funding for the ETF project is \$3,557,503, allocated to eligible expenditures. The contribution from Health Canada will be paid as follows:

- Up to \$1,658,044 in fiscal year 2025-2026
- Up to \$1,899,459 in fiscal year 2026-2027

The City is responsible for receiving and managing the funding provided under this agreement and for further distributing these funds to CMHA and Social Services for services and capital expenses that qualify for funding under the ETF. All project funds will be distributed to CMHA and Social Services to maximize the impact of the funding in the community.

Strategic Plan / Policy Impact / Climate Impact

The project aligns with the Corporate Strategic Plan 2024-2027 in Focus Area 1: Community Development – Well-being – Take a collaborative approach towards a healthy and safe community.

Recommendation

It is therefore recommended that Council take the following action:

The relevant By-laws 2026-21 and 2026-22 are listed under item 12 of the Agenda and will be read with all by-laws under that item.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Vair

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