



**The Corporation of the City of Stratford
Social Services Sub-committee
Open Session
AGENDA**

Date: Wednesday, February 13, 2019

Time: 4:30 P.M.

Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

Sub-committee Present: Councillor Henderson - Chair Presiding, Councillor Bunting - Vice Chair, Councillor Burbach, Councillor Ritsma, Councillor Vassilakos

Staff Present: Jacqueline Mockler - Acting Director of Social Services/Director of Human Resources, Barb Hobson - Manager of Early Years and Child Care, Kim McElroy - Manager of Ontario Works, Eden Grodzinski - Manager of Housing, Alex Burgess - Supervisor of Social Services, Victoria Trotter - Recording Secretary, Mike Beitz - Corporate Communications Lead

Pages

1. Call to Order

The Chair to call the Meeting to Order.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

The *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* requires any member of Council declaring a pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof, where the interest of a member of Council has not been disclosed by reason of the member's absence from the meeting, to disclose the interest at the first open meeting attended by the member of Council and otherwise comply with the *Act*.

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

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3. Delegations

None scheduled.

4. Report of the Manager of Housing

- 4.1 New Digital Community Engagement Platform – letstalksocialservices.ca – provided by the software company, Bang the Table (SOC19-003) 4 - 8

Motion by _____

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report of the Social Services Department's launch of letstalksocialservices.ca be received for information.

- 4.2 City of Stratford Social Services Department's Participation in the National 20,000 Homes Campaign Collaborative (SOC19-001) 9 - 13

Motion by _____

Staff Recommendation: THAT Council support the Social Services Department's involvement in the 20,000 Homes Campaign Collaborative in order to move the community's goal of ending chronic homelessness forward.

5. Report of the Manager of Early Years and Child Care

- 5.1 Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, Bill 66 proposed changes to the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (SOC19-004) 14 - 18

Motion by _____

Staff Recommendation: THAT the letter "Re: Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, 2018 submitted by OMSSA, January 17, 2019" be received for information.

6. Report of the Manager of Ontario Works

- 6.1 2018 Auditor General Report; Ontario Works Value-for-Money Audit Report (SOC19-002) 19 - 23

Motion by _____

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report "Office of the Auditor General (OAGO) Ontario Works Value-for Money (VFM) Audit" be received for information.

6.2 Province announces plan for Social Assistance Reform (SOC19-005)

24 - 26

Motion by _____

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report "Province announces plan for Social Assistance Reform" be received for information.

7. Advisory Committee/Outside Board Minutes

There are no Advisory Committee/Outside Board minutes to be provided to Sub-committee at this time.

8. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Social Services Sub-committee meeting is March 6, 2019 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

9. Adjournment

Meeting Start Time:

Meeting End Time:

Motion by _____

Sub-committee Decision: THAT the Social Services Sub-committee meeting adjourn.



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: February 13, 2019
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing
 Mike Beitz, Corporate Communications Lead
Report#: SOC19-003
Attachments: None

Title: New Digital Community Engagement Platform – letstalksocialservices.ca – provided by the software company, Bang the Table

Objectives:

- To inform the Social Services Sub-Committee about the launch of the City of Stratford Social Services Department's new Digital Community Engagement Platform - letstalksocialservices.ca
- To highlight the community consultations that will be taking place on the digital engagement platform as part of the 10-Year Housing & Homelessness Plan Update
- To provide the Social Services Sub-Committee with a demonstration of the software and its utilization

Background:

The City of Stratford's Social Services Department understands the importance of reaching, informing, and involving residents in strategy development and the implementation of programs and services that affect their lives. In 2018, the Social Services Department contracted "Bang the Table" (a company that specializes in digital engagement services for municipalities) to help design, implement and moderate a new on-line engagement system that will improve our ability to consult with clients, tenants, service providers, and other interested community members.

A new website – **letstalksocialservices.ca** – will be launching this February 2019, with an initial focus on engaging community members in the five year review and refresh of the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County.

Analysis: What is Bang the Table?

Bang the Table is a software company that specializes in on-line stakeholder engagement services. Their mission is to improve the quality of public debate and level of community

involvement in public life, and to ensure that people have accessible opportunities to learn about and contribute to the decisions that affect their daily lives. Bang the Table brings together the latest web technologies and best practice stakeholder engagement to deliver interactive communications solutions.

The company has successfully worked with numerous municipalities in Ontario, for example, The Corporation of the County of Perth, Township of Perth East, Municipality of West Perth, Municipality of North Perth, City of Burlington and City of Guelph.

Bang the Table offers eight different on-line engagement tools:

- **Forums** - Forums, or discussion boards, are nearly as old as the internet but they remain to this day, the simplest, most transparent and most democratic tool for engaging communities online. The difference between Bang the Table's forums and other social media sites is that the company acts as a moderator, to ensure that discussions are courteous and productive.
- **Guest Book** – The guest book is a moderated way to gather community feedback and ideas transparently. It is perfect for situations that do not require or would not benefit from public debate. Community members are welcome to post thoughts, feelings, advice, congratulations, suggestions, tips and tricks.
- **Ideas** - Ideas is a tool for the early, or divergent, stages of a community engagement program. It is used to gather lots and lots of ideas quickly from as many people as possible, and then to carry out a preliminary prioritization (or sifting) of those ideas.
- **Places** – Places are spatial surveys, and can be used to capture community input about places and spaces, however large or small (e.g., places you take visitors to town, places you like to read and drink coffee, places you go to watch birds in the snow, etc.)
- **Polls** – Quick polls are mini surveys, such as votes. They are a simple and fast way to capture a community's mood and sentiment towards a range of issues. They can be used to show the community instant results.
- **Questions & Answers (Q&A)** - Q&A is an issues management and communication risk mitigation tool. It is a managed space for communities to ask questions and for organizations to respond either publicly (to create a Q&A library) or privately.
- **Stories** - Stories is a safe way to gather personal narratives. The idea being that, particularly in more emotional and potentially psychologically fraught contexts, you do not want to encourage disparagement or destructive debate of one person's perspective. You simply want to honour the individual's experience. The stories we

tell ourselves and the stories we share determine who we are and contextualize how we respond to the world around us. Sharing stories affects both the story teller and the listener (or reader) profoundly at both an emotional and cognitive level. Emotional resonance that creates some form of empathy or understanding is a critical element in creating an "engaged" community, rather than simply a "consulted" community.

- **Surveys** - Surveys are really consultation tools, rather than engagement tools, but they have two benefits. First, people are generally used to filling them in, so they generate high response rates. And secondly, they can provide users with quantifiable data for analysis.

How Bang the Table differs from social media?

Bang the Table strives to ensure that on-line posts and discussions are respectful and civil. The company provides a 24/7 moderation service, whereby the company's staff review all publicly accessible community contributions to on-line forums and guest books according to the company's site moderation rules. Public comments are either allowed or removed, but are never edited by Bang the Table staff.

Benefits of Community Engagement

Collaborating with the Bang the Table provides significant benefits to the work that the Social Services Department is doing to engage community members locally, such as:

- Increasing the likelihood that community plans will be widely accepted - Citizens who participate in these processes show significant commitment to help make the projects happen.
- Creating more effective solutions - Drawing on local knowledge from a diverse group creates solutions that are practical, achievable and effective.
- Improving citizens' knowledge - Participants are able to learn about the issues in-depth. Greater knowledge allows them to see multiple sides of the problem.
- Empowering and integrating people from diverse backgrounds - Groups that feel ignored can gain greater control over their lives and their community. When people from different areas of the community work together, they often find that they have much in common.
- Creating local networks of community members - The more people understand what is going on, the more likely they are to help contribute to activities to assist the City in reaching its goals.
- Creating several opportunities for discussing concerns - Regular, on-going discussions allow people to express concerns before problems become too big or out of control.
- Increasing trust in the City of Stratford - Working together improves communication and understanding. Knowing what government, community citizens and leaders, and organizations can and cannot do may reduce future conflict.

Initial Community Engagement Project

As per Management Report #SOC18-007 (May 16, 2018), the Social Services Department has embarked on a **five-year review of the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County**, to be submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing by June 30, 2019. This plan will provide us with an up-to-date picture of affordable housing and homelessness locally, will identify current and emerging issues and needs, and will determine the Department's priorities and objectives over the next five years. Community consultations are a critical component of the development of this plan.

We are currently at the "community listening" phase of the project. As such, we have been gathering data, information, and ideas to inform the 10-year plan update. A series of in-person discussions have been taking place between November 2018 and February 2019, with key stakeholder groups identified in the provincial policy guidelines, including:

- Housing providers – private sector landlords, non-profit housing providers, and housing co-operatives
- Municipal partners - planners and economic development representatives of all municipalities in the service area of Stratford, St. Marys and Perth County
- Health and social service providers (e.g., members of The Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys Alliance to Prevent Homelessness and Enhance Housing Solutions)
- Individuals with lived experience of social housing and homelessness (e.g., tenants of the Perth & Stratford Housing Corporation)
- Other interested community members (e.g., faith community)

With the support of Bang the Table, we will be taking the public engagement process on-line for the "validation" phase of the project. This will include publishing Q&A information on the new provincial policy requirements, informing citizens of the project timeline and ways to get involved (in person and on-line), and offering opportunities to provide input through stories, polls, surveys, and forums.

For more information, visit letstalksocialservices.ca.

Financial Impact: The annual fee of \$17,500 plus HST for Bang the Table was covered in the 2018 operating budget. It was cost shared between Ontario Works and Child Care Divisions of the Social Services Department, through 100% provincially funded programs.

Staff Recommendation: **THAT the report of the Social Services Department's launch of letstalksocialservices.ca be received for information.**



Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing



Mike Beitz, Corporate Communications Lead



Jacqueline Mockler, Acting Director of Social Services



Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: February 13, 2019
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing
 Jeneane Fast, Housing Stability Policy & Program Coordinator
Report#: SOC19-001
Attachments: None

Title: City of Stratford Social Services Department's Participation in the National 20,000 Homes Campaign Collaborative

Objectives:

- To inform the Social Services Sub-committee of the benefits of the City of Stratford Social Services Department's participation in the 20,000 Homes Campaign Collaborative
- To highlight the City's responsibilities and requirements as a participating community in the 20,000 Homes Campaign Collaborative

Background: The 20,000 Homes Campaign is a national change movement focused on ending chronic homelessness¹ in 20 communities and housing 20,000 of Canada's most vulnerable homeless people by July 1, 2020. The City of Stratford Social Services Department joined the campaign in 2017, making a commitment to end chronic homelessness locally. In November 2018, the Social Services Department renewed its pledge to the campaign and, along with 25 other communities across Canada, signed on to be a part of the 20,000 Homes Campaign Collaborative. This collaborative model combines and adapts elements of collective impact² and quality improvement science³ to provide a structured learning/action framework. This framework includes in-person and virtual coaching that walks communities through a structured process to achieving

¹ Chronic homelessness refers to individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness and have been homeless for six months or more in the past year. Government of Canada (2014). *Homelessness Partnering Strategy Directives 2014-2019*.

² Collective impact is a structured form of collaboration that brings together different sectors and establishes a common agenda to solve a specific social problem such as homelessness.

³ Quality improvement science is a concept which explores how to undertake quality improvement well. It includes elements of both research and quality improvement by using research methods to help understand what impacts quality improvement.

and sustaining Function Zero⁴ chronic homelessness. This process includes adopting proven best-practices, using real-time data, and learning how to distribute resources more efficiently to increase local capacity.

Analysis: Expectations of a Participating Community

1. Establish a Local Team:

The Local Team determines and prioritizes projects and activities that enable the community to reach the goal of ending chronic homelessness and guides the work necessary for successfully implementing them. The team must consist of a Campaign Lead, a Data Lead, and other members who provide expertise and knowledge in the area of homelessness response. Locally, this includes:

- Jeneane Fast, Housing Stability Policy & Program Coordinator (Campaign Lead)
- Calvin Mackenzie, Research & Data Analyst (Data Lead)
- Grant Martin, Housing Stability Policy & Program Coordinator/SHOPP Team Lead
- Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing

2. Attend In-Person Learning Sessions:

Between November 1, 2018 and June 30, 2020, five in-person learning sessions have been organized by the 20,000 Homes Campaign. These sessions are an opportunity for participating communities to share ideas, projects, tools, and lessons learned with each other and with subject matter experts from across Canada and the USA. During this time, communities will also be identifying goals and developing tangible work plans for improvement projects to be implemented during the subsequent action cycles. Communities will receive support to do this in the form of coaching and mentoring from expert 20,000 Homes Campaign staff and partner organizations.

In 2019, the learning sessions will all occur in Toronto:

- March 6 & 7
- June (dates TBD)
- October 2 & 3

3. Implement Improvement Projects during Action Cycles:

Action cycles occur in between the learning sessions. The local team will return to the community to share their learning and implement their work plans for the improvement projects. Follow-up coaching as well as robust data and performance management support will continue during this time.

4. Report Monthly:

⁴ "A Functional Zero end to homelessness means that communities have a systematic response in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible or is otherwise a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience." 20,000 Homes Campaign (2018). *Functional Zero Chronic Homelessness: Question and Answer Document*.

Throughout the process, communities are required to submit monthly reporting on housing-move-ins, actively homeless numbers and other measures which enable us to better understand homelessness in our community and to track our progress towards ending it.

Benefits of Participation

Being a member of the 20,000 Homes Campaign Collaborative provides significant benefits to the work we are doing to address homelessness locally including:

1. Access to resources

Being a member of the 20,000 Homes Campaign Collaborative allows us access to coaching and mentoring from experts in the field as well as networking opportunities with key government officials and funding partners. We also receive the benefit of using exclusive tools and training materials. As a smaller community, these are resources we would not otherwise have the opportunity to tap into.

2. Support with achieving the provincially mandated goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2025

Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Update (2016) clearly outlines the province's expectation that Service Managers work towards ending chronic homelessness in their communities by the end of 2025.⁵ As a 20,000 Homes Campaign Collaborative community, and the resources and supports that come with that participation, we are well positioned to achieve this provincial goal.

3. Access to funding opportunities

On April 1, 2019, the Federal Government will officially launch **Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy** which replaces the existing Homelessness Partnering Strategy. This funding program is a partner with the 20,000 Homes Campaign meaning that opportunities for further funding related to ending homelessness locally may be available, in addition to the funding we currently receive from the province.

Current Implementation Projects

The idea of ending homelessness is a substantial task that can seem overwhelming. The 20,000 Homes Campaign Collaborative's approach breaks down the issue into a series of smaller tasks. As a participating community, the Social Services Department has already undertaken the following initiatives to support our goal of ending chronic homelessness locally:

- **Establishing a Quality By-Name-List**

A By-Name-List is a real-time, dynamic list of all individuals experiencing homelessness in a community. Having this tool enables us to understand homelessness on a systems and community level so that decisions about allocating funding and resources, as well as developing or enhancing programming, is based on reliable data. This tool also allows us to know all individuals experiencing homelessness 'by-name'. A Quality By-Name-List is fundamental in developing a Coordinated Entry System for responding to homelessness in a community.

⁵ Ontario Ministry of Housing (2016). *Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Update*, pp. 31-38.

- **Tracking and connecting with unsheltered individuals**

With support from the Collaborative, the Social Services Department is testing a way to identify and track individuals experiencing homelessness who are unsheltered (i.e. sleeping outdoors, public spaces, makeshift shelters, vehicles, etc.). This provides us with a more fulsome picture of homelessness locally and also improves our ability to connect individuals with appropriate services and supports.

- **Working towards a Coordinated Entry System**

Developing a Coordinated Entry System enables communities to bring consistency and efficiency to the process by which individuals experiencing homelessness access housing and services. It is a system which ensures that individuals are connected to the appropriate supports and services based on their acuity. Similar to triaging in a hospital, it also ensures that the individuals with the greatest needs are prioritized for services first. A Coordinated Entry System relies on coordination and collaboration with community stakeholders from a variety of sectors.

Financial Impact: Due to the smaller size of our service area there is no membership fee for the City of Stratford to participate in the Collaborative, (although there is for larger centres such as Hamilton, Peel Region, and Edmonton). The costs to the Social Services Department only include travel related expenses for the learning sessions, and would be covered through the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Initiative and Home for Good; under the 100% provincially funded programs.

Staff Recommendation: THAT Council support the Social Services Department's involvement in the 20,000 Homes Campaign Collaborative in order to move the community's goal of ending chronic homelessness forward.



Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing



Jeneane Fast, Housing Stability Policy & Program Coordinator



Jacqueline Mockler, Acting Director of Social Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rob Horne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: February 13, 2019
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Barb Hobson, Manager of Early Years and Child Care
Report#: SOC19-004
Attachments: Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA)
 Letter to Hon. Todd Smith, Minister of Economic Development,
 Job Creation and Trade re Bill 66 – dated January 17, 2019

Title: Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, Bill 66 proposed changes to the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.

Objective: To provide Social Services Sub-Committee and Council with a copy of the submission from OMSSA dated January 17, 2019 in response to the proposed changes in Bill 66.

Background: The Provincial government proposed and completed the First reading on Dec 6, 2018 of Bill 66, titled, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act. The goal of the proposed Act is to restore Ontario's competitiveness by amending or repealing specific Acts.

Analysis: Bill 66 has twelve (12) Schedules with each Schedule related to a specific Ministry and Legislation. The full proposed Bill is available on line
<https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-42/session-1/bill-66>.

Schedule 3 contains the proposed amendments to the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014. This Act governs Child Care centre based and home based programs and services. The proposed changes were reviewed by the Children's Services Network and comments submitted to OMSSA to consider as the Association prepared a submission to the Minister, Todd Smith. Attached is the submission by OMSSA.

The common ground from all discussions is that families need access to spaces and affordable child care. The submission from OMSSA details the concerns for safety of children and a willingness to continue following the identified four provincial priorities that early learning and child care be responsive, affordable, high quality and accessible.

The release of the Provincial Child Care plan with the 2019 Budget will give direction for early learning and child care in Ontario.

Financial Impact: There is no financial impact.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the letter "Re: Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competiveness Act, 2018 submitted by OMSSA, January 17, 2019" be received for information.



Barb Hobson, Manager of Early Years and Child Care



Jacqueline Mockler, Acting Director of Social Services



Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer



January 17, 2019

Hon. Todd Smith
Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
777 Bay St., 18th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1S5

CC: Hon. Lisa Thompson, Shannon Fuller

Re: Bill 66, Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, 2018

Dear Minister Smith,

Established in 1950, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) is a non-profit association whose members are the Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) across Ontario. Our members' interests are represented to OMSSA by the senior human services staff of the CMSMs and DSSABs. Service System Managers play a central role in the planning, funding, administration and operation of early years and licensed child care services in Ontario.

Bill 66, *Restoring Ontario's Competitiveness Act, 2018* proposes significant changes to the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*. OMSSA recognizes and appreciates the Province's intention to increase access to child care and supports many of the recommended changes.

The change to allow authorized recreation providers to serve four and five-year-olds helps to align the age requirements for all program types providing before and/or after school programs. In many cases, authorized recreation providers rely on external funding sources to provide affordable fees in many cases. A key source of this funding is the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Sport through the Ontario After School Program. Our hope is that this Ministry will support these programs in expanding to serve four and five-years-olds, in part through the maintenance and expansion of this program. Without additional resources, the ability of these organizations to open up space for four and five-year-olds is expected to be limited and the access that we are all hoping for will not be realized.

While Bill 66 contains some positive changes in early years and child care, there are very serious concerns around children's safety and quality of child care. This is especially true with respect to unlicensed and informal child care, where oversight and standards do not exist.



Service system managers have a duty and responsibility to express concerns when there is a potential for children to be at risk. Specific changes OMSSA is concerned with in Bill 66 include:

“Currently sub-subparagraph 1 iv A of subsection 6 (3) of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 provides that the group of children in the care of one home child care provider may not include more than two children who are younger than two years old. This sub-subparagraph is amended to increase the number to three children who are younger than two years old.

Currently, sub-subparagraph 1 iv B of subsection 6 (3) of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 provides that the group of children in the care of two home child care providers may not include more than four children who are younger than two years old. This sub-subparagraph is amended to increase the number to six children who are younger than two years old.

Currently, subparagraph 2 iii of subsection 6 (3) of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 provides that the group of children in the care of an unlicensed child care provider may not include more than two children who are younger than two years old. This subparagraph is amended to increase the number to three children who are younger than two years old.”

Increasing the limit on the number of children under two years of age makes supervision more difficult, particularly in emergency situations, raising serious concerns among our membership. OMSSA strongly supports licensed child care and the oversight and accountability it provides to protect children’s safety. OMSSA does not support the proposed reform for unlicensed child care providers, as they are not subject to the same oversight and accountability. As a result, this change has the potential to put many children in unlicensed child care at risk.

OMSSA believes efforts should be made to encourage unlicensed child care providers to become part of the licensed system. The implementation of a new child care tax credit, as proposed prior to the election and during the provincial election campaign, is likely to have the opposite effect of the current subsidy-based system, and therefore lead to the expansion of unlicensed child care. OMSSA and its members are concerned that this will lead to more serious and even fatal incidents, with an extremely limited ability to track, monitor or assess these new risks, due to a lack of oversight on the unlicensed child care sector.

Taken together, these two changes (incentivizing the expansion of unlicensed child care, and increasing the number of very young children allowed under each provider’s care) will create a system that many families will be hesitant to trust or to use. OMSSA would be pleased to



work with the Province on ways to encourage unlicensed providers to become part of the licensed system. This could be accomplished by maintaining existing ratios for unlicensed child care providers and removing unnecessary barriers to becoming licensed or maintaining a license, encouraging more providers to participate in the licensed system.

In summary, OMSSA agrees on the need to increase access by creating new cost-effective licensed child care spaces, but feels strongly that increased access cannot be achieved at the expense of children's safety and quality of care. The health and safety of our youngest most vulnerable children must be the top concern in any decision related to early years and child care.

OMSSA expects that the Province will release its new child care plan following the release of its 2019 Budget. OMSSA and its members stand ready to work with the Province and to continue to play an important role within Ontario's early years and child care system. We will be submitting recommendations related to Ontario's child care and early years system following our Children's Services Summit on January 23-24.

OMSSA encourages the Province to reconsider the proposed changes specific to early years and child care within Bill 66, and consider these instead within the development of its new child care plan. This will provide an important opportunity to consider these changes as part of a wider review of the early years and child care system. Local flexibility is also important to address the unique circumstances in rural, urban, suburban and Northern communities.

OMSSA has enjoyed a strong relationship with the Ministry of Education on early years and child care and looks forward to building on that relationship in the future. Our members look forward to consulting on the new child care plan and working together on shared priorities of quality, access, choice, safety and reducing administrative burdens within the early years and child care sector.

Sincerely,

Doug Ball

Executive Director

Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA)



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: February 13, 2019
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Kim McElroy, Manager of Ontario Works
Report#: SOC19-002
Attachments: None

Title: 2018 Auditor General Report; Ontario Works Value-for-Money Audit Report

Objective: To provide the Social Services Sub-committee members with an overview of the Office of the Auditor General (OAGO) Ontario Works Value-for Money (VFM) Audit.

Background: The OAGO completed a Value-for Money audit of the Ontario Works program from January to November 2018. On December 5th, 2018 the OAGO Annual Report was released, their last audit was conducted in 2009. The report contains 19 recommendations, 13 are directed to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, and 6 recommendations are at the Ontario Works service delivery agents.

Analysis: The key themes of the audit included:

- Oversight
- Program Effectiveness
- Program Administration
- Over Payments
- Special Diet Allowance
- And Service Manager Discretion

The offices that were chosen for the Audit were Toronto Employment and Social Services, Peel, City of Windsor, and the District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board.

The recommendations from the audit align with the announcement made on November 22, 2018, by Ontario's Minister of Children, Community and Social Services Lisa MacLeod, in which she outlined the Province's plan for social assistance reform.

The 19 recommendations are as follows:

1. Implement a suitable process, to reinforce to service managers the need to comply with requirements of the Ontario Works Program.
2. Hold service managers accountable to ministry requirements.
3. Improve the effectiveness of the Ontario Works program in helping people to obtain employment and become self-sufficient, and to assess the effectiveness of the service managers it funds.
4. Assess the suitability of the program as it is currently designed, and take steps to improve its effectiveness in meeting the needs of recipients who have significant employment barriers and require extensive assistance to become employed.
5. Collect, analyze and compare service manager staffing and recipient caseloads, between service managers, and to Ministry guidelines, to follow-up on significant differences in order to identify promising practices and instances that require corrective action to improve outcomes.
6. Reduce the number and size of overpayments to recipients.
7. Increase the rate at which service managers recover overpayments, and have the necessary information to assess service manager efforts to recover overpayments.
8. All Ontario Works recipients are treated fairly and only receive allowances for a special diet if they have a medical condition and require it to identify, investigate, and address improbably high trends to reinforce with service managers the need to be diligent in providing the Special Diet Allowance.
9. Work with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario in approving questionable applications for a Special Diet Allowance; to share information with the Ministry that they currently investigating and distribute to all service managers a list of doctors the Ministry suspects of approving questionable Special Diet Allowance applications.
10. Review and analyze the differences in discretionary benefits provided by service managers, and their impact on recipient outcomes; and establish guidelines for issuing these benefits to support local decision-making.

11. Implement a suitable process, to reinforce to service managers the need to comply with requirement of the Ontario Works program.
12. Confirm only those eligible receive benefits by exploring risk factors related to eligibility, improving information sharing with federal government.
13. Service Managers work with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to confirm and formalize the requirements to use the third-party verification check that will be most effective; caseworkers review and document their review of all relevant information required by the Ministry when determining eligibility and reassess the ongoing eligibility of the Ontario Works recipients in the time period required by Ministry policy.
14. Service Managers complete the eligibility verification reviews assigned to them by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services on a timely basis.
15. Service Managers review and investigate allegations of fraud within the required timeframe and refer cases of suspected fraud to authorities for investigation and prosecution.
16. Service managers take steps to ensure that they only waive the requirements to participate in employment support activities in eligible circumstances when supported by the necessary documentation.
17. Service Managers meet with recipients regularly in accordance with Ministry requirements to review and update their participation agreements and assign appropriate employment support activities to all participants.
18. Service Managers take steps to identify opportunities to increase the proportion of recipients referred to employment supports that have successfully assisted recipient to obtain employment and investigate the possibility and assess the merits of becoming a delivery agent for Employment Ontario.
19. Work with the Ministry of Training Colleges and University to increase the portion of recipients who obtain employment.

A local review of our current practices has us well positioned with regards to the 6 recommendations for Service Managers:

- Service Managers work with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to confirm and formalize the requirements to use the third-party verification check that will be most effective; caseworkers review and document their review of all relevant information required by the Ministry when determining eligibility and reassess the ongoing eligibility of the Ontario Works recipients in the time period required by Ministry policy.
- Service Managers complete the eligibility verification reviews assigned to them by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services on a timely basis.
- Service Managers review and investigate allegations of fraud within the required timeframe and refer cases of suspected fraud to authorities for investigation and prosecution.
- Service managers take steps to ensure that they only waive the requirements to participate in employment support activities in eligible circumstances when supported by the necessary documentation.
- Service Managers meet with recipients regularly in accordance with Ministry requirements to review and update their participation agreements and assign appropriate employment support activities to all participants.
- Service Managers take steps to identify opportunities to increase the proportion of recipients referred to employment supports that have successfully assisted recipient to obtain employment and investigate the possibility and assess the merits of becoming a delivery agent for Employment Ontario.

Locally, we have strong partnerships with Employment Ontario, we are able to meet Ministry guidelines on file reviews, and as a proactive measure we are implementing a specialized caseload that will perform intensive case management on our long-term Ontario Works recipients. These practices will hold in our favor for the projected implementation target date of 2020 for these recommendations.

Financial Impact: At this time it is unknown what the financial impact will be to the City of Stratford, Perth County, and the Town of St. Marys as the funding models and accountability measures remain to be seen.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report “Office of the Auditor General (OAGO) Ontario Works Value-for Money (VFM) Audit” be received for information.

K.L. McElroy

Kim McElroy, Manager of Ontario Works

Smaller.

Jacqueline Mockler, Acting Director of Social Services

Rob Horne

Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: February 13, 2019
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Kim McElroy, Manager of Ontario Works
Report#: SOC19-005
Attachments: None

Title: Province announces plan for Social Assistance Reform

Objective: To provide Council an update on the impact of the current Provincial government's plan for Social Assistance Reform on the City of Stratford, Perth County, and the Town of St. Marys.

Background: On November 22, 2018, Ontario's Minister of Children, Community and Social Services Hon. Lisa MacLeod announced details on the Province's plan for social assistance reform. The following details were summarized by the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association's (OMSSA) report "*Province Shares Plan for Social Assistance.*" (November 22, 2018).

The announcement came with a broad framework and principles rather than a full implementation plan. The Minister announced that the Province's determined to move forward with reforms guided in the following principles and priorities:

- **Moving People to Employment:** Reducing administration and paperwork so people receiving Ontario Works and front-line staff can focus on individual action plans that set out a path to health, wellness and preparations to return to work.
- **Locally Focused Social Services:** Streamlining social assistance and employment programs and increase local responsiveness and flexibility to help all job seekers reach their potential.
- **Supporting People with Disabilities with Dignity:** Redesigning the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to provide annualized income support with fewer reporting requirements for Ontarians with severe disabilities.

- **Cutting Red Tape and Restoring Accountability:** Eliminating barriers for people receiving social assistance and for those delivering support by simplifying rates, reducing administration, cutting unnecessary rules, and restoring service accountability through a simplified system to better focus on improving outcomes

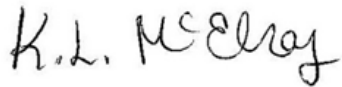
Analysis: The report indicates that design and implementation of specific reforms will be phased in over the course of the government's mandate, predominantly towards 2020 and onwards. Although, details on specific program changes, implementation timelines, funding models and accountability frameworks remain to be seen, the Province did share the following initial details:

- **New Ontario Works earnings exemptions,** with recipients able to earn up to \$300 per month without reducing their assistance, up from the current \$200 flat rate. Twenty-five per cent of subsequent earnings would be exempt, and exemptions would start after one month on assistance, quicker than the current three month waiting period.
- **Incentivizing people on Ontario Works to find jobs,** particularly by allowing lower income workers to keep more of what they earn through the Low-Income Individuals and Families Tax Credit (LIFT).
- **Focusing on ensuring caseworkers are spending more of their time working directly with clients,** including developing individual action plans.
- **Launching a website,** [Ontario.ca/openforbusiness](https://ontario.ca/openforbusiness), to make matching job seekers with businesses easier.
- **Empowering municipal partners** with a modern approach to Ontario Works service delivery that focuses on increased local decision-making and reduced paperwork.
- **Simplifying rules around self-employment** to promote and encourage self-employment
- **Simplifying rates and benefits** and establishing a new, **flexible local discretionary fund** so Ontario Works delivery partners can tailor benefits to improve people's outcomes with a focus on employment.
- **Aligning Ontario's definition of 'disability'** more closely with federal government guidelines.
- **Financial eligibility for ODSP will be reviewed yearly,** instead of monthly.

- Introducing, for clients in receipt of ODSP, a **\$6,000 flat annual exemption plus a 25 per cent exemption for earnings above \$6,000** instead of the current approach which reduces support after monthly earnings exceed \$200.
- Providing people receiving assistance with **more options to access information and service by computer or smartphone**, which will mean front-line staff, can spend more time working with people to address complex needs.
- **The Province will be accountable for designing a simplified system that focuses on outcomes**, helps people instead of trapping them, and uses risk-based approaches to ensure that those who receive assistance are eligible.
- **Municipalities will be held accountable for helping people achieve their goals and public reporting of outcomes**

Financial Impact: At this time it is unknown what the financial impact will be to the City of Stratford, Perth County, and the Town of St. Marys; as the funding models and accountability measures remain to be seen.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report "Province announces plan for Social Assistance Reform" be received for information.



Kim McElroy, Manager of Ontario Works



Jacqueline Mockler, Acting Director of Social Services



Rob Horne, Chief Administrative Officer