

REPORT NO. 243 of the
**SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT,
HEALTH & CULTURE STANDING COMMITTEE**
of its meeting held June 11, 2014

Present: Councillor Ed Sleiman, Chair
Councillor Jo-Anne Gignac
Councillor Alan Halberstadt
Councillor Fulvio Valentinis

Regrets: Councillor Al Maghnieh

That the following recommendation of the Social Development, Health and Culture Standing Committee **BE APPROVED** as follows:

Moved by Councillor Halberstadt, seconded by Councillor Gignac,
THAT Administration undertake a cost/benefit analysis in conjunction with Legal Assistance of Windsor regarding psycho-social assessments.

Carried.

The motion is **WITHDRAWN**.

Moved by Councillor Gignac, seconded by Councillor Valentinis,
THAT City Council **RECEIVE** an update from the Employment & Social Services and Housing & Children's Services Departments regarding the Housing Stability Plan, the Discretionary Benefits Program and the Integrated Team Pilot Project.

Carried.

LiveLink 17077, GH/6905

Clerk's Note: The report by the Executive Director of Housing & Children's Services dated January 22, 2014 entitled "Update on the Housing Stability Plan, Discretionary Benefits Program, and Integrated Team Pilot Project" is **attached** as background information.



CHAIRPERSON



SUPERVISOR OF COUNCIL SERVICES (A)

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THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF WINDSOR
Social Development, Health and Culture Standing Committee-
Administrative Report

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

"The City of Windsor, with the involvement of its citizens, will deliver effective and responsive municipal services, and will mobilize innovative community partnerships"

LiveLink REPORT #: 17077 GH/6905	Report Date: January 22, 2014
Author's Name: Diane Quinn, Shawn Sharpe	Date to Standing Committee: June 11, 2014
Author's Phone: 519 255-5200 ext. 5403	Classification #:
Author's E-mail: dquinn@city.windsor.on.ca; ssharpe@city.windsor.on.ca	

To: Social Development, Health and Culture Standing Committee

Subject: Update on the Housing Stability Plan, Discretionary Benefits Program, and Integrated Team Pilot Project

1. RECOMMENDATION: City Wide: _____ Ward(s): _____

THAT City Council **RECEIVE** an update from the Employment & Social Services and Housing & Children's Services Departments regarding the Housing Stability Plan, the Discretionary Benefits Program and the Integrated Team Pilot Project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

N/A

2. BACKGROUND:

Report No. 16214, dated October 19, 2012, was brought forward to the Social Development, Health and Culture Standing Committee. The Report outlined a transitional model to mitigate the discontinuation of the Community Start Up and Maintenance Benefits (CSUMB) and the capping of the Ontario Works Discretionary Benefits Program, with the advent of the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI). Near the end of 2012, a Community Start Up Working Group was established, which resulted in extensive community consultation and the development of several recommendations surrounding:

1. The creation of a Housing Stability Plan to assist persons who are homeless and persons at risk of homelessness; and,
2. The establishment of overarching criteria regarding the issuance of Discretionary Benefits that will ensure essential, health-related needs of social assistance recipients and

eligible low-income individuals/families are met without exceeding the funding cap instituted by the Province effective July 1, 2012.

Report No. 16214 also described the creation of an Integrated Team as a pilot project for the purposes of:

1. Assisting with applications for social assistance;
2. Employment planning (i.e., completion of participation agreements);
3. Complete eligibility/financial updates (i.e., Form 1's);
4. Auditing; and,
5. The provision of discretionary benefits and Housing Stability Funds.

The primary objective in creating the Integrated Team was to identify best practices in meeting legislative requirements under the Ontario Works (OW) Act and to test the concept of a "clearinghouse" for referrals to the departmental employment services units. As it turned out, the Integrated Team provided a temporary staffing solution to the implementation and delivery of the new Housing Stability Plan until it could be effectively transitioned to Housing & Children's Services as part of CHPI and its 10-Year Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy.

The Discussion section of this report provides a summary regarding the results and status of the Housing Stability Plan (HSP), the Ontario Works (OW) discretionary benefits program, and the lessons learned from the Integrated Team Pilot Project.

3. DISCUSSION:

Housing Stability Plan (HSP)

The City's HSP, which was funded from the CHPI budget, consists of the following provisions to assist people experiencing homelessness to **obtain** and **retain** housing, as well as to assist people at risk of homelessness to **remain** housed.

1. Utilities – Expansion of the Utility Assistance – provides assistance with regards to gas and/or utility arrears and disconnection notices. While funded through the City, this service is delivered by Housing Information Services and the Unemployed Health Centre.
2. Shelter Assistance – provides assistance relative to N4 Eviction Notices.
3. Shelter Enhancement Assistance – provides supports to persons who are homeless to obtain essential items to assist in the transition to housing. The Shelter Enhancement Assistance also includes a Housing Essentials Fund (HEF) with maximum amounts based on family size:
 - a. Single - \$300
 - b. Couple - \$400
 - c. Each additional child or dependant adult add \$150

The HEF is targeted for those establishing a new principle residence; for example, persons leaving an abusive home, persons being discharged from an institution, etc.

Assistance under the HSP is considered once every two (2) years, unless there are exceptional circumstances (e.g., a fire tragedy).

The total number of approved requests in 2013 under the Shelter component of HSP was 1,722 providing \$806,432 in assistance. The number of payments through the Utility component was just over 1,100, which provided \$579,675 in assistance. These figures include assistance to

Ontario Works (OW), Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and low-income eligible individuals and families.

Ontario Works Discretionary Benefits Program

While the HSP is a source of financial assistance designated for those experiencing homelessness and those at risk of homelessness, OW discretionary funds have been used, in exceptional circumstances, for families with children. Although such families have not fallen into the homeless or at risk of being homeless categories, they have faced situations that could impact their health; for example, they require a new mattress because of bed bugs, or need a replacement fridge and/or stove because their existing appliances are broken. Moving expenses have also been considered for disabled individuals in extenuating circumstances, who provide verification of need from a medical practitioner. The foregoing requests related to families with children and persons with disabilities are reviewed on a case by case basis and only issued with supervisory approval. In addition to these circumstances, the OW discretionary benefits have been primarily reserved for **health-related** reasons (e.g., dental services, eyeglasses, prosthetic appliances, orthotics, layettes/baby supplies, funerals & burials). It is important to note that OW discretionary benefits are not considered when HSP has been provided. In other words, duplication of services or top-ups will not be considered. We have been very careful to stay within the provincially imposed funding cap for discretionary benefits at \$10 per case (including both OW and ODSP caseloads) amounting to an estimated \$2.59 million annual budget.

Integrated Team Pilot Project

The Integrated Team has been very beneficial in providing temporary staffing to deliver the HSP pending its current transition to the Housing & Children's Services Department under CHPI and the 10-Year Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy; particularly, given the increased workload with the addition of ODSP client requests under HSP. This allowed for a smooth transition and provided effective one-stop service for clients. Despite the transfer of HSP to Housing & Children's Services, the processes and services remain the same for the clients.

As outlined earlier in this report, the Integrated Team was implemented to test a different approach in completing legislative tasks under OW, specifically updates and participation agreements related to employment and training activities. Additionally, it served as a "clearinghouse" to refer appropriate clients to employment services. Also, due to the lack of time to operationally adjust to the elimination of CSUMB and introduction of HSP, the Integrated Team took on the delivery of HSP as an interim measure pending a more long-term solution. The staffing complement related to the core purpose of the Integrated Team consisted of 3 to 4 OW Caseworkers over a one-year period. One of the fundamental differences in work assignments between the Caseworkers on the Integrated Team and the rest of the department is that the former did not carry a caseload and, therefore, were not responsible for ongoing case management. The results of the pilot project (from March to December 2013) are revealing.

1. **414** Form 1 Updates were finished.
2. **807** Participation Agreements (re: employment & training) were completed.
3. **228** Referrals were made to Employment Ontario and Ontario Works Employment Programs.

These statistical achievements suggest that *specialization* in terms of *tasks* enable OW Caseworkers to remain focused on set objectives without being pulled in different directions and having to address unplanned client emergencies. This also demonstrates the value of establishing a "clearinghouse" to expedite employment services referrals for clients. We see this as a significant contributing factor towards the successful achievement of "found work" and

training targets under both Employment Ontario and Ontario Works Employment Programs. In general, this is important data that would support a different approach to service delivery and customer service.

Within the one-year allowable temporary assignment term, the Integrated Team has been disbanded.

4. RISK ANALYSIS:

The funding cap on discretionary benefits in July 1, 2012 and the elimination of the Community Start-Up & Maintenance Benefits (CSUMB) program as of January 1, 2013 presented huge challenges with respect to funding losses and the resultant reduction in benefits to OW and ODSP clients, as well as substantial workload implications. However, the potential impact of these risks has been mitigated by the development of an effective Housing Stability Plan and the focus on health-related needs when it comes to discretionary benefits. This was accomplished with the involvement of various local community organizations and the help of the Integrated Team to deliver the programs during the implementation and transition period.

A current significant risk to the effective and efficient delivery of the HSP is securing adequate permanent staffing in Housing & Children's Services. Currently, three (3) temporary Caseworkers are in place and funded 100 percent provincially under CHPI. A request to make these positions permanent under CHPI funding will be made in the 2015 Operating Budget submission.

5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

Housing Stability Plan

The Housing Stability Plan is funded 100% by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) which aims to prevent, address and reduce homelessness by improving access to suitable and affordable housing that is linked to flexible support services. The 2013 CHPI calendar year allocation was \$7,920,549. The City also received \$938,600 in one-time funding for Transition to the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) from the Ministry of Community and Social Services. From these allocations, approximately \$1.386 million in total HSP assistance was provided for both the Shelter and Utilities components of the plan.

OW Discretionary Benefits

The Department advised Council in August 2012 that effective July 1, 2012, all Ontario Works Discretionary Benefits items, both health & non-health are being cost shared to a maximum of \$10.00 per case for the combined month average of Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) caseloads. This is a change from the previous funding formula which only capped non-health Discretionary expenditures at \$8.75 per case. Based on 2011 data provided by the Province, preliminary projections forecasted a deficit of \$50,000 to \$60,000, if expenditures and caseloads continued in 2012 at the same level of utilization. Municipalities were encouraged to prioritize OW Discretionary Benefits expenditures based on local needs and capacities to stay within the new capped limits. Today, we report to Council that in 2013 OW Discretionary Benefits expenditures remained within the \$10 cap and were cost shared at 85.8% by the Province, with the City and the County.

6. CONSULTATIONS:

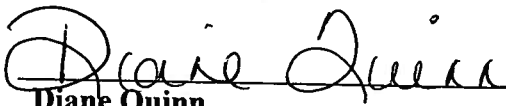
Extensive consultation with various community organizations was done in the development phase of the Housing Stability Plan.

7. CONCLUSION:

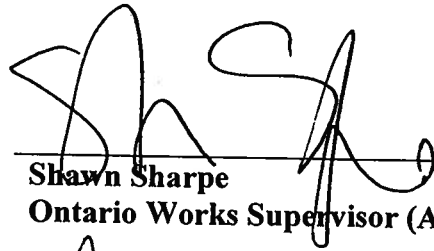
We are pleased to report that the transition to the Housing Stability Plan from Employment & Social Services to Housing & Children's Services under CHPI and the 10-Year Housing & Homeless Plan has been successful, despite some difficulties. However, challenges still remain in regards to securing adequate staffing to manage and ensure the continued success of HSP.

Expenditures under OW discretionary benefits for 2013 have remained within the cap with a focus on helping OW, ODSP and low income individuals and families with health-related needs.

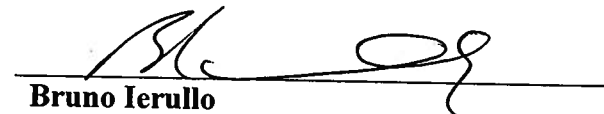
Best practices and lessons learned from the Integrated Team Pilot Project will be given consideration in any potential operational changes, with the goal of ensuring the utmost in efficiency, effectiveness and customer service.



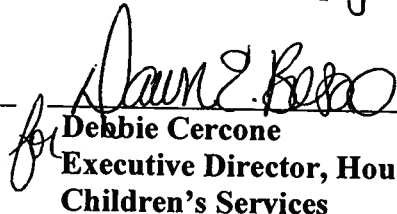
Diane Quinn
Manager, Employment & Training
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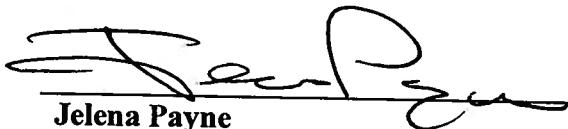
Shawn Sharpe
Ontario Works Supervisor (Acting)



Bruno Ierullo
Executive Director, Employment & Social
Services



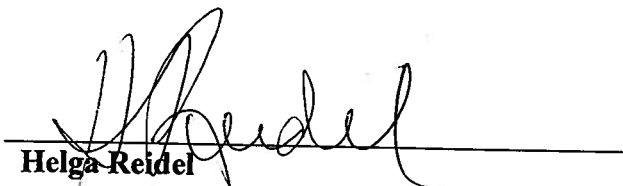
Debbie Cercone
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Jelena Payne
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APPENDICES:**DEPARTMENTS/OTHERS CONSULTED:****Name:****Phone #: 519 ext.****NOTIFICATION :**

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