

Report to Community and Protective Services Committee

To: Chair and Members
Community and Protective Services Committee
From: Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social and Health
Development
Subject: 2023 Ontario Works Participant and Service Delivery Profile
Date: December 2, 2024

Recommendation

That, on the recommendation of the Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development, the following report on the 2023 Ontario Works Participant and Service Delivery Profile **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes.

Executive Summary

The City of London is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) responsible for administering the Ontario Works program for London and Middlesex on behalf of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS).

Ontario Works is a social assistance program designed to provide temporary financial and employment assistance to individuals and families in financial need and that have limited or no means to support themselves. The program aims to assist recipients in achieving self-reliance and independence by providing essential supports and services. Key features of the Ontario Works program include financial assistance to cover basic living expenses; employment supports such as job search assistance, training programs, workshops, and support to develop job-related skills; caseworker support to help develop a personalized action plan and ongoing support and guidance; employment incentives to assist with costs related to seeking employment, and health benefits including, but not limited to, coverage for prescription drugs, dental care, and vision care.

In February 2021, the Ministry of Community, Children and Social Services (MCCSS) introduced a Working Vision for Social Assistance roadmap, outlining a phased approach for working towards an integrated human services model and commitment to co-designing the new system with Municipal service delivery partners. MCCSS has reinforced the importance of effectively connecting people to supports and increasing capacity for caseworkers to spend more time working directly with clients as key foundational goals of service delivery model changes. Application of continuous improvement practices throughout 2022, and introduction of provincial service delivery adjustments, led to enhanced internal approaches and positive impacts to the client experience.

In 2023, MCCSS also began to take on more administrative functions such as determining eligibility and identifying cases that needed more of an in-depth review by the municipal delivery entities. In response, we established a centralized intake team, allowing for more person-centred time for caseworkers. MCCSS also introduced new mandatory tools to utilize with clients which included a common assessment and an action plan that must be completed for all clients seeking social assistance. Staff spent significant time working with the province to prepare our systems and train staff to implement these new tools for January 2024.

In March of 2023, it was announced by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training & Skills Development that the City of London was selected as the Service System Manager for integrated employment services for the London catchment area. London Regional Employment Services (LRES) would be the lead for employment services effective January 1, 2024, and therefore overseeing all agreement and partnerships with employment related services. Life Stabilization worked diligently with LRES and community partners to work through the large systems change and lay a strong foundation for 2024.

Services in 2023 continued to be delivered predominantly by telephone and virtual platforms, however, in-person supports are increasing and remained available as needed and were provided across five Life Stabilization office locations. Community based Life Stabilization services was also increased to the Whole of Community Response HUBS, 602 Queens and Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre were re-established. Client needs and access to services and stability supports remained a priority, with a continued focus on response times at intake, referrals to employment and community partners, access to benefits, and exits to employment and greater financial stability.

Linkage to the Corporate Strategic Plan

Wellbeing and Safety

- London is an affordable and supportive community for individuals and families.

Economic Growth, Culture and Prosperity

- London encourages equitable economic growth and diversification.

Well-Run City

- The City of London is trusted, open, and accountable in service of the community.
- Londoners experience good stewardship, exceptional and valued service.

Analysis

1.0 Background Information

1.1 Previous Reports Related to this Matter

- 2022 Ontario Works Participant and Service Delivery Profile (CPSC October 24, 2023)
- 2021 Ontario Works Participant and Service Delivery Profile (CPSC November 29, 2022)
- 2020 Ontario Works Participant and Service Delivery Profile (CPSC May 11, 2021)
- 2019 Ontario Works Participant and Service Delivery Profile (CPSC December 1, 2020)
- 2018 Ontario Works Participant and Service Delivery Profile (CPSC May 28, 2019)
- 2016 Participant Profile Report-City of London Social Services/Ontario Works Program Delivery (CPSC July 18, 2017)
- Purchase of Service Agreements-Ontario Works Employment Assistance Services (CPSC December 10, 2018)
- Ontario Works Employment Innovations Bridges Out of Poverty & Circles Evaluation #2 (CPSC November 13, 2018)

2.0 Discussion and Considerations

Aligning with the strategic area of focus of Well-Run City, specifically under the strategy of measure and regularly report to Council and the community on the City's performance, as attached as Schedule 1 to this report is intended to provide an overview of Ontario Works service delivery outcomes and employment supports information for 2023. Included are key highlights related to caseload size, demographics, time on assistance, employment and community referrals, employment outcomes, and Discretionary Benefits provided.

Data and information provided in the report is extracted from MCCSS Operation Performance Reports, the provincial Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) database, in-house data management systems (Client Management System (CMS), EA Referral System and Purchase Voucher System), and City of London Financial Business Supports monitoring reports. Data referenced from MCCSS is reflective of the London CMSM which includes the City of London and County of Middlesex.

3.0 Financial Impact/Considerations

There are two transfer payment funding envelopes that support the delivery of Ontario Works:

- Basic Financial Assistance is fully funded by the province. This includes benefits such as basic needs, shelter, emergency assistance, mandatory benefits, and transition child benefits.
- Program Delivery funding supports program administration and the provision of employment assistance activities to eligible Ontario Works recipients. Cost sharing of Program Delivery funding is split 50/50 between the ministry and the City of London.

Discretionary Benefits for social assistance recipients is funded at \$10 per case per month with caseload equaling the sum of the average monthly Ontario Works caseload and the average monthly ODSP caseload within the delivery partner's geographic area.

Conclusion

Throughout 2023, client access to appropriate services and supports continued to be prioritized. City of London – Life Stabilization remained committed to advancing service delivery modernization by embracing provincial opportunities to expand services internally and externally partnering with local service providers to expand person centered care that works to build a pathway to financial independence. Ontario Works employment exit targets for both MCCSS and the City of London Strategic Priorities were exceeded.

Life Stabilization at the City of London is working to ensure we lead amongst the provincial changes while also establishing a service that creates innovation to best support our local community needs.

Prepared by: Jeannette Castillo, Manager, Ontario Works

Submitted by: Tim Smuck, Director, Life Stabilization

Recommended by: Kevin Dickins, Deputy City Manager, Social and Health Development