

Schedule 1

Ontario Works 2023 Participant & Service Delivery Profile

The Ontario Works Program

Ontario Works is an employment assistance and financial support program under the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), with a priority of helping individuals and families gain and maintain sustainable employment through training, education, skill development and individualized supports.

The City of London is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) responsible for administering the Ontario Works program for the London & Middlesex region on behalf of the Government of Ontario. Services for Middlesex are delivered by the County of Middlesex through an apportionment agreement with the City of London. Source data from the ministry informing this report represents the London CMSM, which includes data for Middlesex County.

In February 2021, the MCCSS announced the “Recovery & Renewal: Ontario’s Vision for Social Assistance Transformation”¹, and outlined a Working Vision for Social Assistance in Ontario (Figure 1). Key elements of the vision include maintaining person-centred services, a shift in services provided, identification of responsibilities at the provincial and municipal levels, working towards an integrated human services model and commitments to co-designing the new system with municipal service delivery partners. Associated timelines include work that began in 2020 up until 2025 for full implementation of the vision as outlined in Table 1 below. The plan aims to realign functions and service delivery responsibilities of the program in order to streamline social services systems and create an effective integrated human services model.

Figure 1



Working Vision for Social Assistance

¹ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/recovery-renewal-ontarios-vision-social-assistance-transformation>

Aligning with MCCSS priorities to achieve improved employment outcomes for Ontario Works participants, the delivery of Ontario Works is administered using a local context that provides services and supports in partnership with internal and external shareholders to appropriately respond to the stability needs of our mutual clients.

Financial assistance provided through Ontario Works can include basic needs, shelter, board & lodging, special diet, pregnancy/breast-feeding nutritional allowance, transition child benefit allowance, employment and discretionary supports, and drug coverage. Table 1 below gives an outline of maximum monthly entitlements for individuals and families in receipt of Ontario Works. Basic Needs is calculated based on family size and family composition, and Shelter Allowance is calculated based on family size and actual shelter costs. Eligibility for additional benefits noted above is dependent on circumstance.

Note: Ontario Works rates have not increased since 2018.

Table 1 – Maximum Social Assistance Rates: Basic Needs and Shelter Allowance^{2 3}

Family Size	Basic Needs	Shelter Allowance	Monthly Entitlement
1	\$343	\$390	\$733
2	\$623	\$642	\$1,265
3	\$781	\$697	\$1,433
4	\$956	\$756	\$1,712
5	\$1,131	\$815	\$1,946
6+	\$1,306	\$844	\$2,150

Ontario Works Caseload

London experienced a 7.0% growth in average monthly caseload (benefit units) from 2022 to 2023. While this increase was large, the rate of growth was slightly lower than ministry’s social assistance caseload forecasted increase of 8.6% for 2023-24, and caseload remained lower than pre-pandemic sizes. We do expect numbers to return and potentially exceed pre pandemic levels by 2025.

Table 2 – Average Caseload Size by Benefit Units and Beneficiaries⁴

Type	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Benefit Units	10,008	9,350	8,616	10,354	11,418
Beneficiaries	18,681	17,818	17,162	20,455	22,121

² Ontario Works Policy Directive 6.2 Basic Needs

³ Ontario Works Policy Directive 6.3 Shelter

⁴ MCCSS OW Social Assistance Operations Performance Report – January 2019-December 2023

As noted in Table 3 below, caseload composition in 2023 continued to reflect a greater proportion of singles without children. The greatest fluctuations in composition occurred during the period of 2020-2021 and again in 2022-2023 between “Single” and “Single with Children” caseloads. Therefore, we are looking to how we support both of these family composition types better.

Table 3 – Family Composition as Percentage of Caseload (Benefit Units)⁵

Family Composition	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Single	65%	63%	61%	59%	60%
Single with children	24%	26%	28%	29%	28%
Couple	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Couple with children	9%	9%	9%	10%	10%

Table 4 below provides a summary of family size as a percentage of caseload. Proportions have remained relatively consistent over the past five years with the greatest fluctuations experienced by 1-member grew again from 2022-2023 to the highest level to date.

Table 4 – Family Size as Percentage of Caseload (Benefit Units)⁶

Family Size	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
1 member	65%	63%	61%	59%	60%
2 members	13%	13%	14%	15%	14%
3 members	9%	10%	11%	11%	11%
4 members	6%	7%	7%	7%	7%
5 members	3%	3%	4%	4%	4%
6+ members	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%

Table 5 – Education Level as Percentage of All Adults on Caseload⁷

Education Level	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Grade 1-8	8%	8%	9%	9%	8%
Grade 9-11	30%	31%	33%	33%	32%
Grade 12-13	37%	37%	36%	35%	35%
Post Secondary	24%	24%	23%	23%	25%

Table 5 provides a summary of education level as a percentage of all adults on caseload which has remained mostly consistent from 2022.

Time on Assistance

⁵ MCCSS Ontario Works Caseload at a Glance – Month of December for years of 2019-2023

⁶ MCCSS Ontario Works Caseload at a Glance – Month of December for years of 2019-2023

⁷ MCCSS Ontario Works Caseload at a Glance – Month of December for years of 2019-2023

The Provincial vision for the Ontario Works program is “to create an efficient, effective and streamlined social services system that focuses on people, providing them with a range of services and supports to respond to their unique needs and address barriers to success so they can move towards employment and independence”⁸. For many clients, significant barriers exist along the employment continuum which may impact the ability to acquire skills and training, successfully gain employment or sustain and maintain employment. Length of time on assistance is one of many indicators used to align clients to appropriate life stabilization supports and employment opportunities.

During 2020, there was a marked decline in new applications to Ontario Works and an increase in exits, due to eligibility for federal benefits such as CERB. As a result, the proportion of caseload on assistance greater than 12 months increased by 10% in 2020 over 2019. With the ending of federal benefits in 2021-2022, London saw an increase in new Ontario Works applications which resulted in the proportion of caseload on assistance for 0-12 months growing by 14% in 2022 over 2020 and a decrease in 19+ months by 15% in 2022 over 2020. 2023 saw a return to consistent patterns but slight increase in 19+months on assistance and slight decrease in 0-4.

Moving forward we are looking to establish a more rapid response to those just entering social assistance to help them exit sooner, as well as working with the longest clients on social assistance to transition to the right pathway for them.

Table 6 – Time on Assistance⁹

Duration	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
0-4 months	15%	16%	21%	11%	15%
5-12 months	23%	22%	13%	13%	19%
13-18 months	12%	12%	7%	12%	10%
19+ months	50%	49%	59%	64%	56%

Deferrals from Participation

Individuals may experience circumstances limiting their capacity to fully participate in employment assistance activities. This can be the result of physical limitations, medical conditions, personal circumstances (i.e., family emergency, caregiving responsibilities) or any other circumstance the Administrator considers reasonable.

Individuals who are deferred from participating in employment activities continue to be supported in connection to other stability supports such as ODSP, Disability Services of Ontario, childcare subsidy, and other community resources. In 2023, there were a total of 1,268¹⁰ referrals made to ODSP and 959¹¹ Ontario Works cases terminating to ODSP.

⁸ MCCSS 2021-2022 Service Plan

⁹ MCCSS Ontario Works Caseload at a Glance – Month of December for years of 2018-2023

¹⁰ MCCSS OW Social Assistance Operations Performance Report – January – December 2023

¹¹ MCCSS - CRS120 Case Closure Report for the City of London – January – December 2023

Temporary Care Assistance Caseload

Temporary Care Assistance provides income assistance and benefits to an adult on behalf of a child where the child is in their temporary care, the child is in financial need and the adult providing care does not have a legal obligation to support the child. A child may require temporary care for a variety of reasons. For example, the parent(s) may be temporarily unable to support the child because of financial reasons or other special circumstances, such as health-related issues.

London's Temporary Care caseload remained relatively consistent between 2018-2020 but saw an increase in 2021 and 2022. Between 2020 and 2022, the number of benefit units increased by 25%, with the number of children in Temporary Care increasing by 32%. 2023 was a success as we saw these numbers slowly start to reduce. This population is critically important, and we are looking to wrap around these families in holistic ways to continue to provide stronger pathways to financial independence.

Table 8 – Temporary Care Caseload¹²

Type	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Benefit Units	178	189	175	151	147
Children	269	277	254	209	202

Employment Outcomes

The intent of the Ontario Works program is to support individuals to increased financial stability and employment. Caseload “Earnings” and “Exits to Employment” are key performance indicators with the ministry. With the exception of 2020 and the impacts of the pandemic, London has consistently exceeded its ministry targets.

Prior to 2024, London had an operating model where contracted third-party employment service providers delivered employment supports tailored to meet the needs of Ontario Works clients. As part of the provincial transformation and the introduction of Integrated Employment Services, the City of London was selected as the Service System Manager (SSM) for the London Economic Region (City of London, Middlesex County, St. Thomas-County of Elgin, Oxford County).

The delivery of Integrated Employment Services began in London on January 1st, 2024. London Regional Employment Services, as the SSM, is now responsible for the contracts held with Service Providers delivering Employment Ontario services across the catchment.

Table 9 – Cases with Earnings and Exits to Employment¹³

¹² MCCSS OW Social Assistance Operations Performance Report – January 2018-December 2022

¹³ MCCSS OW Social Assistance Operations Performance Report – January 2018-December 2022

Metric	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
# of cases with earnings	919	957	807	1,024	1,617
% of caseload with earnings	9.19%	10.24%	9.36%	9.77%	14.17%
Average monthly earnings	\$850	\$871	\$894	\$899	\$871
# of exits to employment	1393	1,446	1,236	1,373	2,070
% of all terminations exiting to employment	24.41%	29.16%	27.37%	24.77%	28.01%
% of caseload exiting to employment	13.92%	15.48%	14.35%	13/26%	1.52%

Service Delivery Model

Decentralized Offices

Life Stabilization delivers the Ontario Works program through a decentralized service delivery model. Service delivery design and resourcing decisions are informed by data, local context, and community needs. Continual evaluation and review of service delivery approaches and objectives ensures that planning, design, and implementation best support the City of London’s most vulnerable, as well as effectively equip frontline staff delivering the services.

Five community-based offices and one satellite office are situated across the city providing easy access to employment services and financial supports close to neighbourhoods in which our clients live. All offices are AODA compliant and on London Transit Commission (LTC) bus routes.

Life Stabilization office locations:

- Citi Plaza, 355 Wellington Street, Suite 246
- London East, 1-1835 Dundas Street
- Northland Mall, 107-1275 Highbury Avenue
- Westmount Shopping Centre, 785 Wonderland Road S.
- South London Community Centre, 1119 Jalna Blvd.
- Glen Cairn Community Resource Centre (satellite), 244 Adelaide Street S.

Service Delivery

With the return of original signatures on Ontario Works applications and the reinstatement of in-person appointments, our office has welcomed the opportunity to engage with clients face-to-face once again. We offer in-person services to accommodate clients’ availability and address any limitations they may have with technology, ensuring they receive the support they need.

Aligning with the MCCSS “Recovery & Renewal: Ontario’s Vision for Social Assistance Transformation”¹⁴, Life Stabilization implemented the Common Assessment Tool and Action Plan Tool that will help us further understand the needs and demographics of our clients. These tools will also assist us in determining a clear supportive client pathway that is focus on life stabilization-based services. Staff are now trained in these tools and implementation will begin in 2024.

The Reloadable Payment Card (RPC) is an alternative payment option for clients unable to receive payments through direct bank deposit (DBD). At the end of 2023 our service area is now almost at 100% issued electronic payments. We have made continuous efforts to improve access to setting up digital payments, streamline the RPC replacement process, and support clients in opening accounts for direct bank deposits. We remain committed to finding ways to make these processes as seamless as possible, ensuring that clients have a supportive experience with our office. These efforts have led to significant changes on payment pick-up day at the end of the month, with the office now being less congested and much more organized.

Applications for Ontario Works

In 2023 and already into 2024, the number of new Ontario Works applications increased, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. Online applications became more predominant, with the share growing by 46% in 2023 compared to 2022. However, processing times also rose slightly, with applications processed within an average of 5 days in 2023. Only 59% of applications in 2023 were processed within 4 days.

Table 10 – Applications for Ontario Works¹⁵

Metric	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
# of applications processed	7,105	5,624	4,248	3,897	6,028
% of online applications	80%	34%	27%	28%	27%
Average # of days from intake screening to eligibility decision	5	3	1	3	3
% of applications processed within 4 business days	59%	74%	87%	75%	76%

The ministry’s “Recovery & Renewal: Ontario’s Vision for Social Assistance Transformation” includes the introduction of a centralized intake model with the ministry responsible for completing new applications, other than in emergency cases. The purpose of this centralized model is to give local staff more time to focus on supporting clients by reducing the time spent on administrative tasks and paperwork, and to apply a

¹⁴ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/recovery-renewal-ontarios-vision-social-assistance-transformation>

¹⁵ MCCSS OW Social Assistance Operations Performance Report – January 2019-December 2023

streamlined and standardized approach across the province. This new intake process puts a greater emphasis on clients completing applications independently on-line.

This change rolled out in October 2023. In response we formed the intake team as 55% of applications for London were still being completed by the local office (i.e. applicants with no fixed address, needing interpreters, under 18, EA, etc.). Having a dedicated team allowed our case management staff time to focus on supporting clients and navigate the new requirements for the completion of Action Plans within 30 days of grant.

The delays noted is primarily due to the province’s new centralized intake program where they send us applications once reviewed by their offices. We are working with the province and internally to address this issue as it is a priority for us and our community.

Interpreter Services

In 2023, a total of 3,961 client appointments (across all appointment types) were booked with an interpreter. Table 11 below illustrates the top five languages requiring interpreter services from 2019-2023. Additionally, Life Stabilization maintained compliance with the provincial French Language Services requirements by providing bilingual services through the Client Services Representative and Caseworker roles.

Table 11 – Interpreter Services Top 5 Languages

2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Arabic	Arabic	Arabic	Arabic	Arabic
Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish	Spanish
Kurdish	Kurdish	Kurdish	Kurdish	Nepal
Ukrainian	Ukrainian	Nepal	Nepal	Kurdish
Turkish	Turkish	Assyrian	Farsi	Urdu

Integrated Employment Services

The City of London via London Regional Employment Services (LRES) was selected as the Service System Manager for the London Economic Region (City of London, Middlesex County, St. Thomas – Elgin County, Oxford County) by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training & Skills Development to create a single, efficient, cost-effective system focused on helping all job seekers, businesses, and communities.

LRES and Life Stabilization are working closely to ensure strong connection and integration of employment services and continue to play a key role in economic and workforce development strategies across the region.

This new system combined employment programs from social assistance, such as Ontario Works Employment Assistance and Ontario Disability Support Program Employment Supports, into Employment Ontario. Life Stabilization began ending contracts with service providers in 2023 with a final end date of June 2024. We have

been working diligently to prepare for the system changes and ensure our clients and community partners don't have any gaps in service.

Employment Referrals

Within Life Stabilization, employment will always be a pivotal outcome, however in 2023 with the systems change we began to increase referrals to mental health, basic needs, and counselling-based supports as well. 2024 and 2025 will be cornerstone years in the development of life stabilization-based partnerships that will enhance successful pre-employment pathways for our clients.

In terms of overall employment referrals, 7,409 individual referrals were made to service providers in 2023. This represents a slight decrease of 3% over 2022. As part of the provincial employment services transformation, effective January 1, 2024, London CMSM Ontario Works clients are now referred to service providers in the LRES catchment as part of Integrated Employment Services.

Table 12 – Employment Assistance Referrals¹⁶

Referral Type	Amount	Percentage
Fundamental Employment Services	4,701	63%
Employment Search Placement Retention	1,087	15%
Specialized Individual Supports	613	8%
Skills Training	452	6%
Other (Employment Ontario, self-employment, etc.)	423	6%
Education	133	2%

To address the number of clients on Ontario Works longer than 24 months, Employment Support Specialists and Caseworkers engaged with clients who have been on assistance for a longer period of time. The goal was to support and assist participants in identifying and removing obstacles affecting life stabilization and the path to employment. Some of the strategies implemented include:

- Psycho-vocational assessments to provide insight into barriers to employment and/or learning success.
- Linking clients to additional professional and specialized services and supports, person directed planning and employment supports through Developmental Supports Ontario (DSO) including assistance in moving toward ODSP supports.
- “Getting Ahead” workshops designed to help participants set personal goals and establishing a plan to attain the goals. Graduates of Getting Ahead were eligible to participate in Circles London, a program developed to help participants build confidence, self-efficacy, and social capital.

¹⁶ City of London – EA Referral Report 2022 “All Referral Types”

In 2023, 230 individuals had a psycho-vocational assessment completed by a qualified Psychologist. As outlined in Table 13, 155 individuals were successfully granted eligibility for the Ontario Disability Assistance Program (ODSP) as a result of the assessment findings. Of those granted ODSP, 216 were eligible for Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) supports including professional and specialized services and supports, person directed planning and employment supports. The average length of time these individuals were in receipt of Ontario Works prior to grant was 13.7 years.

Table 13 – Psycho-Vocational Assessment Outcomes¹⁷

Total Assessments Completed	230
ODSP Granted	155
Average # of years on OW prior to ODSP grant	13.73 years
DSO Eligible	216
In Appeal / Pending Decision	6
Denied / Withdrawn	5
OW File Closed / Lost Contact	1

Discretionary Benefits

The Discretionary Benefits program helps with items and services related to health, safety, and physical well-being to those in receipt of Ontario Works, ODSP and low-income Londoners who meet established income eligibility criteria. Services include emergency dental, dentures, eyeglasses, beds, appliances, moving costs, baby needs (cribs/car set/stroller) and utility assistance for those who have exhausted the Housing Stability Bank or other programs. Discretionary Benefits also aids with the cost of funerals, ensuring individuals without financial means receive quality end-of-life services. Tables 15-17 highlight summaries of Discretionary Benefits assistance provided in 2023.

Table 15 – Emergency Dental Program^{18 19}

Emergency Dental Program	2023
# of individual client dental services	2,301
# of procedures completed	10,938
# of full dentures	704
# of partial dentures	583

The Purchase Voucher system allows an individual to obtain a product from a vendor without a financial exchange. Once the individual has received their item(s), the vendor submits the signed purchase voucher to the City for payment. The top categories for purchase vouchers include dentures, eyeglasses, appliances/beds, and prosthetics

¹⁷ Social Services Portal: Employment Assistance Referrals Summary 2023

¹⁸ Social Services Portal: Purchase Voucher Report 2023

¹⁹ Accerta Annual Summary Report 2023

Table 16 – Purchase Vouchers by Income Stream²⁰

Income Stream	2023
Non-Social Assistance Recipients (LICO after tax)	460
ODSP Clients	1,893
Ontario Works Clients	2,263

Funeral coverage includes funeral service, burial or cremation and interment as chosen by the next of kin.

Table 17 – Funerals by Income Stream²¹

Income Stream	2023
Non-Social Assistance Recipients (LICO after tax)	199
Ontario Works and ODSP Clients	119
Warrants to Bury (provincially legislated) – included in above counts	61

Customer Service

Client feedback is collected to ensure services meet the needs of customers. To allow greater opportunity for clients to provide feedback about their experience, a customer service survey link has been incorporated into the Life Stabilization staff email signature block in both English and French. In 2023, 249 responses in English and 8 in French were received with the following feedback provided:

How would you rate the quality of service you received today?	Exceptional – 54.8% Great – 28% Good – 5.9% Okay – 2.5% Not Good – 8.8%
Did you receive the information or services you were looking for today?	Yes – 90.4% No – 8.3% No response – 1.3%
Was the service provided in a friendly, respectful way?	Yes – 93.3% No – 6.7%

Overall our customer service in all 3 categories slightly improved from last year.

²⁰ City of London - Financial & Business Supports DB Monitoring Report 2023

²¹ City of London - Financial & Business Supports DB Monitoring Report 2023

Comments included:

“Very friendly and polite. Easy to talk to and explains something clearly if need help.”
“My casework was exceptional, explained everything I did incorrectly in the beginning and ways in which to correct it all. She did it with kindness and understanding, I was happy to have spoken with her. I won't forget how she helped me along my journey, just a small set-back in all my years of employment.
“The most help I've had sense I've become a mother. Thank you very much.”
“My case worker is exceptionally good and easy to get along with. Very understanding and tolerant. Super prompt in responding to emails and very helpful.”

Conclusion

In 2023, City of London – Life Stabilization continued to take an effective and responsive approach that ensured individualized supports and services for clients were delivered in a timely, relevant, and meaningful way.

In a post-pandemic environment, services continued to be delivered through mainly virtual methods but with increased in person and in community services. Related Expenses funding was used to assist client in obtaining digital devices to allow connection to services in a highly digital climate and to support pathways to meaningful training and employment.

Referrals to community partners connected individuals to necessary employment supports, skills training, education, and psycho-vocational assessments to reduce barriers and increase access to stability supports. Life Stabilization exceeded employment targets set by the ministry for 2023 with 1,393 individuals and/or families exiting Ontario Works to employment. Life Stabilization also supported 959 individuals and/or families in obtaining an increased level of financial stability through ODSP.

Looking ahead, Life Stabilization is committed to ensuring basic needs and connections to community and health supports is maintained through the evolution of the social assistance program and MCCSS Recovery and Renewal priorities. As we continue to shape and evolve our service delivery with life stabilization at its core, our community, staff and partners will be play a vital role is co-creating that vision and together we will support clients on their journey to success and hope.