

TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON NOVEMBER 13, 2018
FROM:	SANDRA DATARS BERE MANAGING DIRECTOR, HOUSING, SOCIAL SERVICES AND DEARNESS HOME
SUBJECT:	ONTARIO WORKS EMPLOYMENT INNOVATIONS BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY & CIRCLES EVALUATION # 2

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Managing Director, Housing, Social Services and Dearness Home, the following report **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER
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- Ontario Works Employment Innovations (CPSC, January 21, 2013);
- RFP 12-07 Request for Proposal Ontario Works Employment Assistance Services (June 19, 2012);
- Ontario Works Employment Assistance Framework 2013-2018 (CPSC, March 5, 2012);
- Amendment to Purchase of Service Agreement – Ontario Works Employment Assistance Services (November 25, 2013);
- Amendment to Purchase of Service Agreement – Ontario Works Employment Assistance Services (June 21, 2016); and
- Ontario Works Employment Innovations Bridges Out of Poverty & Circle Baseline Evaluation (March 28, 2017)

BACKGROUND

This report provides an update to the Ontario Works Employment Innovations - London's Bridges Out of Poverty & Circles Baseline Evaluation presented to City Council in 2017, attached as "Appendix A" *Ontario Works Employment Innovations – Bridges Out of Poverty & Circles Evaluation # 2*. The Bridges Out of Poverty & Circles initiative is delivered in partnership between City of London Social Services and Goodwill Industries Ontario Great Lakes.

The City of London 2015-2019 Strategic Plan identified Strengthening Our Community through caring and compassionate services as an important priority. Bridges Out of Poverty & Circles is a key strategic initiative approved by Council through the 2016-2019 Multi Year Budget Process to strengthen the London community.

London's Bridges Out of Poverty & Circles initiative is a key contributor to the London community's response to poverty. To date 72 Individuals and families living in poverty have along with their 81 Allies and with guidance from their Coach achieved significant successes:

- London's Bridges Out of Poverty & Circles initiative has grown to be the largest Circle location in Canada;
- London's Bridges Out of Poverty & Circles initiative has developed the first youth and young adult focused Circle in Canada;
- By June 2018, 21 individuals and their families had graduated and 72% of these graduates have reached their goals of education and employment and attaining sustainable income;
- Financial savings to Ontario Works from all sources are growing and are expected to reach over \$430,000 per annum in 2019;
- Circle Leaders were recruited to the London For All Leadership Council to lead implementation of London's plan to reduce poverty and have played key roles in public engagement, information and social marketing campaigns related to poverty in the London community such as Poverty Over;

- Circle Leaders have provided input on City of London strategic initiatives and priorities including the Social Services Employment Services Update, Shift Rapid Transit Plan, Transit Subsidy, Food Security and the Ontario government's investigation of young people not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET).

Updated Results of Investment

A demographic review identified that Circle Leaders possess a unique profile as compared to the general Ontario Works profile. Significantly:

- 73% of Circle Leaders shared that their parents had relied on social assistance or had grown up in poverty.
- Circle Leaders have been receiving assistance for a longer period than the average Ontario Works participant - 48 consecutive months compared to 34 months generally.
- Interviews with a sample of Circles Leaders helped describe the impact of the initiative:
 - Individuals and families participating in London's Bridges Out of Poverty & Circles initiative have become more motivated, confident and engaged in the labour force;
 - Individuals and families grow more stable which encourages longer term goal setting and future planning for sustainable employment; and
 - Individuals and families experience a reduction in social isolation and increase their participation in the wider community.

Savings to Ontario Works

Circle Leaders are growing more economically self-sufficient. One outcome of this is direct savings to Ontario Works as individuals and families earn income, return to school and exit Ontario Works.

Assuming the annual growth in savings remains between 70 to 80%, as seen over the past three years, the monthly caseload cost savings to Ontario Works based on earned income and individuals exiting assistance is projected to reach \$35,845 per month or approximately \$430,000 per year by June 2019. The Ontario Works program has been fully uploaded therefore 100% of these savings will be realized by the Province.

Summary / Moving Forward

Findings from the Ontario Works Employment Innovations – Bridges Out of Poverty & Circles Evaluation # 2 (attached as Appendix A) are consistent with the initial 2017 Baseline Evaluation findings that individuals and families living in poverty are having positive, sustainable employment outcomes by participating in London Circles that result in savings to Ontario Works.

Moving forward, London's Bridges Out of Poverty & Circles initiative anticipates the following results in the year ahead:

- Achieving full capacity of 80 Circle Leaders and 80 Circle Allies with an established waiting list of potential Circle Leaders;
- A public launch of the former Bridges Out of Poverty workshop now titled, Rethink Poverty;
- An updated poverty awareness campaign through a partnership between London Circles Guiding Coalition and London For All based on existing assets like Poverty Over and the If You Knew website;

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Funding for this initiative is included in the 2016-2019 Council-approved Multi Year Budget. Council approved Strategic Investment Business Case #14 – Ontario Works Service Plan – Low Income Support Enhancement to fund the implementation of this initiative. The gross budget

allocation of \$520,000 per year is partially offset by Provincial subsidy and by contributions from the Social Services Reserve Fund. This report has no impact on the approved budget.

CONCLUSION

This powerful and transformative initiative supports long term Ontario Works participants' transition into employment as well as strives to break the cycle of persistent poverty while creating a deeper public awareness and understanding of poverty.

PREPARED BY:	SUBMITTED BY:
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RECOMMENDED BY:	
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