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TO:	CHAIR AND MEMBERS COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING ON OCTOBER 22, 2012
FROM:	LYNNE LIVINGSTONE ACTING ONTARIO WORKS ADMINISTRATOR
SUBJECT:	ELIMINATION OF COMMUNITY START UP AND MAINTENANCE BENEFIT

RECOMMENDATION

That, on the recommendation of the Acting Ontario Works Administrator, the following report **BE RECEIVED** for information purposes.

PREVIOUS REPORTS PERTINENT TO THIS MATTER

- Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, Homelessness Social Assistance Regulation Amendments (CSC: September 10, 2012)

BACKGROUND

This information report provides background on the Community Start Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) and outlines the changes from the Province of Ontario regarding the elimination of this existing social assistance benefit. Effective January 1, 2013, CSUMB is eliminated as a benefit from Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

CSUMB is a mandatory benefit provided to Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients to assist in establishing a new principal residence, or to prevent eviction or the discontinuance of utilities or heating in an existing residence. CSUMB may also be issued where there is a threat to the health or welfare of a recipient or a member of the benefit unit in a non-start up situation.

Until December 31, 2012 CSUMB can provide assistance up to a maximum of \$1,500 for a family (with dependents) or \$799 for an individual or couple (with no dependents) in a 24 month period. Additional payments may be available under exceptional circumstances with the approval of the Ontario Works Administrator.

Some common uses of CSUMB include (but are not limited to):

- Payments of last month's rent deposits;
- Fuel and hydro deposits;
- Rental, energy arrears;
- Moving and storage costs;
- Household furnishings such as beds, dressers, table and chairs;
- Settlement costs such as bedding, dishes, small appliances and clothing etc; or
- Any other costs approved and related to stabilizing housing.

Casework staff reviews requests for CSUMB to ensure benefits are provided appropriately where needs have been identified and eligibility requirements have been met.



The City of London operates as the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager which includes the County of Middlesex. The total amount of CSUMB issued to London and the County of Middlesex Ontario Works participants in 2011 was \$2.9 million. The total amount of CSUMB issued by the Ontario Disability Support Program in 2011 was \$1.57 million. The total cost of CSUMB issued was \$4.47 million.

What is the impact?

A review of existing data sources was completed by City staff. In 2011 between 2,500 and 3,000 Ontario Works recipients received CSUMB.

The loss of this benefit will impact social assistance recipients, as this benefit currently supports individuals and families who are on very limited budgets. Until December 31, 2012, staff are continuing to review the availability of this benefit with participants and issue funding as appropriate. Once CSUMB is discontinued, there will be limitations in what other Ontario Works programs can cover; however, staff will continue to utilize and maximize other funding sources and programs in our community to address the needs of participants.

The March 2012 Provincial Budget announcement included a strategy to reinvest up to 50% of CSUMB funding into the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, which will be funded through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

While some of the housing and homelessness related needs of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients may be addressed through the new Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, it is clear that there will be gaps when we compare the needs that CSUMB funding is currently able to meet and the needs that are intended to be addressed through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative.

CSUMB is currently the mandatory benefit that can assist families in re-establishing their lives. Currently CSUMB can be used, for example, to assist abused women and their children in their safety planning and new housing start. These are often urgent situations that require an immediate resolution and are often made through coordinated case management with community agencies. The elimination of this benefit may decrease the immediate response to support the health, safety and well being of individuals and families and create further stress in acquiring necessary housing related expenses including such things as bedding, dishes, pots, pans, appliances, furniture, clothing and other personal items.

Similarly, the loss of this benefit will affect people living with addictions or mental health and individuals released from incarceration where they are re-establishing themselves in our community and will need assistance beyond their housing and homelessness related needs.

To support participants in understanding these changes, London Ontario Works is providing updates to community agencies and will be informing participants about the elimination of the benefit. We are working with ODSP and the County of Middlesex to minimize the disruption to participants.

The report going forward to Community Services Committee on October 22, 2012 "Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative funding Allocation for January 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014" provides the details regarding the funding allocation under the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative. To prepare for these changes civic administration are in a rapid and extensive community engagement process with a wide group of stakeholders to develop service and program outcomes, transition plans and final implementation plans including funding agreements.

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FINANCIAL IMPACT

In 2011, Ontario Works issued \$2.9 million and the Ontario Disability Support Program issued \$1.57 million for a total of \$4.47 million in CSUMB funding. This funding and program has been eliminated.


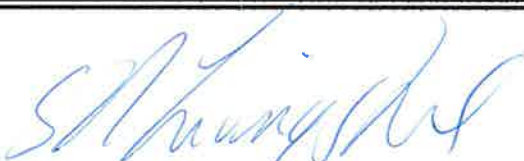
The removal of CSUMB from the caseload will reduce caseload costs that are part of the Provincial Upload. CSUMB issued through the Ontario Disability Support Program have already been fully uploaded and will have no impact to the City. CSUMB issued through the Ontario Works Program will reduce caseload costs in 2013 that are scheduled to be fully uploaded by 2018. The financial impacts will be addressed in the 2013 draft City Budget Submission.

The Province intends to re-invest 50% of the provincial CSUMB expenditures into the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funding allocation. This allocation will be provided based on the percentage of deep core housing need in each municipality. This reinvestment is meant to support the CHPI program, it is not a reduced CSUMB benefit.

The removal of CSUMB creates an immediate gap in available funding to social assistance recipients who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. The impact of this social assistance regulation change will need to be considered as part of the development of the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative plan to address the homeless, housing and housing maintenance needs in our community. We will continue to utilize and maximize other initiatives and programs to address the needs of participants.

Acknowledgments

- Anna Lisa Barbon, Manager, Financial and Business Services
- Gail Devito, Manager, Accounting and Reporting
- Jan Richardson, Manager, Homelessness
- Susan Godin, Manager, Program Supports and Development
- Elisabeth White, Manager, Employment and Strategic Initiatives

SUBMITTED BY:	RECOMMENDED BY:
	
PINA SAURO MANAGER, ONTARIO WORKS OPERATIONS	LYNNE LIVINGSTONE ACTING ONTARIO WORKS ADMINISTRATOR

c. Louise Stevens, Director Municipal Housing, City of London