



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: April 12, 2023
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Report#: SOC23-014
Attachments: None

Title: One-Time Funding – Additional Ontario Works Caseworker

Objective: To provide an update to Council regarding a successful one-time funding request from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS).

Background: As part of the 2023 MCCSS Ontario Works budget package released on January 30, 2023, there was an opportunity for one-time funding requests to be submitted for review with a due date of February 10, 2023. The City of Stratford Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) identified a need within the Ontario Works Division for additional caseworker support as a result of the upcoming Employment Services Transformation, as well as challenges still being felt as a result of centralized intake.

The Employment Services Transformation (EST) transition planning is currently underway with a launch date of April 1, 2023. As a Phase 1 EST site, the transition to EST will create workload challenges as we work through process changes, staffing re-allocations (where necessary), an increased focus on Common Assessment (CA) and Action Plans (AP), and the goals and KPIs set in our client transition plan. Based on the integrated case management model being co-designed with the Service System Manager (SSM), it is expected that caseworker time spent working with Employment Ontario (EO) providers will also increase significantly as more intensive, wrap-around case management supports are provided in conjunction with our SSM and EO partners.

Analysis: Presently, a focus on completing the common assessment (CA) and action plans (AP) is taking time away from other activities that case workers are required to complete. An additional caseworker, on a short-term basis, will allow the Ontario Works department to turn our attention to EST fully and make a more successful transition to the new case management model, including dedicating more time to completing CA and APs with ongoing clients and ensuring Employment Ontario referrals are sustained and are of a high quality.

An additional caseworker will allow our office to have the ability to be more likely to successfully achieve the outcomes being targeted as a Phase 1 EST site, with regard to the percentage of caseload who exit to employment. Working closely with the SSM as we co-design the Integrated Case Management (ICM) model, we also understand there will be added pressures on OW caseworkers to be more active in case conferences, regularly check in with clients who are both working with EO as well as those who are not, and provide wrap-around supports in conjunction with EO to ensure stability is maintained while clients work through employment referrals. An additional caseworker will not only help support operations within the office, they will also help in sustaining increased referrals to our EO partners and allow us to have an increased ability to manage the forthcoming ICM model.

The focus of this request was to increase our achievement of the outcomes detailed in our Ministry business plan and to ensure we are delivering a high level of service to an increasing caseload with complex needs.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

Due to a six-month caseworker vacancy, we are able to afford the \$46,500 cost-shared portion of this position without increasing the Ontario Works wages within the 2023 budget. The Province of Ontario's portion of the position will be \$46,500, which is being received as a one-time grant. Therefore, there is no anticipated impact to the tax levy because of this position.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

There is no anticipated impact to the 2024 operating budget as the unspent portion of the caseworker wage approved in 2023 will be deferred into 2024 and used to fund the position until it reaches its 12-month maximum timeframe.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships

Partnering with the community to make plans for our collective priorities in arts, culture, heritage and more. Communicating clearly with the public around our plans and activities.

Widening our Economic Opportunities

Strengthening Stratford's economy by developing, attracting and retaining a diversity of businesses and talent.

Alignment with One Planet Principles:

Health and Happiness

Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing.

Equity and Local Economy

Creating safe, equitable places to live and work which support local prosperity and international fair trade.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled "One-Time Funding – Additional Ontario Works Caseworker" (SOC23-014) be received for information.

Prepared by: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
Recommended by: Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Joan Thomson, Chief Administrative Officer