



## **The Corporation of the City of Stratford Social Services Sub-committee MINUTES**

Date: November 13, 2024  
Time: 4:30 P.M.  
Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

Sub-committee Present: Councillor Henderson - Chair Presiding, Councillor Briscoe - Vice Chair, Councillor Nijjar, Councillor Wordofa

Regrets: Councillor Biehn

Staff Present: Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Alex Burgess - Manager of Ontario Works, Miranda Franken - Council Clerk Secretary

### **1. Call to Order**

The Chair called the Meeting to Order.

Land Acknowledgment

Moment of Silent Reflection

Respectful Conduct Statement

### **2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof**

The *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act* requires any member of Council declaring a pecuniary interest and the general nature thereof, where the interest of a member of Council has not been disclosed by reason of the member's absence from the meeting, to disclose the interest at the first open meeting attended by the member of Council and otherwise comply with the *Act*.

Name, Item and General Nature of Pecuniary Interest

No disclosures of pecuniary interest were made by a Member at the November 13, 2024, Social Services Sub-committee meeting.

**3. Delegations**

None scheduled.

**4. Report of the Manager of Ontario Works**

**4.1 Update on the Provincial Centralized Intake Initiative (SOC24-013)**

**Sub-committee Discussion:** The Manager of Ontario Works presented the report, highlighting the following:

- the Provincial Intake and Benefit Administration Unit (IBAU), a branch of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, now being responsible for processing Ontario Works (OW) applications;
- the Provincial change taking effect for 10 selected municipalities as of October 1;
- IBAU currently handling applications for Stratford and Perth County with option for local assistance and the IBAU files being passed to the local office as partially completed or grandfathered files;
- IBAU handling the intake process through online or phone applications and granting OW services;
- applications no longer being available at the local office under this change;
- clients with flagged applications through IBAU, being processed and transferred to the local office to complete the application;
- the initiative being launched to the remaining 37 service managers in 2025, including the local office, with no date being clarified;
- the local office continuing to process applications for applicants who are under 18 requiring a trustee, those with temporary care assistants, and clients requiring emergency assistance;

- staff anticipate challenges in the early stages of the transition and are hopeful issues will be addressed following the roll out with the initial 10 municipalities;
- staff anticipate challenges for clients who typically apply at the office and clients with no fixed address;
- following a launch date, staff will work with the Stratford Library and Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) to prepare for an anticipated increase in the need for computer access;
- staff are also being trained extensively on changes as they occur and computers are being set up in the lobby;
- under the Ontario Works Act, the Director of Social Services is identified as the Ontario Works Administrator;
- there being a regulatory change occurring at the same time as this launch, with the local office becoming a delivery partner and a Provincially Designated Agent to be identified as the Ontario Works Administrator and delivery agent;
- no financial implications having been identified as a result of these changes; and
- staff being hopeful the changes will allow for increased meaningful time with clients working towards employment and self sufficiency goals.

Discussion on this matter took place between Sub-committee and staff. Highlights of the discussion included the following:

- the current system for processing applications being explained;
- staff encouraging Huron Perth Community Legal Clinic involvement from internal review through to SBT as this is a complex process and complex legislation;
- under the future model, the IBAU to send the letters deeming ineligible applications, then hearing the internal reviews and referring to the SBT;

- staff being unable to provide support during this process as clients are not involved with a case worker if the application has been denied;
- 80% of clients currently applying online with the remaining 20% applying over the phone or in the local office;
- concerns with the transition having been expressed including that the most vulnerable in the community may be at risk with the new system;
- staff advocating for better turnaround time on issuance of cheques as the mandated processing time is 4 days, which is often not being met;
- staff reviewing a change in service delivery by having a staff member available to assist with application submissions on computers to be located in the lobby;
- Provincial messaging being centralization of the intake process and reduced administration burden to allow more staff time with clients doing high impact case management;
- this being a first step in the 2019 provincial plan to modernize social assistance;
- identification and filing taxes being two of the largest barriers for clients;
- through the action plan, staff continuing to identify needs for ID and are able to provide support covering cost of birth certificate applications and helping with submissions;
- clients without a bank account being given Reloadable Payment Cards (RPC);
- fewer than 30% of clients receiving cheques, and staff aiming to transition all clients to the RPC; and
- staff having access to large volume of client information and expecting the province will continue to provide reports, making data available to support the caseloads.

Motion by Councillor Briscoe

**Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled, "Update on the Provincial Centralized Intake Initiative" (SOC24-013), be received for information.**

**Carried**

## **5. Department Update**

The following Department Update Infographics of September, 2024 were provided for the information of Sub-committee:

- Monthly Children's Services Report
- Monthly Homelessness Report
- Monthly Housing Report
- Monthly Ontario Works Report

**Sub-committee Discussion:** The Director of Social Services provided the department update, highlighting the following:

- five households having been housed in September;
- the Sports and Leisure Program being delivered through the City's Grant Program offering up to \$500 annually for children in families actively on social assistance to access sports or leisure programs;
- 2,509 children on waitlists for licensed daycare;
- there being continued work towards capital funding to build additional licensed daycare facility;
- 25 licenses available through the local office for home day care candidates to become licensed; and
- if the home daycares are full with 5 children each, this could create 125 spaces.

**6. Next Sub-committee Meeting**

The next Social Services Sub-committee meeting is January 14, 2025, at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall, pending Council approval of the 2025 Sub-committee Schedule.

**7. Adjournment**

Motion by Councillor Briscoe

**Sub-committee Decision: THAT the Social Services Sub-committee meeting adjourn.**

**Carried**

Meeting Start Time: 4:30 P.M.

Meeting End Time: 5:04 P.M.