



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: January 14, 2025
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Report Number: SOC25-001
Attachments: 2024 Ontario Works Business Plan

Title: Ontario Works 2024 Business Plan

Objective: To provide Council with an update regarding the 2024 Ontario Works Business Plan that was submitted to and approved by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.

Background: Each year, as a condition of receiving Ontario Works funding from the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, service managers are required to submit an Ontario Works business plan that adheres to the guidelines provided by the Province. In this plan, the local office is able to provide further details to the Ministry regarding local labour market information, service levels, caseload information and how the local office plans to meet the requirements and mandate set forth by the Ministry. Previously, business plans were required every two years with addendums or updates being provided in the second year. The current business plan, submitted and approved in 2024, is the first in a new model whereby plans will cover a 4-year period with an addendum due each year thereafter. This current business plan also marked the first year that the Ministry provided a comprehensive template which was to be used by all service managers, as opposed to previous years whereby each individual service manager could determine what to include, and what format to follow.

Analysis: The 2024 Business Plan was comprised of four primary sections:

- 1) Conduct Community Analysis – This section focused on two primary components as the third component was only required by Prototype sites, and the City of Stratford is considered an EST Phase 1 site. The two primary components were a review of key caseload demographics as well as a community needs assessment.
- 2) Review Performance Outcome Targets – This section does not require a written response but rather requires a review of the outcome targets set in the budget document.

- 3) Develop Service Strategies – This section included a risk assessment using a Ministry-provided template. The risk assessment focused on any potential risks or impacts that may hamper the ability of the municipality to achieve the performance outcome targets. The next part of this section was a focused Diversity, Equity and Inclusion strategy. The department worked closely with the DEI Manager to ensure the strategy reflected the corporate direction as well as the uniqueness of the Ontario Works division. The final portion of this section required logic models to be created for the four performance outcomes, focusing on how strategic activities of the team will help achieve the outcomes.
- 4) Manage Program Delivery – This section required a comprehensive review of local program management activities to ensure alignment with expectations and legislative requirements. The two primary written components required an explanation of how the division plans to meet service delivery expectations as well as monitoring activities that ensure legislative compliance with various requirements related to quality assurance and financial expenditures. There were two privacy and risk-related templates that had to be completed, and these were worked on in conjunction with the IT team. The final portion related to analysis of resources was completed as part of the budget submission package.

The business plan and corresponding budget were accepted and approved by the Ministry in March, 2024. The 2025 addendum is due in February and will be submitted with the corresponding 2025 budget. The Ministry anticipates that the contract for 2025 will be executed by early April.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

The Business Plan and corresponding budget are required to be submitted to receive Provincial funding for the Ontario Works program. By receiving approval of the business plan and budget, the municipality received \$1,248,700 in 2024 and is expected to receive \$1,538,700 in 2025.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

As mentioned in the report, the Business Plan submitted was a 4-year plan with addendums required each year. To continue receiving funding, the business plan was required to be completed and approved, which it was. Each year, the addendum and year-specific budget are required to be submitted and approved so that the municipality can continue to receive Provincial funding.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Build Housing Stability

This report aligns with this priority as funding provided through the Ontario Works program helps vulnerable community members receiving basic financial assistance and other forms of support to ensure they attain housing or remain housed when faced with financial difficulties. The Ontario Works team also operates the Housing Stability Bank

on behalf of the Social Services team, which helps to increase the ability for members of our community to find and retain housing through the provision of one-time financial assistance for items like last month's rent and the payment of rental arrears or utility arrears.

Work Together For Greater Impact

This report aligns with this priority as the Ontario Works program partners with and funds community partners who help to improve the lives of the residents of this community. The local Ontario Works office also utilizes funding received to implement local programs that meet the needs of the community while working to support our clients on their path to self-sufficiency.

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, "Ontario Works 2024 Business Plan" (SOC25-001), 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