

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: July 15, 2025
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Colleen Steckly, Administrative Assistant to the Director of Social Services
Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Report Number: SOC25-008
Attachments: None

Title: Annual Community Income Tax Clinic for Completion of 2024 Returns

Objective: To provide Council with an update on the annual community income tax clinic serving low-income residents of the City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys, and County of Perth.

Background: Since 1989, the City of Stratford has coordinated this clinic with the invaluable support of local accounting firms, specifically this year Famme & Co. Professional Corporation and McCutchen & Pearce Professional Corporation. These partners have consistently offered their services free of charge, this year enabling us to support the completion of 122 individual income tax returns.

Analysis: This year upheld the practice initiated during the pandemic, utilizing a successful drop-off and pick-up method, which extends our capacity to serve more residents and provides additional preparation time for our partners.

Enhanced communication strategies ensured broad awareness, involving partner agencies, multiple media platforms, city transit displays and direct notifications to Ontario Works clients.

There were 132 appointment slots generously made available by the participating firms, with a first-come, first-served approach.

Program Eligibility:

- Social Assistance recipients (Ontario Works, ODSP) with a Form T5007.
- Seniors 65+ with single incomes less than \$25,396 and couples with incomes less than \$34,346.

- Other individuals with single incomes less than \$16,000 and couple incomes less than \$32,000.

Alternatives were also made available to potential participants through partnerships with The Salvation Army in Stratford/St. Marys and North Perth and the Stratford Public Library. Additional tax assistance needs included multiple-year filings, estate returns, and convenience to office or readiness by the deadline were also factors.

The clinic ensures participants are equipped to maximize income through federal benefits, essential for accessing resources such as Rent-Geared-to-Income housing and the Canada Child Benefit. The effort reinforces financial stability by promoting access to benefits like the GST/HST credit.

Continued support of this vital community service aids in addressing financial disparities by providing necessary tax services free of charge, further cementing its positive impact on our residents' lives.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

There is no cost to the Corporation other than some administrative staff time to coordinate with the accounting firms and schedule appointments, which did not have an impact on this year's budget or to service delivery.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

There will be no future year impact relating to the clinic held in 2025.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Work Together For Greater Impact

This report aligns with this priority as it highlights the coordination of a program that supports residents accessing resources to receive all federal benefits available to them, maximizing incomes.

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.

Culture and Community

Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities and promoting a culture of sustainable living.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the City of Stratford issue a thank you to all businesses that provided their support and services during the Annual Community Income Tax Clinic.

Prepared by: Colleen Steckly, Administrative Assistant to the Director of Social Services

Recommended by: Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Adam Betteridge, Interim Chief Administrative Officer