



The Corporation of the City of Stratford  
Social Services Sub-committee  
Open Session  
AGENDA

**Date:** Tuesday, November 12, 2019  
**Time:** 4:30 P.M.  
**Location:** Council Chamber, City Hall  
**Sub-committee Present:** Councillor Henderson - Chair Presiding, Councillor Burbach, Councillor Ritsma, Councillor Vassilakos  
**Staff Present:** Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Eden Grodzinski - Manager of Housing, Alex Burgess - Manager of Ontario Works, Jodi Akins - Council Clerk Secretary

Pages

**1. Call to Order**

The Chair to call the Meeting to Order.

Councillor Bunting provided regrets for this meeting.

**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

### 3. Delegations

None scheduled.

### 4. Report of the Manager of Housing

#### 4.1 Community Housing Renewal (SOC19-019)

3 - 6

Motion by \_\_\_\_\_

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled "Community Housing Renewal: Regulatory Changes to Improve Waiting Lists and Simplify Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) Calculations" be received for information.

#### 4.2 Update on Housing and Homelessness Plan (SOC19-021)

7 - 8

Motion by \_\_\_\_\_

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled "The Status of the 5-Year Review of the Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for (2014-2024)" be received for information.

### 5. Report of the Manager of Ontario Works

#### 5.1 Cancellation of Legislative Changes (SOC19-020)

9 - 10

Motion by \_\_\_\_\_

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled "Government of Ontario Cancels Changes to Ontario Works Legislation" be received for information.

### 6. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Social Services Sub-committee meeting is December 10, 2019 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

### 7. Adjournment

Meeting Start Time:

Meeting End Time:

Motion by \_\_\_\_\_

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




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## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** November 12, 2019  
**To:** Social Services Sub-committee  
**From:** Jeneane Fast, Housing Stability Policy & Program Coordinator  
 Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing  
 Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services  
**Report#:** SOC19-019  
**Attachments:** None

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**Title:** Community Housing Renewal

**Objective:** To inform the Social Services Sub-Committee and Council of the changes to community housing through upcoming regulatory changes.

**Background:** In April 2019, the provincial government released the Community Housing Renewal Strategy, a multi-year plan to stabilize and grow Ontario's community housing sector.<sup>1</sup> The strategy includes three strategic outcomes:

1. Increased supply and appropriate mix of affordable and adequate housing;
2. People have improved access to affordable housing and supports that meet their needs to achieve housing stability; and
3. Improved efficiency of the community housing system to ensure value for money and long-term sustainability.

In September 2019, the province filed new regulations designed to address the third strategic outcome and transform the current community housing system into one that is more effective and efficient. The amended regulations are intended to: 1) Create safer communities; 2) Improve waiting lists; and 3) Simplify RGI rules.

### Analysis:

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<sup>1</sup> The Province of Ontario defines 'community housing' – previously called 'social housing' - as housing that is owned and operated by non-profit housing corporations, housing co-operatives, and municipal governments or district social services administration boards. Locally, this includes the 663 units managed by the Perth and Stratford Housing Corporation and the 415 units operated by 11 non-profit and co-operative housing providers.

**1) Create safer communities:** If a household was ordered evicted from community housing by the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) due to illegal activity and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the household would pose a risk to the safety of other people (e.g. tenants, staff, and contractors), a community housing provider has the authority to refuse to re-house that household. Illegal activity under this amendment means:

- Production, trafficking, or possession for the purpose of trafficking an illegal drug;
- Physical violence/harm, attempted physical violence/harm, or a risk of harm to another person; and
- Human trafficking or use of threats to, intimidation of, and harassment of another person.

This ability to refuse applies:

- For a period of five years from when the household was ordered evicted;
- Regardless of whether the eviction was from the same or a different community housing provider; and
- Equally to special needs housing units and a household with previous membership in a housing co-op terminated by the LTB due to illegal activity.

This new rule **came into effect on September 23, 2019.**

## **2) Improve waiting lists:**

**Refusals:** The centralized waiting list is moving from a three-refusal to a one-refusal system; this means that a household is no longer eligible for RGI assistance if it refuses the first offer for an RGI unit, except in extenuating circumstances as determined by the Service Manager (e.g. hospitalization, unsafe building for SPP applicant due to proximity of abuser). To become eligible for RGI assistance, the household would need to reapply on the centralized waiting list.

This rule applies to all applicants on the centralized waiting list, including those with Special Provincial Priority (SPP) but does not apply to offers for a portable housing benefit. Service Managers are required to have rules for households to indicate preferences for units and to notify all applicants of the new provincial rules.

The new rule **will come into force on January 1, 2020 and Service Managers are required to apply the rule no later than January 1, 2021.**

**Transfers:** Previously, tenant households requesting a transfer to an RGI unit operated by a different housing provider would need to be placed back on the centralized waiting list in order to be eligible for the transfer. A regulatory change removes this requirement, providing the Service Manager more flexibility in determining how to manage transfers; Service

Managers are no longer required to add the household to the centralized waiting list, but can continue to do so at their discretion.

This change **comes into force on January 1, 2020.**

**3) Simplify RGI rules:** In order to simplify calculations:

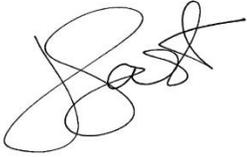
- Income will be calculated annually, based on 30% of adjusted family net income (AFNI) as determined by the tenant's most recent income tax return; filing income taxes annually is a condition of continued eligibility although under extenuating circumstances, staff will have discretion to determine if a household remains eligible despite not filing income taxes.
- An amount (\$75 or \$150 depending on household size) of family unit employment income will continue to be exempt from calculations; however simpler criteria will be used to determine the amount.
- Tenants are no longer required to report an increase in income between annual reviews; in-year reviews only need to be completed under specific circumstances (e.g. if there is a significant, permanent decrease in household income, or a change to household composition).
- All tenants in full-time studies will have their income exempt from the rent calculation.
- The length of time RGI households are able to pay market rent before losing eligibility for assistance is extended from 12 to 24 consecutive months.
- The minimum rent will be increased from \$85 to \$129/month on July 1, 2020 and will be subject to phase-in for existing tenants paying minimum rent.

The new regulations **come into force on July 1, 2020. Service Managers have the choice to implement these changes on July 1, 2020 or July 1, 2021.**

The Housing Division will be working on implementing these changes in early 2020. This will include a review of the local policies under the Service Manager's Social Housing Directives. The Housing Division will also develop a communications strategy to inform applicants on the centralized waiting list, current tenants, and the public on these regulatory changes.

**Financial Impact:** As tenants will no longer be required to report an increase in income between reviews, and as there have been no announcements that the transfer payments received from the Province will increase, the Service Manager may be required to provide more subsidies and/or receive less rental revenue. Also, the ability of tenants in receipt of RGI to be able to complete internal transfers more freely within the Service Manager area may result in higher unit turnover costs.

**Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled "Community Housing Renewal: Regulatory Changes to Improve Waiting Lists and Simplify Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) Calculations" be received for information.**



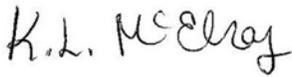
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Jeneane Fast, Housing Stability Policy & Program Coordinator



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Edén Grodzinski, Manager of Housing



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Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services



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Joan Thomson, Acting Chief Administrative Officer




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## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** November 12, 2019  
**To:** Social Services Sub-committee  
**From:** Jeneane Fast, Housing Stability Policy & Program Coordinator  
 Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing  
 Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services  
**Report#:** SOC19-021  
**Attachments:** None

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**Title:** Update on Housing and Homelessness Plan

**Objective:** To update Sub-Committee and Council on the status of the review process and timelines for the updated Housing and Homelessness Plan.

**Background:** In its role as the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM), the Social Services Department is responsible for reviewing its 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for the Service Manager area (Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys) every five years, as per the Housing Services Act, 2011. The framework for this review, based on 8 policy directives outlined in a 2016 provincial policy statement, was described in a previous report (**SOC18-007**).

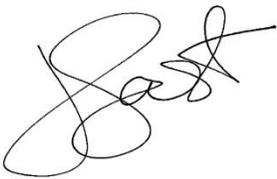
**Analysis:** In fall of 2018, we began a review of the 10-Year Plan. This included an updated assessment of local housing need and demand, an evaluation of the existing vision and strategic priorities, comprehensive consultations with community stakeholders, and an examination of supplementary sources of information. As shared in an earlier report (**SOC19-009**), the initial deadline for submitting the completed review to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) was extended from June 30, 2019 to December 31, 2019.

Unlike previous deadlines related the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan and its Annual Reports, the Province has requested that the results of the review process be submitted to MMAH **prior to** an approval through municipal council. This is to ensure that updated Plans are consistent with the 2016 policy statement.

For this reason, the updated Plan will be presented at Sub-Committee and Council later than originally anticipated, once the Ministry has provided feedback on the review results, likely in spring 2020.

**Financial Impact:** There is no new or additional financial impact for the City associated with this report.

**Staff Recommendation:** THAT the report titled "The Status of the 5-Year Review of the Stratford, Perth County, and St. Marys 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for (2014-2024)" be received for information.



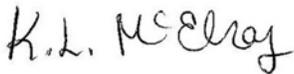
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Jeneane Fast, Housing Stability Policy & Program Coordinator



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Eden Grodzinski, Manager of Housing



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Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services



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Joan Thomson, Acting Chief Administrative Officer




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## MANAGEMENT REPORT

**Date:** November 12, 2019  
**To:** Social Services Sub-committee  
**From:** Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works  
 Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services  
**Report#:** SOC19-020  
**Attachments:** None

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**Title:** Cancellation of Legislative Changes

**Objective:** To provide Council with an update regarding the cancellation of changes to Ontario Works legislation.

**Background:** The Provincial government's plan for Social Assistance Reform was documented in report titled "Province announces plan for Social Assistance Reform" (**SOC19-005**). The report highlights changes to the earnings exemption which were reported to take place on November 1, 2019. The changes would increase the flat rate exemption from \$200 to \$300, but the amount that is deducted after the flat rate exemption would increase from 50% of their income to 75%. These changes would also take effect after 1 month, as opposed to the current 3 month wait.

The Provincial Government had also announced that the Transitional Child Benefit (TCB) would be cancelled effective November 1, 2019. This benefit provides up to \$230 per child on Ontario Works for parents not in receipt of the full amount of the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) such as individuals who have not filed their taxes, parents who are newcomers/refugees, or parents who are not receiving the full entitlement of OCB due to previous tax year earnings.

**Analysis:** The cancellation of the changes to the program provides more financial security for the clients in receipt of Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program who were working or receiving TCB as a supplemental source of income. The changes are supported by municipal delivery agents across the Province due to the negative impacts they potentially would have had on recipients of the program. The cancellation of TCB would have led to a reduction in over-all income for anyone relying on this source of income to maintain accommodation costs and provide for their children.

Clients who are currently employed will see the earnings deduction be maintained at the current rate, meaning that those currently employed will be able to maintain current income levels and will not be negatively impacted by the increased earnings deductions.

The expected impact on caseload size with the increased earnings deductions was quite minimal for the City of Stratford Consolidated Municipal Service Manager; therefore, the cancellation of these legislative changes will maintain the current caseload size.

While these programs will be maintained for the time being to provide continuity of services, the Province has indicated that it will continue to focus on its broader plan to review and improve social assistance and employment programs.<sup>1</sup>

**Financial Impact:** There is no financial impact as a result of these legislative changes.

**Alignment with Strategic Priorities:**

**Widening our Economic Opportunities**

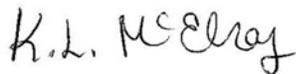
Strengthening Stratford's economy by developing, attracting and retaining a diversity of businesses and talent.

**Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled "Government of Ontario Cancels Changes to Ontario Works Legislation" be received for information.**




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Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works




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Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services




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Joan Thomson, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

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<sup>1</sup> "Province Rolls Back Planned Changes to Social Assistance". October 3, 2019.  
[https://omssa.com/news\\_manager.php?page=19560](https://omssa.com/news_manager.php?page=19560)