



**The Corporation of the City of Stratford
Social Services Committee
Open Session
AGENDA**

Date: Monday, February 24, 2020
Time: 7:10 P.M.
Location: Council Chamber, City Hall
Committee Present: Councillor Henderson - Chair Presiding, Councillor Bunting - Vice Chair, Mayor Mathieson, Councillor Beatty, Councillor Clifford, Councillor Gaffney, Councillor Ingram, Councillor Ritsma, Councillor Sebben, Councillor Vassilakos
Staff Present: Joan Thomson - Acting Chief Administrative Officer, Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Tatiana Dafoe - Acting Clerk, Michael Humble - Director of Corporate Services, Ed Dujlovic - Director of Infrastructure and Development Services, David St. Louis - Director of Community Services, Jacqueline Mockler - Director of Human Resources, John Paradis - Fire Chief, Jodi Akins - Council Clerk Secretary

Pages

1. Call to Order

The Chair to call the Meeting to Order.

Councillor Burbach 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. Sub-committee Minutes

5 - 10

Sub-committee minutes are attached for background regarding the discussion held at the February 11, 2020 Sub-committee meeting.

4. Delegations

None scheduled.

5. Report of the Manager of Ontario Works

5.1 MCCSS Funding, Target and Policy Changes (SOC20-003)

11 - 17

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled "MCCSS Funding, Target and Policy Changes" be received for information.

AND THAT Council be requested to petition the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to:

1. Reverse budget cuts made and planned for the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services;
2. Work collaboratively with Consolidated Municipal Service Managers who are above the provincial median in regards to outcome targets rather than penalizing those Consolidated Municipal Service Managers for not meeting a continuous improvement plan of 3%;
3. Increase social assistance rates;
4. Maintain the current Ontario Disability Support Program definition; and
5. Respect the rights of people living with a disability to participate in decisions affecting them by creating a meaningful process of co-reviewing and co-designing programs of social assistance and the adjudication processes.

Motion by _____

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled "MCCSS Funding, Target and Policy Changes" be received for information;

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5. Respect the rights of people living with a disability to participate in decisions affecting them by creating a meaningful process of co-reviewing and co-designing programs of social assistance and the adjudication processes.

AND THAT a copy of the resolution be provided to MPP Randy Pettapiece with an invitation to speak to Social Services on the impact of the proposed changes.

5.2 A Summary of the Eat, Play, Learn Program (SOC20-004) 18 - 21

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled "A Summary of the Eat, Play, Learn Program" be received for information.

Motion by _____

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled "A Summary of the Eat, Play, Learn Program" be received for information.

5.3 Family Services Perth-Huron Agreement (SOC20-005) 22 - 24

Staff Recommendation: THAT the Mayor and Acting Clerk be authorized to enter into an agreement with Family Services Perth-Huron to deliver a counselling program to Social Services Department participants, as outlined in the agreement.

Motion by _____

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the Mayor and Acting Clerk be authorized to enter into an agreement with Family Services Perth-Huron

to deliver a counselling program to Social Services Department participants, as outlined in the agreement.

6. Adjournment

Meeting Start Time:

Meeting End Time:

Motion by _____

Committee Decision: THAT the Social Services Committee meeting adjourn.



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

Date: February 11, 2020
 Time: 3:30 P.M.
 Location: Council Chamber, City Hall

Sub-committee Present: Councillor Henderson - Chair Presiding, Councillor Burbach, Councillor Ritsma, Councillor Vassilakos

Regrets: Councillor Bunting - Vice Chair

Staff Present: Kim McElroy - Director of Social Services, Alex Burgess - Manager of Ontario Works, Jodi Akins - Council Clerk Secretary, Eden Grodzinski – Manager of Housing, Jeff Wilson – Manager of Children’s Services

1. Call to Order

The Chair called 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

No disclosures of pecuniary interest were made at the February 11, 2020 Social

Services Sub-committee meeting.

3. Delegations

None scheduled.

4. Report of the Manager of Ontario Works

4.1 MCCSS Funding, Target and Policy Changes (SOC20-003)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled "MCCSS Funding, Target and Policy Changes" be received for information.

AND THAT Council be requested to petition the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to:

1. Reverse budget cuts made and planned for the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services;
2. Work collaboratively with Consolidated Municipal Service Managers who are above the provincial median in regards to outcome targets rather than penalizing those Consolidated Municipal Service Managers for not meeting a continuous improvement plan of 3%;
3. Increase social assistance rates;
4. Maintain the current Ontario Disability Support Program definition; and
5. Respect the rights of people living with a disability to participate in decisions affecting them by creating a meaningful process of co-reviewing and co-designing programs of social assistance and the adjudication processes.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Manager of Ontario Works explained the funding model for program delivery is generally 100% funded by the provincial government but there is a 50/50 component as between the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager and Province.

The 2019 outcomes were not reached due to the goals being unrealistic. Two business cases have been sent to the Ministry asking for reconsideration of the targets.

In 2018, above average outcomes were achieved in 2018 which has now resulted in them being penalized as they were required to beat those

outcomes by 3% in 2019 and another 3% over 2019 actuals for 2020. This would require almost 31% of the caseload to exit to employment each month.

The most recent business case was explained, noting it ties directly to the cyber incident last April and staff's inability to close out files in May creating low numbers in April. The Director of Ontario Works has advised they will not remove April from the numbers.

Above-average outcomes have continually been maintained over the provincial averages and median, with the exception of average earnings per case.

There is potential for claw backs that may occur from not meeting 2019 targets. Staff have been told it would be discussed at the end of their two year cycle with the Ministry but will continue working to meet the targets.

The 2020 budget was frozen at 2018 actuals and some background was provided. Concerns are being raised at all provincial tables staff sit at.

Information was provided regarding changes to the Overpayment Recovery Rate and staff's concerns about the effects on clients.

There is discussion on changing the definition of disability and the ramifications of such changes to clients were explained by the Manager as outlined in the report. From the service manager perspective, caseload numbers would be expected to rise.

Information was provided on the current application process, as well as the proposed changes to the adjudication process.

In response to whether there are sufficient staff to meet the challenges of assisting clients with applying for Ontario Works, the Director stated that acuity levels of clients are high, with severe barriers to employment and housing, and continue to rise.

A Sub-committee member asked whether staff have numbers on how many people currently on ODSP would be removed if the definition of disability was changed. The Director responded that they will be grandfathered but do not have exact numbers. The clients with a two-year review are clients she would be concerned about.

Motion by Councillor Ritsma

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled “MCCSS Funding, Target and Policy Changes” be received for information;

THAT Council be requested to petition the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to:

- 1. Reverse budget cuts made and planned for the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services;**
- 2. Work collaboratively with Consolidated Municipal Service Managers who are above the provincial median in regards to outcome targets rather than penalizing those Consolidated Municipal Service Managers for not meeting a continuous improvement plan of 3%;**
- 3. Increase social assistance rates;**
- 4. Maintain the current Ontario Disability Support Program definition; and**
- 5. Respect the rights of people living with a disability to participate in decisions affecting them by creating a meaningful process of co-reviewing and co-designing programs of social assistance and the adjudication processes.**

AND THAT a copy of the resolution be provided to MPP Randy Pettapiece with an invitation to speak to Social Services on the impact of the proposed changes.

In response to what the percentages would be if April 2019 was removed from the calculation, the Manager of Ontario Works advised that it would be 31.42% for target 3 and 2.15% for target 4, which is still a bit short. The Director stated that other municipalities are struggling with the same issues.

It was suggested that the MPP be brought in for discussion on this matter.

The Chair called the question on the motion on the floor.

Carried

4.2 A Summary of the Eat, Play, Learn Program (SOC20-004)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled "A Summary of the Eat, Play, Learn Program" be received for information.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Manager of Ontario Works advised that this program was piloted in 2017 in partnership with Stratford Zehrs and was based off a program in Huron County.

Background on the program and its participants and activities was provided. The program has had positive impacts on the participants and received positive feedback. It has since been expanded to Listowel in conjunction with the Health Unit.

The cost is 100% provincially funded through the Employment Supports portfolio of the Ontario Works budget.

It was stated by a Sub-committee member that the return on investment is exceptional.

A suggestion was made to incorporate experience panels to create opportunities to learn what they can do better. It has been found that it is empowering for people to provide their input in this way and the parents may have insight on how others can be reached who may benefit from the program.

As to whether the families have any input on what appliances would be useful for them in their homes, the Manager advised that the first iteration of the program was chosen for them, however, exiting parents could be surveyed on what would be most helpful going forward.

Motion by Councillor Vassilakos

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the report titled "A Summary of the Eat, Play, Learn Program" be received for information.

Carried

4.3 Family Services Perth-Huron Agreement (SOC20-005)

Staff Recommendation: THAT the Mayor and Acting Clerk be authorized to enter into an agreement with Family Services Perth-Huron to deliver a counselling program to Social Services Department participants, as outlined in the agreement.

Sub-committee Discussion: The Director of Social Services advised this contract has been in place since 2007 and is up for renewal.

Traditionally, caseworkers would identify clients who could benefit from family counselling and would make referrals. They have seen changes since 2007 and it was decided to overhaul the contract to model what staff are seeing in-house.

The program has also been expanded to all Social Service's clients. One on one counselling is still available but many other services have been added to support clients including: neighbour dispute resolution, hoarding support, life stabilization, couples and group sessions and online counselling services.

The contract has also been amended to permit "drop-in" services, as well as an additional \$10,000 if enhanced services are needed.

Motion by Councillor Burbach

Sub-committee Recommendation: THAT the Mayor and Acting Clerk be authorized to enter into an agreement with Family Services Perth-Huron to deliver a counselling program to Social Services Department participants, as outlined in the agreement.

Carried

5. Next Sub-committee Meeting

The next Social Services Sub-committee meeting is March 10, 2020 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chamber, City Hall.

6. Adjournment

Motion by Councillor Vassilakos

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

Carried

Meeting Start Time: 3:30 p.m.

Meeting End Time: 4:04 p.m.



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: February 11, 2020
To: Social Services Sub-Committee
From: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Report#: SOC20-003
Attachments: None

Title: MCCSS Funding, Target and Policy Changes

Objective: To provide Council with an update on the 2019/2020 Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) funding changes and the potential impacts in funding to the Ontario Works program as a result of the Ministry imposed targets that were set for the 2020 budget cycle.

Background: The City of Stratford is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) for the City of Stratford, Town of St Marys and Perth County. The Ontario Works division directly operates the Ontario Works program for these three municipalities, which impacts approximately 1100 citizens across our catchment area. The Ontario Works Act and its regulations include approximately 800 directives which govern how staff delivers the Ontario Works program, including basic assistance such as food and shelter, and employment support. Caseworkers in the Ontario Works program work closely with their clients to build trust, establish rapport, and address the various needs and barriers that clients are facing. They focus on life stabilization and moving towards self-sufficiency through various streams such as direct employment counselling, referrals to community partners, referrals to mental health and addictions support and active case management with their clients. Funding of the Basic Financial Assistance portion of the Ontario Works program was uploaded to the Province as of 2018, whereby the province now funds 100% of this portfolio. Please see Table 1 below for the details regarding the upload of this funding and the timeline over which this gradually occurred. This table is taken directly from the Ontario Works Directive 13.1 – Cost Sharing.

Table 1 - Ontario Works Cost Sharing of Basic Financial Assistance								
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Ongoing
Municipal/ First Nations Share	17.2%	14.2%	11.4%	8.6%	5.8%	2.8%	0%	0%
Provincial Share	82.8%	85.8%	88.6%	91.4%	94.2%	97.2%	100%	100%

In addition to funding for Basic Financial Assistance, Program Delivery Funding is provided by MCCSS to support program administration. Funding is transferred to the CMSM based on the terms set forth in the MCCSS Service Contract. The first component of this funding is referred to as Outcomes Funding and is provided at the same upload rate as Basic Financial Assistance, which is 100% provincially funded. The second component is referred to as 50/50 funding, and is shared between the Province and CMSM at a rate of 50% respectively.

Since the Provincial funding upload occurred, the Ontario Works Division has operated within the allotted budget and has not requested additional municipal funding for the operation of this program. The program operation has always been absorbed within the funding allocation to prevent additional costs to municipal taxpayers.

The Ministry capped the budget submission for 2019 funding, and the 2020 funding portfolio, at the 2018 actuals. This does not take into account any unpaid absences, positional vacancies, operating levels and resources, contractual increases or potential caseload growth. The current budget levels that are being set can negatively impact service delivery if this pattern is to continue.

The Outcomes Funding portion is based on targets that are set by the Ministry, which were previously negotiated during the Service Plan and budget package review with the CMSM. The 2019 targets were prescribed by the Ministry, and were set at 3% higher than 2018 actuals. It has been identified by MCCSS at this time that 2020 targets will be set at 3% higher than 2019 actuals. Failure to meet the targets that have been put forth by the Ministry can result in a financial penalty/recovery of up to 15%, which totals approximately \$82,530 for the City of Stratford CMSM. After a review of 2019's outcomes we did not fully meet the Ministry's set target for our CMSM.

Analysis: The City of Stratford CMSM completed the Service Plan and Budget Package with MCCSS in July, 2019 (Report #SOC19-017). The Service plan identified the targets which must be met to avoid a potential financial penalty/recovery with regards to the Outcomes Funding that is provided by the Ministry. The City of Stratford had very good results in 2018, exceeding all of the targets put forth and exceeding the Provincial median for all four employment outcomes (Report #SOC19-10). In 2019, the CMSM made the

decision to be funded on two primary targets knowing it would be difficult to surpass 2018's outcomes in all four targets:

- 1) The percentage of cases closing which exited to employment
- 2) The overall percentage of caseload exiting to employment

In discussion with MCCSS during the Service Plan, it was identified that we must achieve 3% higher than our 2018 actuals. The CMSM identified that this was an unrealistic target, as 2018 exceeded our previous historical averages by a significant margin.

Below, in Table 2, the historical averages are listed from 2015-2019, for all four employment outcomes. The two targets that we are currently monitoring for the 2019-2020 Service Plan are targets #3 and #4.

Table 2: City of Stratford CMSM Employment Outcomes Averages					
Employment Outcome	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1. % of Caseload with Earnings	13.48%	18.03%	18.81%	17.87%	16.00%
2. Average Earnings per Case	\$757	\$736	\$764	\$905	\$857
3. % of Files Closing Exiting to Employment	14.77%	21.45%	22.01%	31.35%	29.90%
4. Overall % of Caseload Exiting to Employment	1.14%	1.90%	1.83%	2.51%	2.04%

As the table above shows, targets 3 and 4, were much higher than previous years, and exceeded the provincial median of 13.35% and 1.5%, respectively. Table 3 below shows the Provincial averages for these outcomes over the same time period:

Table 3: Provincial Employment Outcomes Averages					
Employment Outcome	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
1. % of Caseload with Earnings	10.58%	12.32%	12.96%	12.96%	13.20%
2. Average Earnings per Case	\$817	\$776	\$802	\$868	\$893
3. % of Files Closing Exiting to Employment	14.23%	14.93%	16.09%	18.00%	23.00%
4. Overall % of Caseload Exiting to Employment	0.79%	0.85%	0.87%	1.01%	1.29%

We have continually maintained above-average outcomes when compared to the province for employment outcomes #1, #3 and #4, as noted in Table 3 above. Historically, outcome #2 has been a statistic where we trended lower than the provincial average.

Due to our success in 2018, we are now being penalized in 2019 with regards to the targets we must meet. The CMSM submitted a business case to the Director of Ontario Works with MCCSS asking for reconsideration of the targets that were being set due to the fact that municipalities who achieved greater success in 2018 were now being penalized, and exceeding actuals by 3% was both unrealistic and inconsiderate of factors such as the Provincial median, and this municipality's success when compared against that median. The business case can be found in the Ontario Works Service plan, as it was also imbedded in this document to ensure attention was being brought to these factors. In return, the Province agreed to reduce the target to 2% greater than 2018 actuals, which is still an unrealistic target to meet considering all factors that contribute to employment outcomes

such as market volatility, the housing market, and client barriers. It has now been determined that 2020 targets will be set at 3% higher than 2019 actuals, penalizing us for reaching our target, if we are able to. This again sets an unrealistic expectation that does not focus on service delivery, holistic case management or life stabilization and in turn focuses on capturing statistics to meet funding requirements. The Director of Social Services has raised the Division's concerns on a number of occasions, at both Provincial and Ministry driven tables, and with our Program Supervisor and Program Manager at MCCSS. At this time our Program Supervisor believes the CMSM's case is salient and at the end of the two year cycle (2021) will utilize the information when assessing the potential impact of the CMSM not meeting the Ministry's targets if this transpires.

In Report #SOC17-020 presented in November of 2017, the details of the Province's Income Security Reform project were detailed, as well as a link to the Roadmap for Change, a document which was created by three working groups focusing on income security reform throughout Ontario. There were several recommendations made through this document which focus on increasing social assistance rates and modernizing the social assistance rate scale. The recommendation of the report included a 22% increase to Ontario Works rates, phased in over three years, as well as a 15% increase to Ontario Disability Support Program rates, also phased in over three years. At that time, the Provincial government had scheduled rate increases of 3% for 2017, 2018 and 2019. After the Provincial election in June of 2018, the rate increase for 2018 was reduced to 1.5% and the 2019 increase was cancelled. During this time, the government also announced that it would be putting all program changes on hold as it conducted a thorough review of the Ontario Works program. Please see the tables below for details regarding current Ontario Works rates for both Shelter Allowance and Basic Needs.

Benefit Unit Size	Maximum Monthly Shelter Allowance
1	\$390
2	\$642
3	\$697
4	\$756
5	\$815
6+	\$844

Family Composition	Basic Needs Entitlement
Single	\$343
Single w/ 1 Child	\$360
Single w/ 2 Children	\$360
Single w/ Dependent 18+	\$623
Couple	\$494
Couple w/ 1 Child	\$494
Couple w/ 2 Children	\$494
Couple w/ Dependent 18+	\$652

Currently, it is very difficult for an individual in receipt of Ontario Works to afford rent in many communities across Ontario, let alone purchase any additional items or necessities for their home. The Roadmap for Change recommended a much more appropriate and adequate increase to social assistance rates than the current government has implemented, leading to further hardship for clients who are already living in poverty. The Roadmap also recommended moving towards a Standard Flat Rate that does not differentiate between Basic Needs and Shelter, as the current rate structure does. This would provide all recipients of Ontario Works and ODSP a consistent level of support regardless of their living situation. The negative health impacts that the current rates can have on recipients of Ontario Works support are exacerbated by the constant increases to daily living expenses such as affordable and adequate housing and nutritious food. Furthermore, OW participant's ability to access necessities such as a cell phone, internet for their home or transportation throughout their community are also impacted by the lack of increases to social assistance rates over the last few years. Earlier in 2019, the Government of Ontario implemented a change to the Overpayment Recovery Rate for individuals in receipt of assistance. All new overpayments that were created, that were not the result of administrative error, were to be set at a 10% recovery rate, as opposed to the current 5% of the total monthly entitlement.

For example, a single recipient currently can receive a maximum of \$733 per month in basic financial assistance. Previously, if they had an overpayment then the recovery per month would be set at a rate of 5% of their monthly entitlement, leaving them with \$696.35 per month. Now, a single recipient would receive only \$659.70 until their overpayment is fully repaid. This change has reduced the income that an individual is able to access and further deepens their experience of poverty while limiting their ability to afford housing and cover their basic needs.

Further to this, there is discussion surrounding changes to the current definition of a disability under the Ontario Disability Support Program Act (ODSP), which will directly impact Ontario Works caseloads across the province. The current definition of a disability under ODSP legislation is "a medical condition that is continuous or recurrent". The Ministry is looking at aligning their definition closer with the CPP-Disability definition of "a medical condition that is severe or prolonged". This change means that individuals who experience short term or episodic disabilities will not qualify for ODSP under the new definition. These individuals who have short term or episodic disabilities may now remain on Ontario Works, receiving significantly less income to support their disability. The negative health outcomes these individuals will face will be exacerbated by their lack of additional income for basic necessities or specialized supports required as a result of their disability. In turn, CMSM's delivering Ontario Works programming will see increased caseloads and less individuals who qualify for ODSP. This also has the potential to directly impact employment outcomes if clients who no longer qualify for ODSP are unable to maintain employment due to their disability.

With regards to the ODSP program, the Roadmap for Change recommended that the Province continue to work with the Disability Adjudication Working Group to streamline and

improve the ODSP application and adjudication process as well as provide additional supports to individuals living with a disability. Currently, the application process is quite difficult and can prove to be a barrier for individuals trying to access supports. The recommendations made included making the adjudication process more transparent, improving the quality of decision-making, ensuring equitable access for Indigenous peoples and reviewing administrative and legal processes. Currently, Ontario Works caseworkers assist their clients through the application process, but the adjudication process is quite difficult to navigate and often includes additional appeals, and requires support from the Community Legal Clinic due to the complexity of the issues under appeal. This process is quite stressful for individuals to navigate, and can be difficult to understand for an individual who may be living with a disability. Through ongoing engagement with the Disability Adjudication working group, and involving individuals with lived experience, healthcare professionals and caseworkers in the OW and ODSP program, the Ministry can improve the process of applying for and receiving ODSP support.

Financial Impact: The potential financial impact of failing to meet the targets set forth by the Ministry is a funding recovery of up to a maximum of \$82,530.

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 "MCCSS Funding, Target and Policy Changes" be received for information.

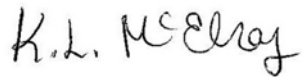
AND THAT Council be requested to petition the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to:

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- 3) Increase social assistance rates;**
- 4) Maintain the current Ontario Disability Support Program definition; and**

- 5) Respect the rights of people living with a disability to participate in decisions affecting them by creating a meaningful process of co-reviewing and co-designing programs of social assistance and the adjudication processes.**



Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works



Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services



Joan Thomson, Acting Chief Administrative Officer



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: February 11, 2020
To: Social Services Sub-Committee
From: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
Kelly Stone, Supervisor of Social Services
Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Report#: SOC20-004
Attachments: None

Title: A Summary of the Eat, Play, Learn Program

Objective: To provide an overview of the Eat, Play, Learn (EPL) program run by the Social Services Department in conjunction with Stratford Zehrs and the Huron Perth District Health Unit.

Background: Eat, Play, Learn was piloted in Stratford on September 29, 2017, in partnership with Stratford Zehrs, their Registered Dietician, and the Cooking School. The program is only available to individuals who are currently in receipt of Ontario Works and it runs one morning per month during the school year as it is geared toward children who are not yet of school age. The program was based on Huron County's Eat, Play, Learn program that they had been operating with Ontario Works recipients in previous years.

This program is facilitated by both the Ontario Works (OW) Division and the Early Years and Child Care (EYCC) Division. The Resource Consultant staff support the EYCC Division by providing resources in child development and linkages to other Children's Services. Involvement in this program meets the goal of being involved in Early Identification Initiatives in order to identify children who may be facing challenges, and to assist families with receiving the right support and having access to available resources. The Ontario Works caseworker is also available to answer questions related to their social assistance or benefits that may be available to them. Both members of staff also attempt to engage clients and make referrals to partner agencies which will support the family in working through identified areas of need.

Since sole support parents are deferred from OW employment participation until their youngest child reaches school age, often times these individuals will not begin to think about career options or further education until it becomes a requirement. By engaging in

meaningful conversations on a monthly basis, it allows for a more positive caseworker-client relationship. Through the positive rapport and enhanced client relationship that can be built through this program, the caseworker can begin encouraging clients to explore academic upgrading/career options before it becomes a mandatory requirement. This group allows for regular ongoing contact; where conversations around goal setting and support can happen much more frequently.

The EPL program will often include a guest agency and/or focused activity for the group. Agencies which have attended and provided resources to parents thus far include:

- Small Talk,
- Stratford Public Library,
- EarlyON,
- Perth District Health Unit Dental and Dietician,
- A presentation for "Kids Have Stress Too".

Some of the targeted activities completed during the program include:

- Review of the new Canadian Food Guide,
- Loose parts craft ideas,
- Homemade baby wipes,
- Book days,
- Homemade bubbles and playdough,
- No cost summer fun activities,
- Making school lunches,
- Mindfulness,
- Home organization ideas,
- Kindness and anti-bullying.

The program was well received and well attended by families in Stratford throughout the 2017-2018 school year leading to its continuation for the 2018-2019 school year. During this time, it was identified that this program could benefit OW recipients residing in North Perth which lead to the implementation of the EPL program, in conjunction with the Huron Perth District Health Unit, from March-June, 2019, at the Steve Kerr Memorial Complex. The program started again in both Listowel and Stratford in September, 2019 and remains running one morning per month in both locations.

The program has averaged approximately 7 attendees in Stratford and 5 in North Perth since its inception. Overall, the program has seen 29 parents registered in both locations since 2017.

Analysis: When the EPL program was first piloted, the primary focus of the program was inclusion and supporting families who are in receipt of Social Assistance with preschool aged children. Further goals of the program include:

- Improving child wellbeing and development as well as family functioning through the provision of integrated support systems;
- Providing preventative and early intervention services;
- Focusing on family relationships, parenting, family health and nutrition;
- Building relationships amongst adults and children attending program;
- Providing a safe, non-judgemental environment when families can feel comfortable asking questions and learning together;
- Starting open conversations about plans for the future and setting achievable goals with the intent to exit from Ontario Works once becoming self-sufficient.

The EPL program encourages relationship building between not only parent and child, but also between Social Assistance recipients and Service Providers. Providing a safe and welcoming environment encourages strong discussions and peer-relationships. From staff perspective, it is very encouraging to see friendships and support networks form, and how much effort each group member puts into making the other members feel included. By allowing parents to be a part of the food making process, through observation or participation, they are encouraged to have discussions around different food groups, and how to make meals more healthy and cost effective. Providing necessary appliances and gift cards to assist with the food preparation helps to eliminate barriers and ensure everyone has access to otherwise costly items.

A short survey was completed with parents who attended the Stratford EPL program in 2019, which reinforced the importance and positive impact that the program had been having. The majority of parents commented that the appliance they received at the beginning of the program had been in frequent use in their homes, allowing and encouraging them to make healthier meals or meals they could not make before. Parents commented on the positive impact that the dietician had on their lives, including proper meal planning, making healthier choices and using new ingredients. When asked about speakers who attended the program, the feedback was very positive and showed that the tools and tips provided by the program had a lasting and positive impact on their daily lives. The program has encouraged new connections, play dates with other parents and an overall sense of community and belonging. The parents commented that they look forward to the program each month, that their children have made new friends, as have they, and the staff resources have been impactful for them and their children.

Financial Impact: The program is funded through the Employment Supports portfolio in the Ontario Works budget. Employment Supports are 100% provincially funded at this time. The total cost of the Eat, Play, Learn program since its creation in 2017 has been just over \$12,000. After start-up costs, the program funding averages approximately \$3000 per year. There is no impact on the municipal tax levy due to the operation of this program.

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.

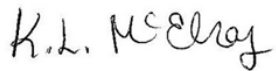
Staff Recommendation: THAT the report titled "A Summary of the Eat, Play, Learn Program" be received for information.



Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works



Kelly Stone, Supervisor of Social Services



Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services



Joan Thomson, Acting Chief Administrative Officer



MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: February 11, 2020
To: Social Services Sub-committee
From: Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works
 Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services
Report#: SOC20-005
Attachments: None

Title: Family Services Perth-Huron Agreement

Objective: To consider approval for the Mayor and Acting Clerk to enter into an ongoing agreement with Family Services Perth-Huron, to deliver a counselling program to participants in Social Services programs.

Background: The City of Stratford Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) has been working in partnership with Family Services Perth-Huron (FSPH) to provide counselling services to eligible recipients of the Ontario Works program since 2007. The purchase of service agreement allowed for Ontario Works recipients to work with a counsellor on a one on one basis. A referral would be made to this service by Ontario Works caseworkers when it was identified that counselling would benefit the recipient in efforts to move them through the employability continuum.

Analysis: As the CMSM for the City of Stratford, Town of St Marys and Perth County, the City of Stratford Social Services Department strives to provide the highest level of support to individuals and families accessing services across all divisions. It was acknowledged that the previous purchase of service contract mandate was limiting to some individuals and the division as there were other services that Family Services Perth-Huron provided within their mandate that would benefit more individuals/families that were accessing services within the Social Services Division.

The new agreement with FSPH reflects a broad service mandate and has now been expanded to support all individuals accessing services through the Social Services Department. Some of the expanded services that are now included are:

- Neighbour dispute resolution for the Perth and Stratford Housing Corporation
- Hoarding support

- Life stabilization
- Couples and Group sessions
- CBT modular therapy

The modalities of counselling that can be offered by FSPH will also assist a greater number of clients by matching their needs to the most appropriate modality based on the professional opinion of the regulated clinician. The various types of therapies include but are not limited to:

- Evidence Based Narrative Therapy,
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy,
- Dialectical Behavioural Therapy,
- Satir Systems,
- Family of Origin
- Choice Therapy.

Throughout 2018, FSPH has provided similar services to those outlined in this contract, and the statistics for participation in the program are listed below, including total number of open files, sessions attended and sessions that were missed. By expanding the provision of services, we hope to reduce the amount of no-shows for appointments and increase the level of engagement by providing alternate forms of support aside from strictly counselling services.

Month	Open Files
<i>March</i>	34
<i>April</i>	40
<i>May</i>	42
<i>June</i>	47
<i>July</i>	45
<i>August</i>	41
<i>September</i>	43
<i>October</i>	35
<i>November</i>	40
<i>December</i>	43
Yearly Average	40

As the table above demonstrates, we have averaged 40 open files per month. With the expansion of this program it is predicted that the numbers of individuals/families accessing this service will increase and the numbers associated with it by allowing greater flexibility in the services offered.

The contract has also been changed to permit clients to “drop-in,” during set times as opposed to a formal referral being completed by the caseworker. Although a formal referral can still be completed and a time set, this added component provides flexibility for

the client as well as the ability to have their needs met in a timely matter on their schedule.

The agreement with FSPH and corresponding funding for this program is provided through the Ontario Works Employment Support portfolio, which is 100% funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. The funding model is to continue providing \$60,000 per year for services rendered. A clause of an additional \$10,000 has been made available if enhanced services were needed. This would be at the discretion of the Director of Social Services and would address any outlier situations that may occur within the community.

Financial Impact: This program is funded through the Ontario Works Employment Supports portfolio, which is funded 100% by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services. The maximum amount of funding available to the program is \$70,000. There is no request for additional municipal funding at this time.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

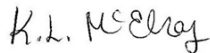
Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships

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.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the Mayor and Acting Clerk be authorized to enter into an agreement with Family Services Perth-Huron to deliver a counselling program to Social Services Department participants, as outlined in the agreement.



Alex Burgess, Manager of Ontario Works



Kim McElroy, Director of Social Services



Joan Thomson, Acting Chief Administrative Officer