



The Corporation of the City of Cornwall
Regular Meeting of Council
Report

Department: Social and Housing Services
Division: Social Services
Report Number: 2021-15-Social and Housing Services
Prepared By: Mellissa Morgan, Manager
Meeting Date: February 22, 2021
Subject: Ontario's Vision for Social Assistance Transformation

Purpose

To provide Council with information regarding Ontario's Vision for Social Assistance Transformation, as announced by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (the Ministry).

Recommendation

That Council receive Report 2021-15-Social and Housing Services.

Financial Implications

The province currently shares the cost of Ontario Works delivery with municipalities. As transformation of both employment services and social assistance delivery continues, the funding model will also evolve in order to address the shifts in roles and responsibilities.

The co-designed system will include a new approach to funding and a new performance and accountability framework. The province and municipalities will work together to develop a funding approach that addresses administrative costs appropriately and re-invests administrative savings to enhance the system.

Background / Discussion

On October 13, 2020 Council received a report regarding the Social Assistance Recovery and Renewal Plan. On Thursday February 11, 2021, the Ministry further announced Ontario's Vision for Social Assistance Transformation. This plan lays out the government's vision for how they will work with delivery partners to improve social assistance and make it easier to navigate.

Ministry Vision

“To create an efficient, effective and streamlined social services system that focusses on people, providing them with a range of services and supports to respond to their unique needs and address barriers to success so they can move towards employment and independence.”

A review of the social assistance system found many of the current processes are too bureaucratic, too paper-heavy, and more focused on enforcement and technical aspects than helping people improve their lives.

The Ministry wants to work with delivery partners to realign responsibilities and create a more responsive system that helps people get back on their feet, re-enter the workforce and live independently (attachment #1). This multi-year plan will start by looking at how to better align service delivery so that people are getting the right supports at the right time. This is an essential component of a system that is streamlined and focused on the people being served.

At the core of this transformation are the following principles:

- prioritizing the outcomes of employment, financial resilience, independence and well-being
- supporting positive client and staff experiences
- assigning roles to where they make the most sense and improve efficiency
- improving program integrity by leveraging data and technology
- designing in partnership with municipal delivery partners
- building a system that puts people at the centre, with services that work effectively together to support them
- using data, evidence and the voice of clients to inform design

This transformation is being implemented on a phased approach, starting with basic products and services that are able to expand. Phases will begin at different times, in different regions, to support smooth transitions in a gradual process that causes little or no disruption to those who rely on these supports with the goal of making significant progress in all areas by 2024.

The province will also propose legislative and regulatory changes where necessary to enable a flexible and gradual approach to transformation.

As indicated in the October Council report, the first step is the redesigning of the intake process for applicants to social assistance with a new, easy-to-use digital application. Features include:

- the ability for applicants to verify their identity digitally
- the ability to sign forms electronically
- a new-risk based model that can automatically grant most cases while flagging the complex cases that require in-depth review

As the new intake model rolls out, the Ministry will begin realigning the delivery functions and streamlining financial benefits, and then finally, will assume responsibility for month-to-month eligibility for social assistance.

As realigning of roles and responsibilities continues, the Ministry, municipal partners and other ministries will work together to build the new human services model.

This new vision will ensure the system is responsive and sustainable in the long-term, so future Ontarians can access the help they need, when they need it.

Document Title:	Social Assistance Transformation - 2021-15-Social and Housing Services.docx
Attachments:	- SA Vision Placemat.pdf
Final Approval Date:	Feb 16, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Tracey Bailey - Feb 16, 2021 - 6:29 PM

Maureen Adams - Feb 16, 2021 - 9:40 PM