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<p><u>Information Previously Distributed</u> To Be Listed on Community Services Committee Agenda    2 April 1998</p>
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DATE                           25 February 1998

TO/DEST.                   Co-ordinator, Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP.                 Commissioner, Social Services

SUBJECT/OBJET           **INFORMATION REQUEST- SPECIAL ASSISTANCE AND  
SUPPLEMENTARY AID**

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PURPOSE

This report is in response to a request from Chair Munter, at the 22 January 1998 Community Services Committee meeting, for an information report on items previously and currently covered under Special Assistance and Supplementary Aid.

BACKGROUND

The items available under Special Assistance and Supplementary Aid have remained relatively unchanged since the fall of 1995. At that time, reductions in provincial cost sharing, forced the Department to review all items provided under these two programs in order to limit the impact on clients. The review resulted in a reduction in the range of items provided as well as a tightening of eligibility for those continuing to receive the remaining items.

DISCUSSION

The items provided under Special Assistance and Supplementary Aid can be categorized as related to employment, health or accommodation.

Employment Related

The 1995 reductions in this area were limited to the elimination of transportation subsidies for non-specific need. Previously, a \$ 29 bus pass subsidy had been provided to employables for three months to assist with job search and to unemployables according to need. Bus tickets had also been available to employables after the original three month period. Rural clients not

serviced by bus routes received a \$ 29 allowance to meet their transportation needs. Subsequent to 1995, transportation allowances were limited to medical transportation which is a mandatory benefit covered through Special Necessities and to the transportation requirements of clients in specialized programs, i.e. Employment Programs.

### Health Related

The most significant 1995 change in this category relates to the level of dental services provided to adults. Adults previously received basic care which included elements of preventive dentistry. As of 1996 adults receive emergency dental care which is limited to the treatment of pain and suffering. In addition, all requests for dental and denture services are now assessed through the Regional Dental Clinics. This process ensures that clients receive timely and appropriate services. This process has proven to be very effective and results in clients receiving only the services recommended by RMO dental professionals. There was no change to the dental services provided to children. Orthodontics continue to be limited to special need only.

Changes to vision care were limited to removing the prescribed time frame for the provision of new frames and lenses. Policy now provides for replacement in accordance with the client's change in prescription.

Since 1996, the Department has not provided for the purchase of lactation consultant services or for the rental of breast pumps.

### Accommodation Related

Since the beginning of 1996, furniture provided under Special Assistance and Supplementary Aid has been limited to cribs, beds and mattresses. Prior to 1996 the Department had also provided dressers, tables and chairs. Appliances were restricted to fridges and stoves. Previously the purchase and repair of washers and dryers had been available. Limitations were also established as to the number of times items would be provided. For example, beds, fridges and stoves are provided only once to clients. Mattresses are replaced as needed.

Pots/pans and basic linens were eliminated as an item of Special Assistance and Supplementary Aid. Requests for these items are now granted under the mandatory Community Start Up Benefit.

Since 1996, incidents of default on Last Month's Rent guarantees and requests for food vouchers are recoverable from General Welfare Assistance and not provided as items of Special Assistance.

Moving services were largely replaced by cash grants to clients to arrange for their own moving requirements. Moving services are restricted to clients unable to manage the physical and organizational challenges associated with a move.

## FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The chart attached in the appendix provides a summary of the actual expenditures in each of the three categories for the past three years. It is important to note that the expenditures reflect the change in services as well as the reduced caseloads experienced over this time.

## FUTURE OF PROGRAM

The future of both the Special Assistance and Supplementary Aid programs is uncertain. Provincial announcements to-date have indicated that the cost sharing distinction between Supplementary Aid and Special Assistance will end in January 1998. Further clarification on the items to be provided through Special Assistance are expected shortly.

## SUMMARY

Past reductions to Special Assistance and Supplementary Aid were achieved through changes in the range of items provided, transfers to other programs and alternative service provision. This approach has maintained the maximum level of client assistance possible while achieving the necessary cost savings. The changes in service have largely been recognized by clients as being the best possible options from those available to the Department. No changes to the programs have been made by the Department since 1996. Future changes may be required to meet Provincial directives or budget constraints.

An additional document entitled "A Primer on Special Assistance and Supplementary Aid" is currently under development. This document will provide additional information on the legislative basis of these programs, historical data, and explain linkages to other programs. The Primer will be available by the end of March 1998.

*Approved by  
Dick Stewart*

BL/aej

cc: Director, Strategic and Operational Support

ANNEX

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPLEMENTARY AID

	<u>1995</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1997</u>
Health Related	9,185.9	5,491.4	5,619.2
Accommodation Related	6,219.9	2,925.8	2,979.4
Employment/Transportation	4,059.3	1,350.4	1,184.9
Other	<u>3,493.1</u>	<u>1,648.9</u>	<u>1,602.4</u>
Total	22,958.2	11,416.5	11,385.9

Other: Includes expenditures for funerals and burials, cultural interpretation services and identification documents.