

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf.
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DATE 22 January 1998

TO/DEST. Co-ordinator, Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Commissioner, Social Services Department

SUBJECT/OBJET **EVALUATION AND COMMUNITY MONITORING: ONTARIO WORKS**

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION

That the Community Services Committee and Council receive this report for information.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to update Community Services Committee on Departmental evaluation and community monitoring of Ontario Works.

BACKGROUND

In March 1997, Community Services Committee received the Ottawa-Carleton Business Plan for Ontario Works. The Business Plan outlined overall information about program design and delivery, service targets and budgets. Community Services Committee and Regional Council approved the plan, including a motion to create an independent volunteer panel to evaluate the success of the program, as follows:

That an independent volunteer panel be struck to evaluate how successful the Region's Ontario Works program has been and report at the one-year and two-year marks to Regional Council. That this panel include representatives of social service agencies, business, academia, labour, the broader community and social assistance recipients.

The Department subsequently undertook negotiations with the Province and developed a final Business Plan based on these negotiations. In September 1997, Community Services Committee was apprised of changes to the plan resulting from these negotiations and the final Business Plan was approved by the Province. The Department began implementing Ontario Works September 29th, 1997.

Community Services Committee requested that the Department report back in early 1998 on evaluating and community monitoring of Ontario Works in Ottawa-Carleton.

COMMUNITY PROJECT TEAM

Subsequent to Regional Council approval of the Business Plan, a local group comprising social service agencies, the Social Planning Council, labour and clients approached the Department and expressed interest in forming the independent volunteer panel. The group also indicated that it would undertake to include representation from business and academia.

The Department has met several times with the group to clarify the focus for community monitoring. It was confirmed that the Project Team would be an independent group at arm's length from the Department and would be advisory to Community Services Committee. It was also agreed that, where appropriate, the Project Team and the Department would share information or undertake joint activities.

This initiative will provide valuable insight into clients' and the community's experiences with Ontario Works.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Department released funds of \$11,000 in December 1997 for the first phase of the Project Team's work, including: recruitment and establishment of the Project Team, development of the Project Scope, and search for additional funding sources. A further \$12,000 of Departmental funding is budgeted for completion of focus groups and the preparation of a summary report in 1998.

Further details on the project focus, activities, funding sources and budget are included in a separate report prepared by the Project Team.

DEPARTMENT'S EVALUATION

The Department is currently developing an approach to monitoring and evaluating its operations. In addition, it has been working with other municipalities and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) to develop a specific Guide to Evaluating Ontario Works. This will allow us to draw comparisons on Ontario Works outcomes across the Province.

The Departmental approach is long-term, with interim results being provided at regular intervals. It will focus on process and outcomes based on effectiveness of the Department's services. For example, the evaluation will look at the effectiveness of services in:

- assisting clients to become employed;
- assisting clients to become less reliant on the Department's social services; and
- assisting clients with their basic needs.

It is also a collaborative approach with the community, where the SPC's Project Team will focus on client and community impact. The Departmental results, combined with the community results, will provide an overall assessment of Ontario Works.

*Approved by
Dick Stewart*