

2. EVALUATION AND COMMUNITY MONITORING: ONTARIO WORKS

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

That Council receive this report for information.

DOCUMENTATION

1. Commissioner of Social Services report dated 22 January 1998 is immediately attached.
2. Extract of Draft Minute, Community Services Committee, 19 February 1998 immediately follows report and includes a record of all votes.

Our File/N/Réf.
Your File/V/Réf.

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*

4. EVALUATION AND COMMUNITY MONITORING: ONTARIO WORKS
- Commissioner of Social Services report dated 22 January 1998

Public Delegations

Ms. Susan Learoyd, Social Planning Council and Linda Lalonde, The Anti-Poverty Project

Ms. Learoyd explained that both the Social Planning Council (SPC) and The Anti-Poverty Group are members of the project team monitoring Ontario Works. The intent of her presentation was to establish a framework for a relationship between this Committee and the project team, and to provide a brief update on the project team's activities planned for the next year. (Note: Report previously distributed and listed on Agenda).

As background, Ms. Learoyd stated that the project team is responding to a motion by this Committee to form an arms-length, broadly represented group to evaluate the success of the Ontario Works project at a one-year and two-year mark. The project has begun and resources are available. The SPC has taken the lead in bringing the project team together.

Ms. Learoyd stated the focus of planned activities is to capture the experience of clients who are participating in Ontario Works. They have planned a series of focus groups, beginning in April and continuing in the Fall/Winter. The project team would like to return to this Committee in September with a mid-way report, and again at the end of the year with a final report. In addition, Ms. Learoyd requested that the project team be able to bring forward issues and make recommendations as required.

Ms. Lalonde informed the Committee that the project team's grant application to the Trillium Fund had been turned down, on the basis that independent, arms-length monitoring of a regional Social Services Department program is, in the opinion of the Trillium Foundation, a regional responsibility. There is an appeal pending.

Questions to Presenters

Councillor Holmes asked if the project team had enough funds to do its job. In response, Ms. Lalonde acknowledged that the project was not going to be as comprehensive as initially planned. They are relying on Community Resource Centres and other partners to provide information on individuals who are not members of the four focus groups.

Extract of Draft Minute
Community Services Committee
19 February 1998

In response to a question by Councillor Holmes, Ms. Learoyd stated the project team was in the process of developing a monitoring tool for agencies to use to examine issues brought forward by clients. Participation will depend on the initiative of particular agencies.

Commissioner Stewart stated that as of December 1997, there were 10,560 registered participants for employment supports (exceeded target) and 32 community placements (below target). The Department was in the process of finalizing details for the employment placement portion of Ontario Works. To date, the Department has contacted 1200 - 1300 non-profit and public sector organizations in Ottawa-Carleton and has registered 160 community placement possibilities. Responding to Councillor Holmes' inquiry, Commissioner Stewart stated he was disappointed that the Trillium grant had been denied. He stated he believed the project team's focus on the experience of clients added value to the Department's evaluation.

Councillor Loney stated that if the appeal of the Trillium grant is unsuccessful, Committee should consider more funding for this worthwhile evaluation project.

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

RECEIVED