



Staff Report to Council - for Information

Title: Q1 2024 Income and Support Services Update

From: Tina Metcalfe, Director Human Services

Date: May 16, 2024

Report Purpose:

This report is for information.

Report Summary:

The Income and Support Services update provides an overview of service delivery components and outcomes throughout Q1 2024.

Background:

The activities highlighted in this report underscore the Income and Support Services Division's ongoing commitment to supporting social assistance clients in addressing their stability needs and providing support related to readiness for employment services. Through targeted interventions, partnerships, and outreach efforts, staff strive to empower clients, enhance their well-being, and foster independence.

Income Supports

Social Assistance (Ontario Works) caseloads continue to rise across the province and within Bruce County. In Q1 2024, an average of 613 households per month were supported locally, representing an increase of 11.7% over the same period in 2023. Additionally, in Q1 2024, there were 191 applications for Ontario Works and Temporary Care Assistance and 17 Emergency Assistance applications processed.

The Provincial Centralized Intake system continues to struggle with the volume of applications across the province. As such, staff have needed to support the completion of applications locally to ensure clients are connected to financial and stability supports to mitigate the need for increased crisis support.

Integrated Employment Services

As at Q1 2024, regular monthly checkpoints have been instituted with our three main Employment Ontario Service providers to establish client pathways, monitor referrals, and coordinate benefits for program participants. Further, staff are actively referring program participants and are engaged in Integrated Case Management with 6 different Employment Ontario service delivery agents across the Stratford-Bruce Peninsula catchment area.

Program participants are provided with the option of being matched to an Employment Ontario provider that best meets their individual needs and preferences around geography/location, language of service, cultural considerations and available supports and programming.

Leadership staff continue to meet monthly with our Employment Service System Manager (SSM) and municipal partners (Grey, Huron, Stratford) at the Social Assistance Integration Committee meetings. New processes have been developed around benefit coordination and the timeliness of issuing monetary supports to social assistance clients who are participating in employment services. In addition, collaboration has taken place with the SSM's Quality Assurance Specialist to find effective solutions for accurately tracking referrals and outcomes between the two systems.

Person Centered Supports

In Q1 2024, Income and Support Services staff referred and supported 10 clients in attending the Financial Literacy Program offered through the United Way. This program aims to address concerns related to affordability, credit and collections, budgeting, and bankruptcy. By empowering our clients with essential financial knowledge and skills, we strive to enhance their financial stability and resilience.

During the same period, the fourth cohort of the Make Your Way program was offered, with 11 participants successfully completing this life skills-based program. Make Your Way equips participants with essential life skills, including communication, problem-solving, and decision-making, which are crucial for their personal and professional development. Through this program, we aim to foster self-sufficiency and empower our clients to overcome challenges effectively and move toward readiness for employment services.

In Q1 2024, staff were active in promoting, connecting, and supporting program participants with transportation to attend Community Volunteer Income Tax Clinics. These clinics enable clients to complete their tax returns and access critical tax credits and benefits, including Canada Child Benefit and Canada Ontario Housing Benefit. By facilitating access to these services, clients can maximize their entitlements and alleviate some of their financial burdens.

Recognizing the transportation and financial barriers faced by those who access our services, staff continued to provide outreach services and met clients at Bruce County library branches in Lucknow, Chesley, and Mildmay. Additionally, staff in Saugeen Shores and Wiarton have continued outreach services through the Salvation Army. These efforts aim to connect social assistance clients with food security and life skills support services, thereby enhancing their overall well-being and stability.

To continue our efforts to establish partnerships and create opportunities for program participants, an inter-agency meeting for the Saugeen Shores area was re-established. Staff organized and hosted the inaugural meeting in March at the Lakeshore Hub, with over 30 area service providers in attendance. This collaborative platform fosters communication, coordination, and collaboration among various agencies, ultimately benefiting clients by

expanding access to support services, resources, and creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for all.

Financial/Staffing/Legal/IT Considerations:

There are no financial, staffing, legal, or IT considerations associated with this report.

Interdepartmental Consultation:

There were no Interdepartmental consultations with this report.

Link to Strategic Goals and Objectives:

Community and Partnerships - Enhance and grow partnerships

Community and Partnerships - Build a strong and inclusive community

Link to Departmental Plan Goals and Objectives, if any:

Report Author:

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Departmental Approval:

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Approved for Submission:

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