



Hamilton

CITY OF HAMILTON 2013-2014 ONTARIO WORKS SERVICE PLAN



Acknowledgements

This service plan is the result of a collaborative effort on the part of City of Hamilton staff and the Hamilton community.

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Section 1: Ontario Works Vision and Mandate

Ontario Works Vision

To achieve improved employment outcomes for Ontario Works participants by increasing individual employability with the goal of sustainable employment and increased financial independence.

Ontario Works Mandate

To provide employment assistance and financial assistance to people in financial need.

The Ontario Works program:

- Recognizes individual responsibility and promotes self-reliance through employment;
- Provides financial assistance to those most in need while they meet obligations to become and stay employed;
- Effectively serves people needing assistance; and is accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario.

Executive Summary

The City of Hamilton currently delivers Ontario Works services to over 28,000 people. Recent economic improvements and strategies to support recipients have reduced the caseload by approximately 10% since its post recessionary peak in July 2011.

The last three years has brought about positive change as leadership with a strong desire to ‘listen’ has stimulated participation at a grass-roots level. Integrated committees and workgroups uncovered many interests and needs or ‘currencies’ of those served and allowed for citizen engagement and ownership. Continued work with members of this community will strengthen services that are helpful, cost-effective and generate results.

The next two years will bring both opportunities and challenges as staff work through the implementation of a new social assistance database and experience change through social assistance reform. Sustained commitment to groups such as Ontario Municipal Social Service Association (OMSSA) and Association for Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) provide a wider lens for review of policies, procedures and practices – creating alternatives and generating innovation. A renewed focus on service standards and measurement practices will establish benchmarks and generate enhanced transparency and accountability.

The City of Hamilton delivers outcomes through well-managed programs and services. This enables effective delivery of value for money – for both the City of Hamilton and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Monitoring legislative requirements and the delivery of quality services occurs in many ways. A regular and thorough review of case files, legislative changes, required training initiatives, program delivery and operational plans leads to decisions regarding the accurate delivery of Ontario Works and improvement of local and provincial strategies.

Caseload Demographics

As at August 2012:

- Half (46%) of Hamilton Ontario Works applicants hadn’t completed high school.
- Almost one-third (32%) of the caseload was comprised of sole support families.

- Over half (59%) of the caseload had been receiving Ontario Works assistance for over a year.

During 2012:

- There were almost 100,000 calls to the Hamilton Intake Unit and approximately 22,000 appointments were scheduled in 2012 to update files, revise case plans, and assist with other concerns.
- There were 3,412 initial employment assessment appointments completed, followed by a series of subsequent appointments to assist with job search efforts.
- There were fewer convention refugees (41% less), permanent landed residents (8% less) and refugee claimants (52% less) than in 2011.
- The top ten languages were Hungarian, Arabic, Spanish, Croatian, Czech, Somali, Slovak, Vietnamese and Farsi .

Variances from 2011 outcomes were as follows:

- The average monthly amount of earnings for 2012 increased by 5.3%
- The average monthly amount of earnings at exit for 2012 increased by 9.3%
- The percentage of caseload with employment income increased by .3%
- The percentage of terminations exiting to employment increased by .5%
- The average length of time to employment increased by 1 ½ months.

Moving forward, outcomes will be positively affected by the following:

- Hamilton's increased notoriety as an economically resilient community. Hamilton's Social Planning and Research Council attributes the city's resiliency to several factors – a diversified economy, affordability, collaboration between sectors to help develop a skilled labour force and a focus on poverty reduction.
- The City's focus on select economic sectors and award-winning marketing strategies has encouraged business to relocate to Hamilton, bringing revenue and employment opportunities with them.
- The successful implementation of S.A.M.S. technology and strategies to continue delivering effective service throughout the implementation. Although an improved system, much effort will be required to support staff in the change to this new technology. The more successful the integration to the new system, the more effective staff will be in delivering comprehensive services at an early stage.

- A strong desire to engage in stakeholder planning rather than conveying a top-down approach. Staff strongly invests in continuous improvement by soliciting feedback from a variety of groups. From grassroots forums such as Town Hall and stakeholder advisory meetings to relocation within neighbourhoods, the City regularly collects valuable keys to building better programs.
- The move to services that provide a more basic approach to employability. In addition to 'employment' services such as job search, resume interview workshops, the inclusion of life skills programs will support those who need intensive supports to enter or re-enter the labour market.
- The identification of standards and targets. Staff will be better-prepared and more accountable in supporting their participants search for employment.
- Linkage of participants to specific job opportunities through the development of employer relationships will support future increases in average wages – for those remaining on the caseload and those exiting as a result of substantial earnings.
- Continued collaboration with the City's Economic Development Department will allow for quick connections with new employers.
- Continued focus on foreign-trained professionals to provide a higher than average wage once employed.
- Opportunities for skill development training that will support overall average earnings and employment opportunities.
- Employment development counsellors who encourage participants to apply for better paid employment opportunities and job laddering is actively promoted.
- Availability of immediate mock interviews for those with pending interviews will help to better prepare participants for their interactions with employers.
- Increased number of positions in growing sectors commonly filled by Ontario Works participants. The top two sectors of employment in Hamilton: retail/wholesale trade and manufacturing are sectors that often employ Ontario Works participants. Although advanced manufacturing is becoming a more highly skilled occupation, skill development training may provide opportunities for participants that may otherwise prevent them from entering these labour markets.

Challenges to outcome achievement:

- A trend toward reliance on sub-contracted and part-time positions reduces average earnings significantly
- Some areas of Hamilton's economic growth are often mismatched with the skills of Ontario Works participants
- Limited funding for skill development training to compensate for the above
- Caseloads are currently comprised of harder-to-employ participants that most often require intensive interventions. Caseload ratios currently prevent the level of intervention required to support these participants.
- Policy changes that affect outcome measures. Although changes positively support participants, rate increases and other incentives may result in a greater number of participants remaining on assistance while working, thereby reducing employment outcomes.

Introduction

The City of Hamilton is a strong, historical and vibrant community. Known for excellence in areas such as education, innovation, business, arts & entertainment and healthcare, Hamilton offers many opportunities for its residents and businesses. The City's long term Vision: "To be the best place in Canada to raise a child, promote innovation, engage citizens and provide diverse economic opportunities" is re-affirmed in the 2012-2015 Strategic Plan.

Hamilton boasts world class opportunities for post-secondary education, training and research. McMaster University, and its area university and college partners, support rapidly developing fields such as robotic surgery, e-health and software engineering, spawning secondary and tertiary industries that support business, manufacturing and the community as a whole. The McMaster Innovation Park is a centre of excellence that offers researchers and entrepreneurs, from around the world, state of the art opportunities to develop new products and services, and create companies which will provide high-paying, highly skilled jobs in Hamilton, resulting in greater economic and social strength for the entire community.

Hamilton's burgeoning arts community is lively and nurturing, and plays a major role in revitalizing the downtown core. Galleries open their doors to increasingly popular 'art crawls' and several live theatres engage and energize the people of Hamilton. Restaurants that feature produce from the local farmer's markets and local wineries continue to thrive. Gourmet food-trucks are a new phenomenon on the City's streets with twelve trucks serving food to busy Hamiltonians, mirroring trends found in Toronto and Los Angeles. The developing food truck scene has generated an annual "Sew Hungry" event in Hamilton's textile district.

Hamilton is a city of opportunity; but like most other cities in Ontario, not everyone is able to fully participate in the myriad of economic, cultural and social experiences. Growing concern has led Hamilton to become an increasingly socially active and community – a City that works diligently to create an environment that invites and supports involvement. Community members collaborate to support those who lack the resources to participate in Hamilton's dynamic culture. The concepts of social inclusion and equity, community capacity development, diversity, citizen feedback and neighbourhood hubs have become foundational in decision making processes. The City of Hamilton is dynamic and progressive in making change happen.

The following section of this report will provide an overview of Hamilton’s demographics, local labour market conditions, political climate and socio-economic environmental and demographic trends. Further on, the scan will focus on describing Hamilton’s local Ontario Works Caseload and the local economy. Finally the report will demonstrate how the City of Hamilton intends to support people in participating fully in all the economic, social and cultural vibrancy of this outstanding community.

Success Story

Finding work in times like these can present many challenges. For Steven, persistence and commitment to helping others while confronting challenges resulted in full-time employment.

Steven started working with Employment Services in July of 2011. He worked diligently, accepting any opportunities presented to him, in order to secure employment.



In January of 2012 he applied to the Helping Hands Program and proved himself to be a dependable and reliable employee and a valuable member of the program. When Steven found full-time employment in August 2012, he insisted on continuing with his work helping at the community, while at the same time working the night shift at Food Basics. He did continue this for a short period of time, but had to give up the Helping Hands in order to dedicate all his time to his new employer.

Steven continues to provide this same dedication to his current employer and we all wish him continued success.

Section 2: Environmental Scan



Analysis of Previous Planning Cycle

Despite concerns regarding improved employment outcomes during a time of economic instability, the City has effectively helped many participants achieve success. During 2012 alone, counselling teams met with over three thousand participants. They assisted with over 1,000 full-time placements in an increasingly part-time and casual environment. More than one hundred participants were offered funding to participate in skill development training, supporting the growth of the individual, the economy and the community as a whole.

Staff and community partners worked in unison, building critical foundations to support and enhance employability and subsequent outcomes. Employment counsellor 'liaisons', attached to both financial case management teams and Employment Ontario agencies provided steady support, encouraged collaboration and ensured processes met the needs of those served. More than one hundred people were referred to Second Career for skill training opportunities during 2012. Funding for credential assessments and certification exams was provided for seventy-four foreign trained professionals to assist them in regaining levels of achievement and pride. Firm connections were established between employment staff and five community schools to offer employment services to newcomers. The services resulted in twenty client employment placements during 2012.

Seven community-based Ontario Works networking groups operated throughout the year – mainly in the most vulnerable areas of Hamilton, including specific groups for people with criminal records, newcomers and those with self-disclosed addictions. Almost half of the people involved found employment.

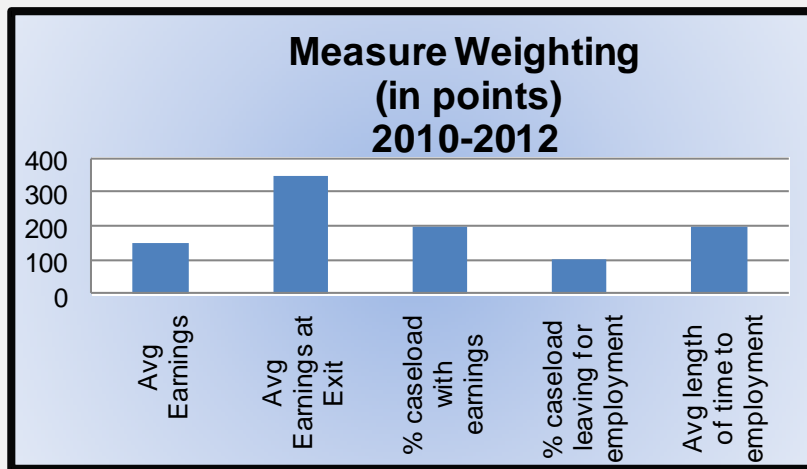
Case managers and employment counsellors moved outside of their routine office locations and into the community to provide a neighbourhood approach to service, building trusting relationships and engaging people in their outcome plans. Within the Congress Crescent neighbourhood hub, a successful client conference took place in partnership with a local Employment Ontario service provider, local employers, the City's child care division, Ontario Works job developers and Hamilton's Social Planning and Research Council.

During the year, employment staff joined our community members to facilitate a filmed session explaining Ontario Works services. Led by Hamilton's Good

Shepherd Centre, the presentation enabled approximately 500 frontline workers serving Hamilton's homeless to share Ontario Works program and service information. Together, the City of Hamilton and community service providers are building a foundation for success.

2010 - 2012 Outcome Weighting

When developing service plans, delivery agents are required to set targets for improvement in each of their selected measures and distribute 1000 points per year amongst those measures.



Targets are set based on strategies that reflect local needs, priorities and both current and anticipated environmental trends. Points represent the priorities determined

through service planning and become the basis for funding.¹

The City of Hamilton placed equal weight in both earnings and employment outcomes for the previous planning period, believing that strategies put in place would increase both. Within each outcome, targeted increases were forecasted and contracted for the following measures:

- Average amount of employment earnings
- Average amount of employment earnings at exit
- Percentage of caseload with earnings
- Percentage of terminations exiting as a result of earnings
- Average length of time to employment

Although job retention targets were set internally for evaluation purposes, they were not included in the Ministry of Community and Social Services contract. The

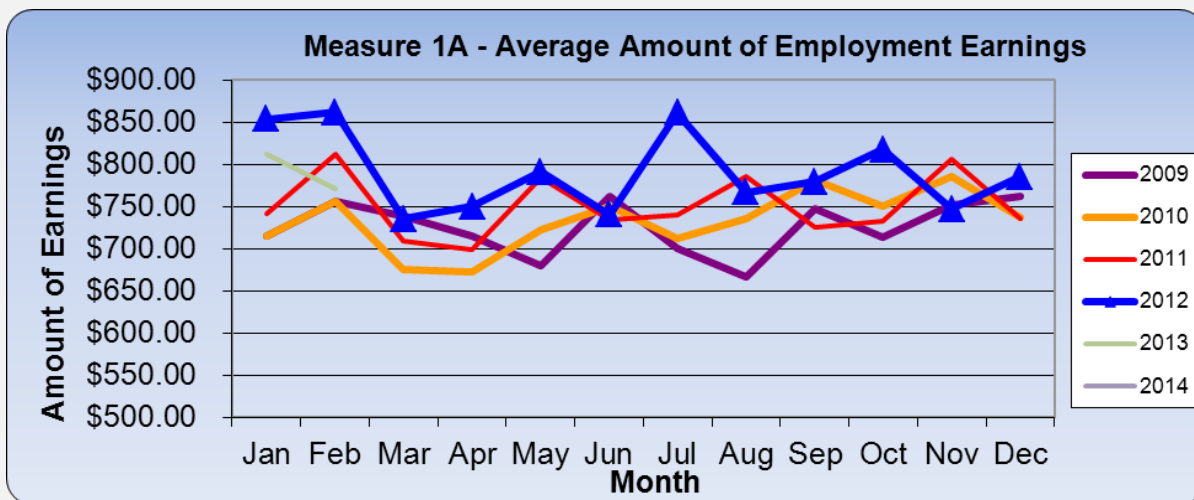
¹ (Ministry of Community and Social Services, 2010)

job retention measures within the service contract are more reflective of ‘recidivism’ and include factors other than employment that skew results. For example, measures may include people returning to Ontario Works as a result of an increase in family size or loss of another type of income. As a result, employment supports geared to increase the amount of time people remain at their jobs may not be truly reflected in the outcome, making both analysis and effectiveness of strategies difficult to measure. Regardless of this challenge, the City of Hamilton continued to build on strategies to support job retention in the absence of a contracted measure.

Outcomes achieved in raising the amount of earnings were higher than those measuring the number of people who had earnings and who exited as a result of earnings. A focus on person-centred job development may have contributed to successful earnings outcomes. While continuing to fill vacancies as a result of employer contact, increased effort has been placed on finding jobs for participants, securing higher wages for those with specific skills.

Measure 1A: Average Amount of Employment Earnings

The average monthly earnings for people receiving Ontario Works assistance increased from \$725.46 in 2009 to \$790.52 in 2012. The increase surpassed targets for each of the three contracted years.



Source: Ministry of Community and Social Services – Ontario Works Statistics (2009 to 2012)

It could be argued that the recession is over and earnings have naturally increased without interventions, or that minimum wage increases have artificially raised outcomes in this measure.

A divergent theory holds that employers were able to reduce starting wages after the recession due to a large pool of unemployed people. In addition, some were reluctant to hire after the recession and used temporary services as a form of protection – again lowering wages for participants. Precarious employment is becoming more prevalent and is not only forcing lower wages but creating higher levels of insecurity and anxiety for workers. No increase in minimum wage has been seen since 2010. Considering all of these factors, average Ontario Works earnings in Hamilton have still increased every year since 2009. Effective employment supports, strategic corporate planning and growing economic stability are more plausible links to substantial gains in this measure.

Systems data to support the distinction between part time and full time earnings would greatly assist in evaluating community success within this measure. Information on hourly wages rather than monthly wages would similarly allow for a more informed analysis.

The City of Hamilton's Economic Development Division achieved great success over the last three years by attracting business to the area, setting the stage for improved outcomes, including increased wages. With skilled marketing and promotion of infrastructure development, Hamilton's economy will become increasingly productive, leading to employment opportunities, stabilized tax rates and increased funds for social programming.

Ontario Works staff builds on Economic Development's foundation by assisting participants with both formal and informal skills to match new employment opportunities as they arise.



Social skills such as communication, networking, problem-solving and conflict resolution are taught in classroom environments and lead to better working relationships and subsequent opportunities for advancement including higher

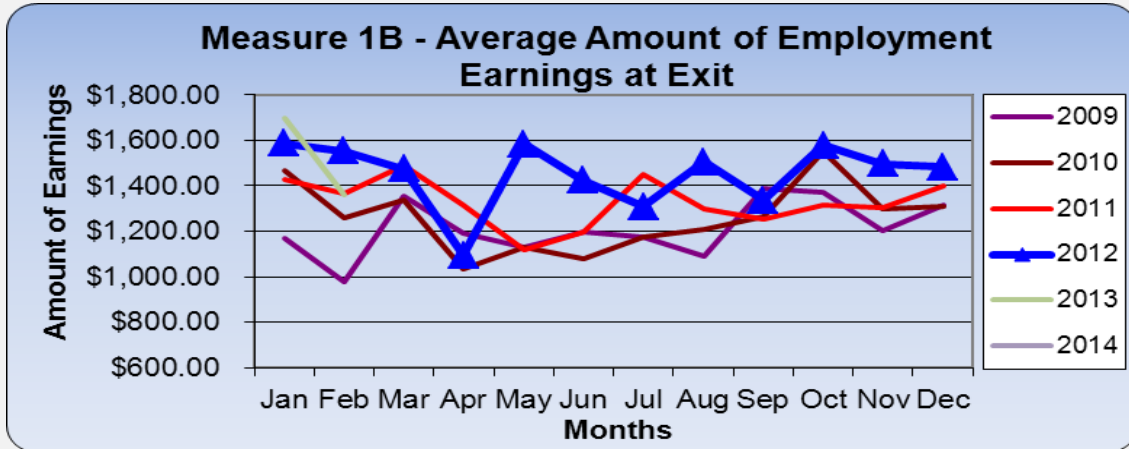
wages. Community placement opportunities promote on-the-job learning and offer a chance for long term unemployed participants to acclimatize into a work environment. The experience gained allows some to step into positions with a rate potentially higher than minimum wage. The ability to participate in skill development training at no cost to the participant offers great opportunities for wage advancement. These interventions all promote participant stability leading to financial benefits including wage increases and supplementary employer benefits.

Specific cause-and-effect relationships within the earnings measures are difficult to determine, in part due to a pervasive and increasing trend toward casual and part-time work and to multiple interventions. Community strategies contribute to higher earnings while an increase in part-time and temporary work depresses monthly earnings. Amidst these competing forces, outcomes for these measures have still been positive.

Measure 1B – Average Amount of Employment Earnings at Exit

This measure is reflective of the average amount of employment earnings at exit where earnings have taken benefit unit off assistance (i.e. termination due to excessive earnings in the current or preceding month).

Interventions that allow for increased monthly earnings described in the previous section, also promote economic independence and exit from Ontario Works. The average monthly earnings for benefit units that exit Ontario Works assistance increased from \$1,214.09 in 2009 to \$1,451.83 in 2012. The increase once again surpassed targets for each of the 3 contracted years. The following chart illustrates changes since the last service plan submission.



Source: Ministry of Community and Social Services – Ontario Works Extranet Statistics (2009 to 2012)

Although impacts from the recent recession were affecting Ontario Works participants long after the ‘official’ end of the recession was announced in the summer of 2009, efforts to increase wages have still been successful. The City’s Economic Development division has provided information on new business in Hamilton, presenting new leads for Job Developers. Encouragement and supports for higher levels of education and skill development also contributed to successful outcomes.

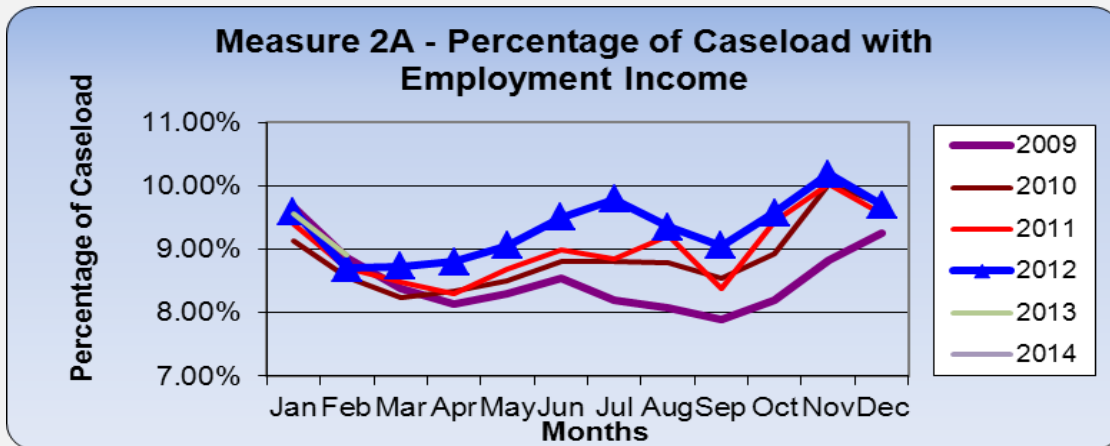
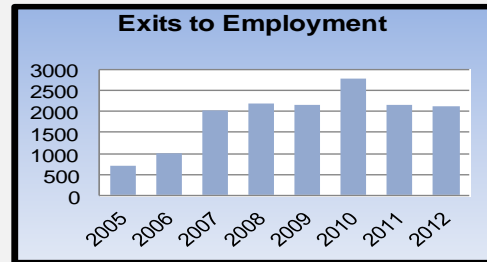
Measure 2A – Percentage of caseload with employment income

Caseloads increased in 2009 by 21.81% - the equivalent of approximately 2,000 benefit units. A surge in applications as a result of poor economic conditions and job loss triggered the change. Those with marketable skills began to find employment opportunities, as evidenced by the increased number of terminations to employment in 2010. Caseloads began to significantly decline from July to December of 2012, producing a final annual caseload that was 3.76% lower than 2011.

The percentage of caseload with employment income increased from 8.53% in 2009 to 9.33% in 2012. Increases surpassed targets for both 2010 and 2012. Although outcomes achieved were above the baseline set for 2011, they fell short of the targeted goal.

Measure 2B – Percentage of terminations exiting to employment

The percentage of terminated cases that left as a result of employment decreased by .31% from 24.73% in 2009 to 24.42% in 2012. This decrease is in part due to conditions of part time, seasonal and temporary work.



Source: Ministry of Community and Social Services – Ontario Works Statistics (2009 to 2012)

Measure 2C - Average number of months from exit due to earnings to re-entry into social assistance

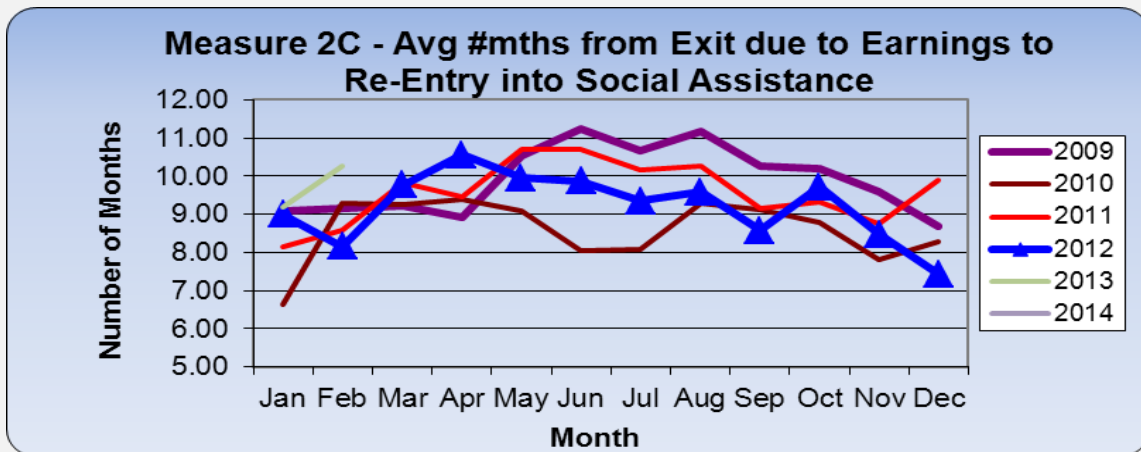
It must be noted that this measures those who return to assistance for any reason, not those retain their jobs.

No points were assigned for the 2010 to 2012 cycle. To measure the change, a ‘non-contracted’ target of 9.6 months was set for 2012. Outcomes have been unfavourable within this measure, again most likely again as a result of a proliferation of part-time, temporary or contract work. As noted in Hamilton’s Social Planning and Research Council’s New Recession Impacts Bulletin: Employment, “The number of residents working full-time, full-year has increased

by only 16% since 1976, while part-time, part-year or seasonal work has increased by 38%.”²

As at the end of 2012 participants who left for employment and then returned, did so within 9.2 months. Job retention supports such as contracted personal counselling through Catholic Family Services, on the job training, enhanced one-to-one employment interventions and post-employment supports have assisted, but more work is needed in this area.

Much of job retention is about attitude. Pre-employment interventions to encourage the development of positive attitudes both personally and on the job are critical to participants’ success. SAIL principles are becoming the norm in all functions within Hamilton Ontario Works to support and coach performance.



Source: Ministry of Community and Social Services – Ontario Works Statistics (2009 to 2012)

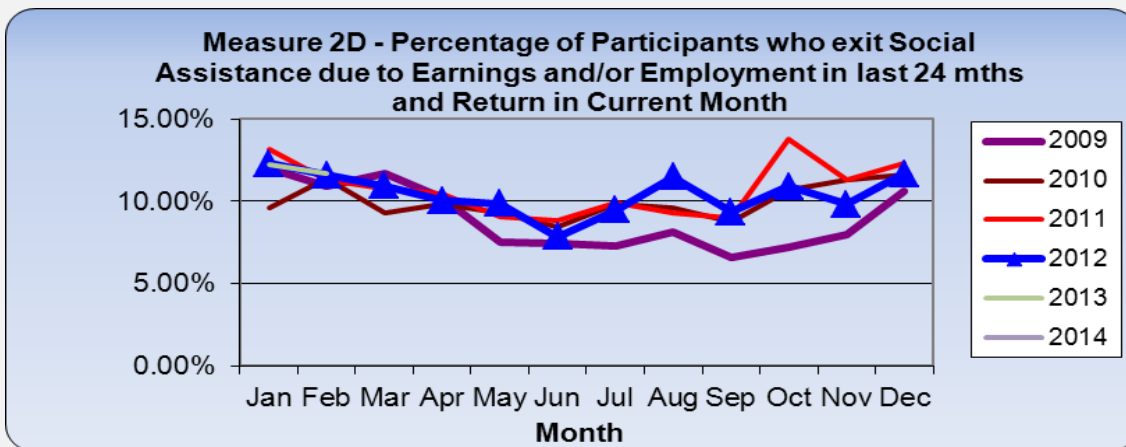
Many participants require remedial or developmental classes prior to job searching. A new program for 2013, entitled ‘Making Change Happen’ offers assistance in developing the skills required to build positive attitudes, communicate effectively and deal with personal stressors. Facilitators have obtained certification as Life Skills Instructors to effectively deliver this program. Using a ‘coach approach’, they will engage participants to develop transparent and accountable transitions to employment where career laddering becomes a

² Mayo, S. (2013). *New Recession Impacts Bulletin: Employment*. Hamilton: Social Planning and Research Council.

goal, not a possibility. Similarly, the Addictions Services Initiative (ASI) program offers numerous developmental classes and services to support those recovering from addictions.

Measure 2D – Job Retention Rate Determined by Percentage of Participants Who Exit Social Assistance due to Earnings and/or Employment in last 24 months and Return in current month

In addition to measuring the number of months to return to Ontario Works, this measure looks at the percentage of benefit units who exit for employment and return within 24 months. Similar to measure 2C, given a large number of part time employment opportunities, results did not meet expectations for 2010 and 2011. However, during 2012 the target was met.

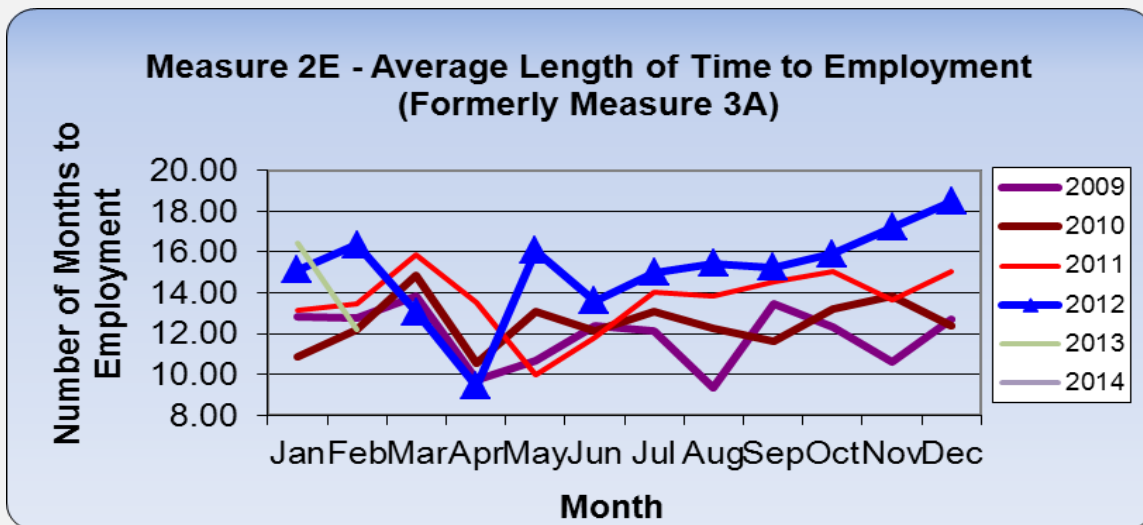


Source: Ministry of Community and Social Services – Ontario Works Statistics (2009 to 2012)

Measure 2E – Average length of time to employment

This measure proved to be the most challenging. Closely related to ‘time on assistance’, this measure has been affected by the percentage of ‘job ready’ people on the Ontario Works caseload. This may reflect that as the economy improved, fewer employable people remained within the Ontario Works caseload. As employers became more confident during the economic recovery and began to hire, those with skills found employment, often at reduced rates of pay. Jobs normally available to unskilled labour became limited as a result of competition.

The ‘average amount of time on assistance’ is a focus area for the Employment and Income Support division’s 2013-2014 Operational Plan.



Source: Ministry of Community and Social Services – Ontario Works Statistics (2009 to 2012)

Evaluation of 2010-2012 Service Plan Strategies

Marketing for full completion of final Income Reporting Statement (IRS)

During 2010, the chair of the Employment Outcomes Working Group visited team meetings to request promotion of full IRS completion. Since that time, case Managers and Employment Counsellors have been regularly encouraged to clearly advise participants of the benefits of completing their IRS until they no longer receive an Ontario Works payment. Benefits such as Full-time Employment Benefits along with possibility of partial supplementary payments and extended health benefits are now regularly communicated to participants. Information on completion of the IRS was included in appointment and termination letters that were mailed to clients. There has been a slow but steady improvement in full completion of data.

Employment Outcomes Working Group

The Employment Outcomes Working Group continued to meet to review outcome measures and bring information to the management table for review. Continuation of this group allowed for regular environmental scans, outcome review and development of suggestions for improvement.

Developing jobs with higher paid employment opportunities

Along with regular advertising and offering employer supports, Job Developers spent time working with Economic Development to bring in higher paid opportunities. Early interventions were crucial as competition was at a peak due to generally lower wages caused by more labour supply than demand during the recession. Increased employer cold-calls also contributed to job orders.

Hamilton attracted more industrial and commercial development than any other city in Canada over the past year. Site Selection magazine, Atlanta, Georgia Sept 2012

Monitoring the labour market for fluctuations

Employment counsellors must have an ever-present awareness of labour market conditions when guiding participants into key areas of employment. During the past three years, staff have been involved in many community labour market information sessions and workgroups to stay current. Regular attendance at Workforce Planning Hamilton tables ensures current and valuable planning information. Strong connections with the City of Hamilton's Economic Development Division also provide timely and valuable information. The Employment and Income Support Division's Employment Outcomes Working Group monitored the labour market through article reviews, Conference Board of Canada reports, Workforce Planning Reports, Chief Economist's reports and other sources of labour market information, including international website information. The Vocational Training Specialists monitored the labour market to ensure funds for skill development training were appropriately issued for occupations in-demand. Staff information sessions and employer sessions also contributed to the general knowledge base.

Monitor the effects of employment services redesign

In 2011 a review was conducted to measure the success of the employment services redesign. The review produced a standardized system complete with methodology and tools. A fact-finding approach to prove or disprove previous hypotheses promoted a culture of evidence-based decision making. The involvement of front line staff in leading work groups allowed for flexibility and

encouraged a willingness to grow and accept increased responsibility. The review resulted in several positive outcomes:

- Employment Development Counsellors now attend case management meetings to keep staff updated on changes and bring information back to employment teams.
- Recommendations were made to the Standards Committee to improve communications and relations between Case Managers and Employment Development Counsellors, ultimately benefiting clients
- Root causes of overdue Participation Agreements were identified
- Recommendations were made to reduce participants who fail to appear for appointments
- Reengineering of a database to capture information regarding participants who found work provided a good source of accurate information
- The development of a new employment services brochure for case managers
- Updating of business processes to include circumstances in which a telephone participation agreement may be completed.

Continue to create awareness of the importance of accurate data entry

A workgroup (the termination group) was developed to study data entry upon file closure. Processes were developed to assist staff in habit development to ensure information input in to SDMT was complete, accurate and timely. Business processes were developed to ensure consistency in service delivery. A checklist tool was created to support case managers in ensuring all tasks were completed as required. Additional telephone contact with participants ensures participants are aware of all resources available to help them with job retention. Regular file reviews show an increase in accurate closures.

Increase networking Opportunities

This action step is a priority for the City of Hamilton. Employment liaisons were established for all case management teams, Employment Ontario agencies and several other community agencies. Ontario Works staff now conduct business in locations outside their home base office and regularly participate in community agency workgroups, boards and committees. Hamilton has regular participants at OMSSA Employment and Income Issues Network meetings and Ministry of

Community and Social Services Workgroups such as the Employment Outcomes Workgroup. Agencies deliver information on their services at staff Employment Information Sessions and team meetings are often held at community agencies.

Stakeholder Linkages and Community Collaboration

With increasing demand for service and decreasing resources, collaboration is essential for growth. It allows for the expansion of ideas, solutions and resources. When lateral processes replace hierarchical ones, and group direction and decision-making takes place in a safe and respectful environment, sustainable resolutions can be reached. For the Hamilton Ontario Works program, collaboration extends from private meetings with participants to inter-governmental consultations.

The City of Hamilton invests in leadership skills to promote high levels of collaboration. Staff members from all levels within the organization are seated at a number of local and provincial boards, committees and workgroups. This section provides a description of the many collaborative unions that have taken place over the last three years.

Skills Development Flagship

The mandate of the Skills Development Flagship is to assist individuals who have been marginalized from the labour market gain access to opportunities for meaningful employment by ensuring that the knowledge and skills of workers match the needs of Hamilton's economy. This collaborative is co-chaired by the City of Hamilton's Director of Employment and Income Support Division (Ontario Works Administrator) and the Executive Director of Employment Hamilton. Membership is open to all employment service delivery agencies, educators and representatives from all three levels of government. Currently there are over 30 members which focus on providing the best possible employment services for job seekers which:

- Leads to meaningful and sustainable employment
- Ensures participant satisfaction
- Maintains confidentiality
- Provides informed consent
- Helps participants reach their goals
- Fosters participant independence

With the understanding that there are existing standards to support, the committee seeks to develop a common language for employment service providers. The repository of information for these providers is WinHamilton.ca. Employment services and functions are outlined on this website that also provides a networking resource for all frontline staff.

The Community Mapping Project

The Community Mapping Project is an initiative of the Skills Development Flagship (SDF). The WINHamilton website was created as a repository of community employment resources where both service provider and job seeker can access help. One-stop access to community information saves administrative time and allows for more time to work with participants on their outcome plans. Agencies regularly use this site to update the community on changes to their programming.

The committee is revisiting their mapping work initiated in 2009 to ensure in depth information regarding service alignment in Hamilton is available. Using the Workforce Information Network (WIN) Hamilton site and client data received from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (M.T.C.U.) Workforce Planning Hamilton will map employment, training and literacy services in Hamilton. Mapping will include types of services, locations and demographics served. The determination of high risk populations based on postal code areas will be used to identify gaps in service. The information will also assist in establishing service standards. An advisory group will be consulted in June to assist with planning.

Hamilton/Niagara Employment Assistance Resource Network

This network of career, employment and training professionals meets monthly to develop community knowledge of employment supports. Members provide updates to services to ensure information and referrals are both current and effective. Along with the exchange of information, members share concerns and issues related to their programs and services. An Ontario Works employment development counsellor is a co-chair of this valuable resource.

Ontario Works/Ontario Disability Support Program Advisory Committee

The purpose of this committee is to provide a forum to ensure that the perspectives of persons receiving services provided by the Ontario Works (OW) Program and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) in the City of Hamilton are taken into consideration in operational delivery. The objectives of the group are as follows:

- To provide an opportunity for representation from the community to meet with municipal and provincial staff to identify and where possible resolve issues that arise in the operation of the Ontario Works and ODSP programs.
- To establish clear communication both within the Community Services and other City departments and ODSP to ensure full understanding of identified issues.
- To work in collaboration to keep clients and other community members appraised of changes in both the OW and ODSP programs to ensure that all viewpoints are taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of the programs.
- To provide the opportunity to discuss policy issues and provide recommendations to the appropriate parties for those issues that require City Council to provide further action with provincial and federal ministries.

The OW/ODSP Operational Advisory committee developed 'VOICE' – a quarterly newsletter sent to all Ontario Works participants to inform them of existing services and supports and Town Hall meetings. The publication is also shared with community partners in order to educate the community further on our services and programs.

Ontario Works/Ontario Disability Support Program Town Hall

The Annual Town Hall Meeting provides an opportunity for citizens of the City of Hamilton, clients of the OW/ODSP programs, service providers and staff of the OW/ODSP programs to network, engage discussion, provide information on services and benefits and to also provide information on other valuable community services which relate to the topic of discussion.

Town Hall provides an opportunity to showcase different service providers in Hamilton, provide an open forum regarding information on programs, legislation and services. Roundtable discussions provide advocates, OW and ODSP participants and other stakeholders with an opportunity to give feedback on their

experiences with the programs and services offered. Plans will be developed to increase citizen participation for the next Town Hall meeting. By responding to the citizens of Hamilton the Town Hall ensures that the perspectives of the persons receiving services provided by the Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program are taken into consideration.

Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works, participants of both programs and community agencies work together to provide a broad range of services, information and programming to ensure citizens are provided with information needed to achieve their maximum independence. Evaluations are completed for each Town Hall and are reviewed for improvements to services and future Town Hall events. The event also keeps the community apprised of changes in both Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program programs.

Living Wage Hamilton

Too many working Hamiltonians live in poverty. Low wages increase the likelihood of worse physical and mental health among these workers. A group entitled Living Wage Hamilton has calculated that a wage of \$14.95 (including benefits) for 37.5 hours a week is necessary for a minimally decent standard of living in Hamilton. Making Hamilton a living wage community would improve the lives of many of Hamilton's workers, including youth, many of whom are facing declining wages. Several community organizations have collaborated to make Hamilton a living wage city. Partners are:

- Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction
- Hamilton Community Foundation
- McMaster Community Poverty Initiative
- Social Planning and Research Council
- Workforce Planning Hamilton

Human Services Planning Initiative (HSPI)

The Human Services Planning Initiative is a community-driven, highly-collaborative approach to planning current and future human service's needs. The goal of the HSPI is to share information for the purpose of enhanced quality of life for Hamilton citizens.

To establish the conditions for success, a 'playbook' was created to support. The Playbook outlines conditions for success including steps required for effective planning. The HSPI has developed nine principles to support effective Human Services Planning. They are:

- Supports neighbourhood capacity building by building healthy neighbourhoods which provide a strong foundation for a vibrant city; acknowledging civic engagement as an important element of the planning process and encouraging community members 'voices, sharing leadership, and facilitating networks to build on community resources.
- Embraces the opportunity to 'do things differently' by promoting innovation and risk-taking in how we plan, deliver and invest in human services and stepping away from how things have been done before while building on past accomplishments.
- Is dynamic and responsive to change by being adaptable, flexible and responsive to changing political, economic, demographic, and social environments
- Promotes healthy human development and life-long learning across the life-cycle for all citizens by creating opportunities to facilitate healthy human development and life-long learning so that everyone may achieve their full potential
- Is citizen-centered by planning, delivering and investing in ways that make sense for the people we serve
- Fosters an inclusive, welcoming and accepting community by recognizing everyone has a role to play in creating an inclusive community that welcomes and accepts social and cultural diversity; advancing physical, economic and social accessibility and providing opportunities and encouraging full participation in planning processes
- Recognizes and values our history by recognizing Hamilton's unique histories, which shape our city and celebrating, respecting and building on past experiences.

- Engages the community by utilizing a community development approach and promotes and fosters citizen engagement. Contributes to environmental sustainability through environmentally sustainable policies and practices. These principles provide the foundation for human services success.

The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC)

HIPC is a leadership collaborative which will assist in the implement an Immigration Strategy for Hamilton. The Strategy will support the attraction, settlement, retention and economic participation of immigrants as well as create a welcoming community for newcomers. The activities to date include the development on a newcomer guide which includes information on:

- a) Immigration
- b) Settlement Services
- c) Housing
- d) Health
- e) Education
- f) Employment
- g) Recreational

Workforce Planning Hamilton

Workforce Planning Hamilton (WFH) acts as a catalyst for economic and labour market development, building solutions and engaging multi-stakeholder alliances. The City of Hamilton's Ontario Works Administrator acts as an advisor to the WFP Board of Directors for this critical agency. Workforce Planning regularly meets with community members to identify critical factors in the development of Hamilton's local economy including the growth of a sustainable workforce. Their reports on the local labour market are vital for service planning. Information sharing occurs regularly between Workforce Planning and Hamilton Ontario Works.

Neighbourhood Planning Strategy

In 2010, the Hamilton Spectators "Code Red" Series emphasized the need for enhanced supports within specific Hamilton neighbourhoods. The City of

Hamilton's Neighbourhood Development Strategy is focused on helping neighbourhoods to be great places to live, work, play and learn.

To do that, the City of Hamilton is working with community partners, neighbourhood groups and residents to develop action plans to build healthier communities. Committees that support this initiative include social assistance recipients, community agencies and both Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program representatives. Employees from various departments of the City of Hamilton assist residents in building effective solutions for their identified concerns.

Neighbourhood plans are resident-led to ensure solutions meet their needs. Five community development workers support residents in eleven Hamilton neighbourhoods. Working with businesses, Provincial and Federal governments and non-profit organizations, the goal is better align existing resources and find new investments that can support neighbourhoods.

Mohawk College Services at the Career Development Centre

Knowing that participants are often uncomfortable attending a community college for supports, Mohawk College staff work within the Career Development Centre to meet with participants to encourage higher levels of learning and offer supports through the college. The sharing of resources leads to better relationships and enhanced information for both staff and participants. Relationships with other community agencies have been enhanced through the development of an employment liaison manager.

Addictions Supports & the Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program

The Ontario Works Addictions Support Initiative program has formed a partnership with the Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program (ABIP) of the Hamilton Health Sciences to screen all participants for brain injury. Once screened, participants who may require additional testing and/or treatment are identified and assisted to link with the appropriate community resources. Services are coordinated on site and case facilitators and counselors at times attend assessment appointments to support participants through the process. This partnership removes barriers that prevent individuals accessing specialized health

services and assists participants in addressing complex health issues that impact their day to day lives and recovery from substance use.

Hamilton Steering Committee for Mental Health, Addiction & Violence Against Women

Committee members will work together to advocate for, influence and make decisions regarding education, research and service delivery needs for women. The committee is led by specialists in violence against women, mental health and addiction services. In its initial planning stage the work at this time is focused on terms of reference, member participation, scope, etc. The committee reports to and consults with a provincially led group.

Over the next two years, this committee will develop terms of reference, scope and assist with research related to best practices with specific attention to substance use and meaningful employment activities.

The committee will be instrumental in developing standards of care across systems leading to better care for individuals as they continue to recover from trauma, mental health and addiction, engage in work and most importantly, improve their quality of life.

Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction

The Roundtable for Poverty Reduction was formed in 2005 out of concern for the community's poverty challenge. The group includes leaders from both profit and non-profit sectors and most importantly, people who have 'lived experience'. Their role is to create a community that understands the importance of investing in poverty reduction strategies in order to create a healthy, inclusive and more prosperous Hamilton. They work with all levels of government on policy and systems-level change to achieve long-term solutions to eliminate poverty.

Children's Aid Society/Catholic Children's Aid Society

In order to improve the skills and capacity of all service providers working with families, the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Hamilton (CCAS), the Children's Aid Society of Hamilton (CAS) and Hamilton Ontario Works office jointly provide leadership in developing training and education opportunities. Specifically, cross training is provided at staff team meetings for each program upon request.

Presently OW and CAS are working on a protocol policy to improve the working relationship of the two agencies and to ultimately ensure that a quality service system is maintained through enhanced communication and understanding.

Success Story

Craig was struggling to find steady pay working at various temporary agencies. He could not make ends meet and as a result, applied for Ontario Works assistance. Craig was referred to the City of Hamilton's Helping Hands program. During his time in the program, Craig advanced to the driver position, assuming an increased amount of responsibility. The Helping Hands group assisted Craig in developing some interview skills and then referred him to a mock interview with a Job Developer. After helpful feedback, Craig was ready for the real thing – an interview with an employer.



MOS Systems is a file management and storage company located in Hamilton. The owner, Christopher Columbus, needed a full-time warehouse person to manage and sort files. Craig's resume was sent to the employer after being screened by the Job Developer. Craig was successful at securing the position.

Financial incentives and WSIB coverage were offered to the employer to offset Craig's training and onsite monitoring ensured Craig's training was on track. Craig is still happily employed, earns \$11 per hour and states he now has a sense of purpose.

Local Demographics



Hamilton's Social Planning and Research Council's 2011 report entitled 'Hamilton's Social Landscape' provides valuable, though dated, demographic information for community agency planning. They describe Hamilton's low population growth as less than half the average for Ontario with a forecast of continued low growth. Most of the population decline is in older parts of the City. The Hamilton Spectators award winning 'Code Red' series identified concerns associated with many of these areas.

Code Red and Vital Signs

The two-part award-winning Hamilton Spectator series' published 2009, 2010 and later completed with the feature 'BORN' in 2012, focused on poverty and its effect on the city – specifically in the core and east end areas. The intensive articles researched and written by Steve Buist, cite facts and figures relating to education levels per household, income levels per household, lack of doctors and overuse of emergency services per household and neighborhood. The information was gleaned from census tracts (neighborhood identifiers) as opposed to postal codes. The articles spoke of disturbing poor health trends and also predicted average life spans based on residence within the community. Existing within the boundaries of the city there is a life expectancy disparity of 21 years.

Alarming, the core and the city's east end were identified as areas demonstrating the greatest struggle - factors such as pollution, low income earnings, reliance on social assistance and lack of post-secondary education pointedly to blame. In the series 'Born', low birth weights, lack of pre- and post natal care and childhood disabilities were attributed to the same contributing factors.

As evidenced by the intensive research and interviewing of countless physical health, mental health professionals and along with elected officials and helping agencies, there's a glaring need in Hamilton for the creation and unification of services to reverse the damage of the past 20 years.

Neighbourhood plans to create positive growth conditions are working to improve life in these neighbourhoods.

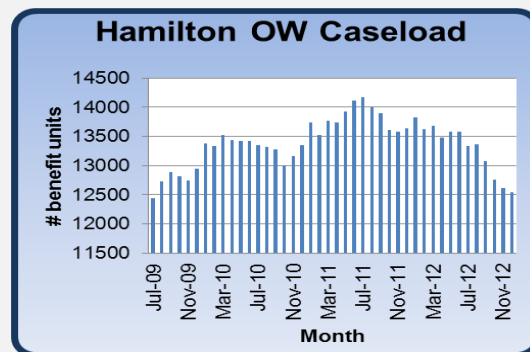
Caseload Description

Ontario Work’s caseload information is critical for the planning and delivery of meaningful city services. Information regarding the Ontario Works population is sometimes minimally represented or absent from other community statistical reports, but is critical in achieving a more comprehensive and socially inclusive community analysis.

Lack of current census data prevents up to date information and as a result, agencies must rely on 2006 data combined with data from any other available source. In the future, it may become more difficult to assess change as a result of removing the long form from the census. More recent information is critical to further analyse trends in the Ontario Works caseload as compared to the population as a whole.

Caseload Size

Ontario Works beneficiaries currently make up approximately 5% of Hamilton’s population. In 2011, Hamilton had a population of 519,949, representing a percentage change of 3.1% from 2006. (Statistics Canada, 2012) The number of Ontario Works recipients grew by 32.5% during the same time period.



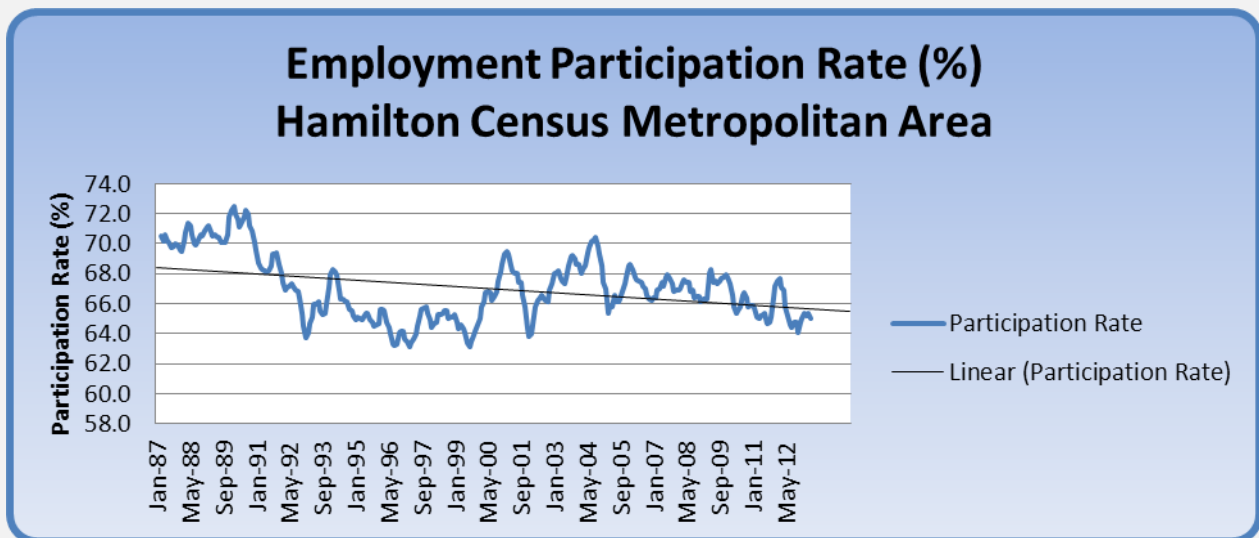
The Hamilton Ontario Works caseload as at Dec 31, 2012 was at its lowest point since July, 2009 – a date often regarded as the end of the recession. Economists identified signs of economic recovery just as Ontario Works experienced a counterpoint reaction – caseloads began to grow.

John Stapleton, Social Policy Consultant for ‘Open Policy’ and ‘The Mark’ and former Ministry of Community and Social Services staff member explains post recessionary increases in welfare caseloads in his article, ‘E-I Spells Post-Recession Welfare’. He writes “With every recession in the past, welfare caseloads peaked after the immediate crisis was over.”³ Many people exhausted their Employment Insurance (EI) claims toward the end of 2009 and more than ten percent of those

³ Stapleton, John, E-I Spells Post-Recession Welfare, The Mark, April 14, 2010

people moved to social assistance for support. As a result, caseloads continued to rise after the recession officially ended. In addition to those who exhausted their EI benefits, people began withdrawing from job-search activities. Unemployment rates are based on the number of people participating in the labour market – and that number has been dropping substantially.⁴

There has been a general decrease in the labour force participation rate since 2006 and an overall increase in the unemployment rate. This means there is a smaller proportion of the population in the work force or looking for work and a higher proportion of the work force that is unemployed. The following chart depicts the trend in labour force participation for the Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area (Hamilton, Burlington and Grimsby). This phenomenon is not specific to Hamilton or Ontario or even Canada. This trend can also be seen south of the Canadian border.



The City of Hamilton’s Employment Outcomes Working Group compiles monthly information regarding the size of Hamilton’s Ontario Works caseload and compares it to unemployment rates from Labour Force Surveys.⁵ One would expect that an improvement in the economy would result in a lower unemployment rate and a lower Ontario Works caseload; however the two are not always synchronous.

⁴ Stapleton, John, E-I Spells Post-Recession Welfare, The Mark, April 14, 2010

⁵ Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey – Definitions, Data Sources and Methods

Labour Force Survey participants, used to define Canada's unemployment rates, are selected based on dwellings and include only those who claim to be currently seeking employment. Follow up contact is mainly conducted by telephone. The transient nature of many Ontario Works recipients and frequent lack of access to personal telephones renders them unlikely candidates for follow up. As a result, they may be under-represented in Provincial survey results. Tools such as the Labour Force Survey used in conjunction with the Ontario Works Caseload numbers give community members a more fulsome and consistent picture of unemployment in Hamilton – leading to a better-informed analysis when identifying trends and future improvements.

Caseload demographics began to change with the economic recovery and slow job growth. The most employable Ontario Works recipients returned to the labour force, often at lower-paid and lower-skilled positions, leaving fewer opportunities for those without marketable skills. According to a new report authored by Dr. Wayne Lewchuk and The United Way of Toronto, 47.1% of Hamiltonians have standard full-time jobs, 12.3% work permanent but part-time, 15.2% have temporary work and 25.4% work on contracts or have some other type of employment.⁶

Caseload Forecast

The City of Hamilton uses a variety of information to forecast caseload increases or decreases including local economic indicators.

- Number of employment insurance claims
- Unemployment rate
- Number of residential and commercial/industrial building permits
- Number of bankruptcies
- Childcare Subsidy waitlist
- Employment Data – changes in part-time or full-time employment
- Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) forecasts
- Information from neighbouring CMSMs and/or CMSMs with similar socio-economic climates (e.g. London, Peel, Ottawa, Windsor)
- Caseload history, pre and post-recession
- Housing wait list
- Changes in legislation

⁶ Precarious Employment Conference; Dr. Wayne Lewchuck with United Way Toronto, April 18, 2013

It is expected that caseloads will continue to decline as the economy improves. Forecasts for the next two years are as follows:

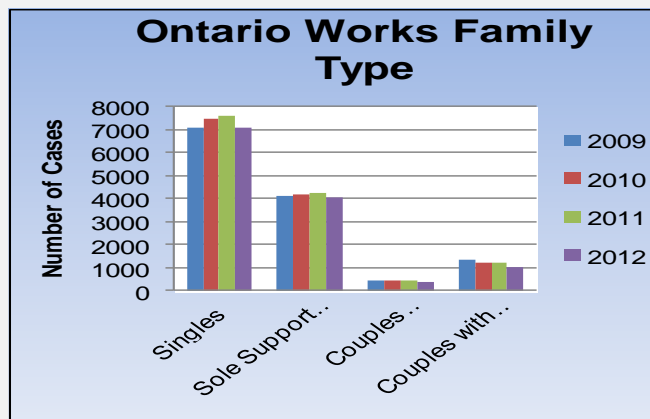
- 2013: 12,389
- 2014: 11,472
- 2015: 11,210

Program Type

As at December 31, 2012, the Hamilton Ontario Works caseload was comprised of 97% regular cases, 2% temporary care cases and 1% Ontario Disability Support Program dependent adults and spouses who are involved in employment activities.⁷ These percentages tend to remain fairly consistent year over year.

Family Type

Caseload family composition has also changed. Single people have become the predominant case type, representing 55% of the Hamilton Ontario Works population.⁸ The following chart shows family type and benefit unit members as at December 31, 2012 and their respective percentage of the caseload.



As of the end of 2012, single people who received Ontario Works in Hamilton decreased by 6.7% from 2011. The number of sole support who received Ontario Works decreased by 5.2%, couples with children by 21.4% and couples without children by 15.5%. In addition, as of the end of 2012, the number of beneficiaries decreased

by 8.2% from the same point in the previous year. The change in predominant family type to singles is mainly a result of decreases in other categories, and not necessarily increases in single applications.

⁷ MCSS SERVICE DELIVERY ORGANIZATION SAR 140M - Benefit Unit Summary Report December 2012

⁸ MCSS SERVICE DELIVERY ORGANIZATION SAR 140M - Benefit Unit Summary Report December 2012

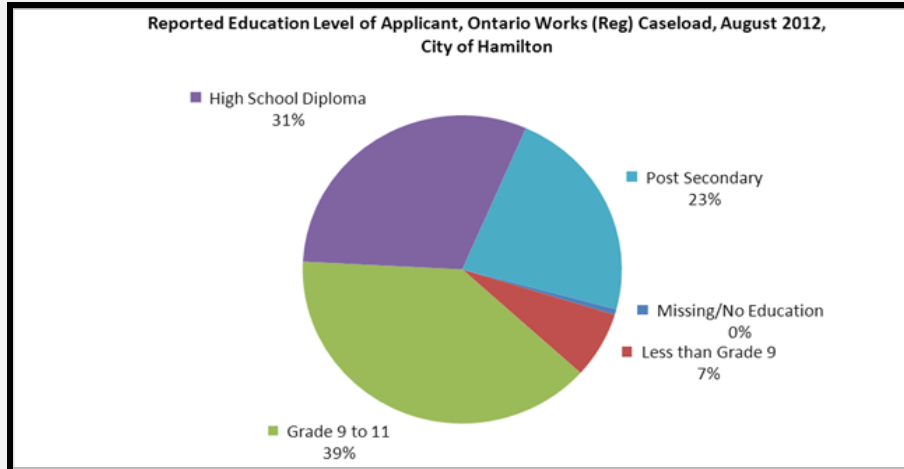
Intake

As people began to find employment after the recession, the number of people applying for assistance also began to drop. During 2012, 14,816 applications were received – a decrease of 5.5% over 2011. The number of completed applications for 2012 was 10,858 – a decrease of 2.1% over 2011.

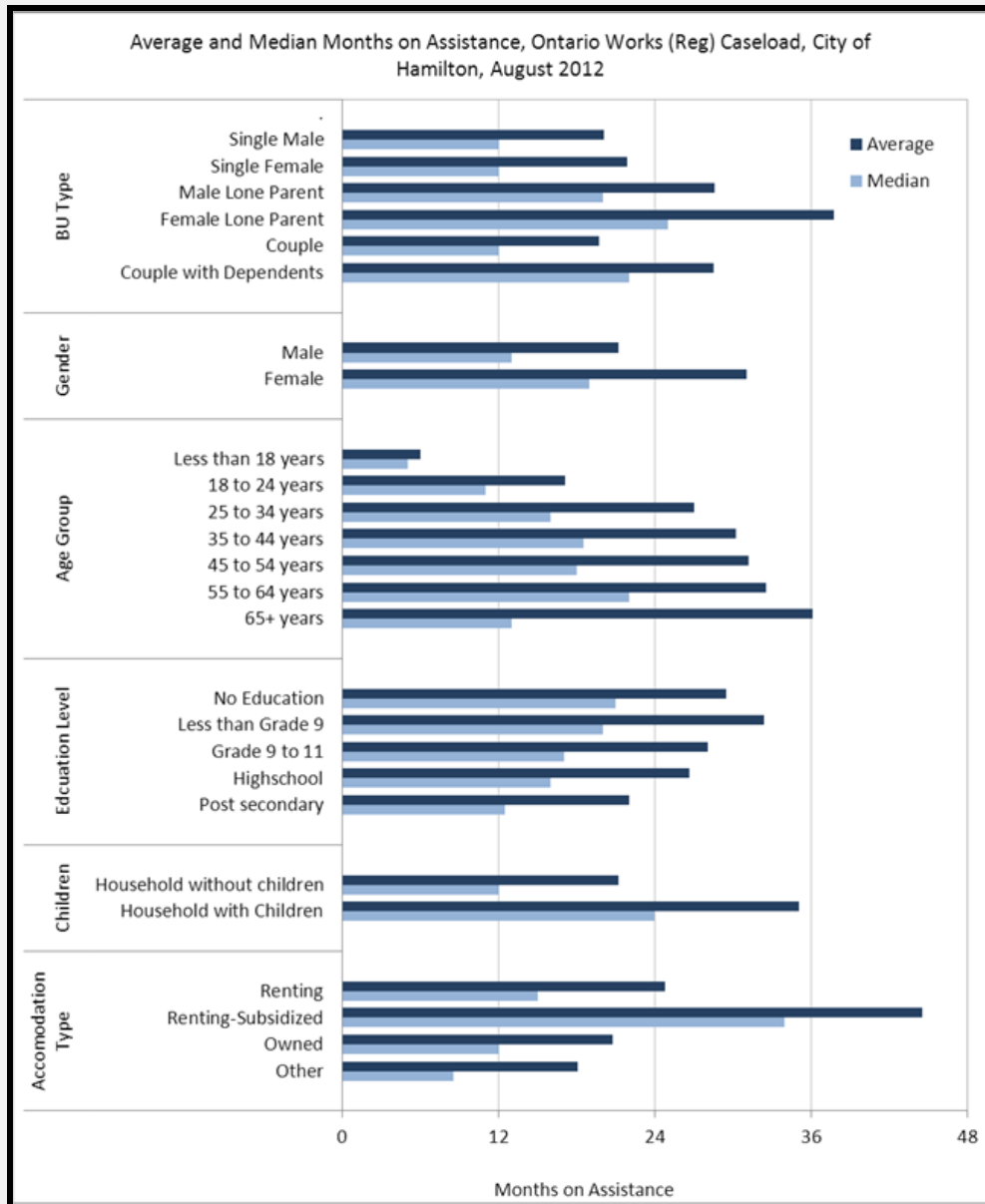
The intake reductions combined with a higher number of terminations allowed for improved and timelier services. Applications for 2012 were verified within 3.1 days, an improvement of .5 days from 2011. The average time to determine eligibility upon receipt of documentation was 7.8 days, again an improvement of approximately .5 days from 2011.

Additional Caseload Facts

- The majority (95%) of households receiving Ontario Works in Hamilton live in rented housing units. Ten percent (10%) of households are in rent subsidized units.
- Overall, there are more households headed by women than men (54.4% vs. 45.6%). The proportion of applicants in the “less than 18 years” and the “18 to 24 years” categories that are female is much higher than males.
- Almost one-third (32%) of the caseload in August 2012 was comprised of sole support (single parent) families.
- The proportion of single male households is higher than single female households (64.9% vs. 35.1%). The majority (93.1%) of sole support families are headed by a female.
- Forty-six percent (46%) of applicants have not completed high school education.



- Over half (59%) of the caseload has been receiving Ontario Works assistance for over a year.
- The average number of cases for 2012 (13,228) was 3.8% lower than in 2011.
- The average number of beneficiaries (people on the caseload, including applicant, spouses, dependent adults, children and temporary care children) for 2012 was 29,867. This was a decrease of 3.3% from 2011.
- The average Case Manager to Benefit Unit ratio for 2012 was 1:128, a decrease of 16.9% from 2011.
- The average time on assistance was 26.4 months, up 7.3% from 2011.
- During 2012, 10,858 intake applications were completed within three days of the initial call. This was a decrease of 2.1% from 2011.
- The average number of months on assistance is longer for female lone parent households than other benefit unit types. The average number of months on assistance is longer for households in subsidized housing units compared to households in other accommodations.



- 876 benefit units (cases) moved into Hamilton from other locations in Ontario during 2012 – a decrease of 10.4% from 2011.
- 784 benefit units moved out of Hamilton to another location in Ontario during 2012 – a decrease of 0.5% from 2011.
- Calls from the intake queue and the general queue totaled 99,554 during 2012.
- 22,504 appointments were scheduled in 2012 to update files, revise case plans, and assist with other concerns.

- During 2012, there were 3,412 employment assessment appointments completed. The assessments were followed by periodic follow-up appointments to assist with people's job search efforts.
- During 2012, 11,223 files were closed. 18% of the closures were as a result of confirmed employment, 10% were approved for Ontario Disability Support Program and the remainder was closed for other reasons including other types of income and failure to provide information required by legislation.
- During 2012, the average cost per case for basic financial assistance was \$691. The total cost of mandatory benefits issued was \$111,533,689, down 4.6% from the previous year.
- During 2012, there were fewer convention refugees (41% less), permanent landed residents (8% less) and refugee claimants (52% less) than in 2011.
- The top ten languages from OW recipients have remained relatively consistent between 2011 and 2012. Hungarian, Arabic, Spanish, Croatian, Czech, Somali, Slovak, Vietnamese and Farsi were identified as being top ten languages in both 2011 and 2012. In 2012, Polish was no longer recognized as a top ten language of OW recipients and was replaced by Karen.
- In 2011 and 2012 the top three languages of OW recipients were Hungarian, Arabic and Spanish.⁹

Economic Influences and the Local Labour Market

Although impacted by the most recent recession, Hamilton has gained increased notoriety as an economically resilient community.

Hamilton's Social Planning and Research Council attributes the city's resiliency to several factors – a diversified economy, affordability, collaboration between sectors to help develop a skilled labour force and a focus on poverty reduction.¹⁰

The City's focus on select economic sectors and award-winning marketing strategies has encouraged business to relocate to Hamilton, bringing revenue and employment opportunities with them. To meet the demands of new and existing employers, Ontario Works participants must have the skills required to compete

⁹ (ITS Hamilton, 2012)

¹⁰ Social Planning & Research Council, *Hamilton's Social Landscape Bulletin*, January 2013

with others in the labour market, for example, skills in advanced technology. Even before employers make the move to Hamilton, there must be a skilled labour force to meet their needs. Situated within the Golden Horseshoe and with access to major markets, Hamilton is a prime location for business, but the labour force must be available. The mismatch between people without jobs and jobs without people is becoming more acute.

Employment organizations within the City of Hamilton rely heavily on Workforce Planning Hamilton to analyze economic and labour market conditions and work with stakeholders to strategize improvements. They use evidence-based processes that include data from Statistics Canada Labour Force Surveys, Canadian Business Patterns, sector-based information from local employers and workforce information from the community. They are considered a leading repository of labour market information for the community.

According to Workforce Planning, as of June, 2010, there were 27,207 businesses in Hamilton. Over half of these businesses were owner operated and 46% were small businesses with less than fifty employees.

The top sectors based on number of businesses as of June 2010 were professional, scientific and technical services, real estate and specialty trade contractors. Workforce Planning's most recent data on labour force participation (2006) puts Hamilton's labour force at approximately 246,000 people, predominantly in the 25-44 age range. Hamilton is home to fewer workers with university-related credentials and high school diplomas, but has a higher percentage of people with apprenticeships, trades certificates and college diplomas.

Workforce Planning conducts an annual review to report on local labour market issues. Community agencies rely on this report to support their strategic planning processes. The 2012 review included a study of the City of Hamilton's priority cluster areas: Advanced Manufacturing; Agriculture and Agri-business; Bio-Science, Clean Technology; Creative Industries; and Goods Movement.

Workforce Planning Hamilton reports the current top ten sectors of employment as depicted in the following chart.

Top 10 Sectors of Employment			
Industry	% of Employment in All Industries Hamilton CMA 2011	% Growth of Employment in Industry Hamilton CMA 2006 to 2011	# of Employers in Hamilton Census Division 2011
Retail and Wholesale Trade	17.3%	7.7%	3883
Manufacturing	13.3%	-11.1%	972
Health Care and Social Assistance	12.7%	22.0%	1897
Educational Services	6.8%	-15.7%	328
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing	6.8%	-1.5%	4290
Construction	6.7%	-7.6%	3686
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	6.3%	2.1%	3232
Accommodation and Food Services	6.1%	39.5%	1235
Transportation and Warehousing	5.3%	26.3%	1667
Business, Building and Other Support Services	4.4%	16.7%	2388

The following information includes information on both economic considerations and labour market information as the two are inextricably bound.

Immigration and Economics

Hamilton's economy relies largely on increased immigration. The city's ageing population is greater than the provincial average and to compensate, immigrants

and youth will be the focus for continued growth. The City of Hamilton is working with the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council to develop a plan to attract economic class immigrants, immigrant entrepreneurs and international students to the community while improving services for newcomers.¹¹



Hamilton is home to many highly educated immigrants yet many are unable to secure employment based on their level of skill. Difficulties in obtaining Canadian professional accreditation, lack of Canadian work experience, language barriers, and discriminatory practices make starting over extremely difficult.

Hamilton's Immigration strategy aims to build collective and collaborative leadership, strengthen the delivery of settlement services, create a welcoming community and develop and disseminate knowledge of immigration. Hamilton Immigration Council Partnership workgroups develop inclusive policies regarding service providers, newcomer services, employment, language training, housing and health. The Council's workgroups have produced a variety of supports including guidebooks on community resources such as language training, service providers, housing providers and employment supports.

The Housing Services division of the City of Hamilton has included immigrant housing needs into their Housing and Homelessness Action Plan and the Ontario Works program in Hamilton offers accreditation supports to help foreign-trained immigrants return to their former occupations. According to Immigration Attraction to Hamilton: Background¹², 'implementing strategies to increase Hamilton's appeal to Canada's immigrants would help to add skills to the existing local labour force, and boost the size and productivity of Hamilton's economy'.

Youth and Economics

In a recent report from TD Economics, Martin Schwerdtfeger, Senior Economist, outlines that youth unemployment has long lasting career consequences.

¹¹ City of Hamilton Council Report - Update on Immigration Initiatives within the City of Hamilton (CS12037/CM12018/PED12223) (City Wide)

¹² Sarah V. Wayland and Tim Rees, November 2012. Produced by: Cartographic and Graphic Services Section, Planning and Economic Development Department, City of Hamilton

“Economic research indicates that a period of unemployment at the time of entry into the labour market is associated with persistently lower wages many years



thereafter.”¹³ This impact is known as “scarring”. In the same report, Schwerdtfeger points to two public policy interventions required to support youth, reduce scarring and support the economy: policies geared towards training or access to education for unemployed youth and policies to improve mobility to higher paying positions.¹⁴

According to 2006 Census data, 53% of Hamilton youth (aged 15-24) were employed in sales and service occupations. As expected, few were engaged in traditionally higher paid employment activities. According to Workforce Planning Hamilton, youth unemployment rates are high due to the vulnerability of this group. They generally have little seniority, work experience and the least amount of employer-invested training, often making them the first to go when downsizing. Those who are unemployed often have less job search experience and may lack the knowledge and resources to find work, such as a means of transportation.¹⁵ A new report from Hamilton’s Social Planning and Research Council found that:

- The 1980s and 1990s recessions led to steep declines in youth wages, without a recovery.
- Earnings for Hamilton CMA workers aged 25-34 are second lowest among Ontario large CMAs.
- The city of Hamilton’s youth unemployment rate in 2011 was still higher than before the recession, but was lower than most other southern Ontario communities.¹⁶ As of December 31, 2012, there were 2,939 Ontario Works applicants under 25 years of age.

¹³ TD Economics, *Assessing the Long Term Costs of Youth Unemployment*, Martin Schwerdtfeger, Senior Economist, Jan 28, 2013

¹⁴ (Martin Schwerdtfeger, 2013)

¹⁵ Workforce Planning Hamilton, *A Portrait of the Youth Labour Market in Ontario*, November 2011

¹⁶ Mayo, Sara Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton, 2013

According to 'The Economist', a well-respected publication,¹⁷ the problem of youth unemployment has been getting worse for several years but "there are at last some reasons for hope. Governments are trying to address the mismatch between education and the labour market. Companies are beginning to take more responsibility for investing in the young. And technology is helping democratize education and training. The world has a real chance of introducing an education-and-training revolution worthy of the scale of the problem."

Construction Sector and the Hamilton Labour Market

In January, 2013, CBC Hamilton News published a report identifying Hamilton as the city expected to lead Ontario housing price gains in 2013.¹⁸ Although gains are expected, Hamilton housing costs are still below those of most neighbouring communities, bringing commuters into the city.

The February 2013 Conference Board of Canada's report, Metropolitan Outlook for Hamilton indicates that while multi-family construction starts increased during 2012, they are expected to decline during 2013 by 14.4% contributing to an overall 7.8% decline in this area of construction. The Board forecasts that multi-family housing starts will begin to increase again during 2014. Increases in non-residential construction will compensate for this loss bringing overall construction gains to .5% for 2013. The following year is expected to bring gains in housing starts. Combined with non-residential gains increases during 2014 are expected to increase by 2.2%.¹⁹ In short, during 2013 there will be modest opportunity for employment gains in construction leading to the possibility of employment growth in 2014.



¹⁷ The Economist, *Generation Jobless*, April 27, 2013 (*Economist*)

¹⁸ CBC News Hamilton – Posted Jan 17, 2013,
<http://www.cbc.ca/hamilton/economy/story/2013/01/17/hamilton-ontario-housing-forecast.html>

¹⁹ (Conference Board of Canada, 2013)

Goods Movement Sector and the Hamilton Labour Market

Hamilton's prime location makes it a hub for 'goods movement' in Ontario. An international airport, two railways, access to major highways and the busiest harbor in the Great Lakes make Hamilton a great place to work within this sector. Despite this, skilled worker shortages are developing due to an aging population lack of desire for this type of work. Long hours away from family often deter applicants from occupying these positions. Employment growth in this sector is expected to expand by 4.2% in 2013 and then at a compounded annual rate of 1.1% through to 2017.²⁰ Ontario Works staff members encourage participants to work within this sector as it provides a good opportunity for labour mobility and remuneration.

Service Sector and the Hamilton Labour Market

During 2012, growth in Hamilton's service sector was hampered by overall slow economic growth. Government service growth decreased due to fiscal restraints. Economic conditions also weakened overall consumer spending on personal services. However, growth was seen in cultural and information industries, finance, insurance, real estate and wholesale/retail trade. The Conference Board of Canada predicts small growth gains in public administration over the next two years as a result of government cut-backs, more growth in non-commercial services, and a respectable increase in wholesale and retail growth due to income increases. Further growth of 2.4% is anticipated for the service sector in 2014.²¹ Due to an abundance of entry level positions within the service sector, Ontario Works participants often find employment in this area.



Manufacturing Sector and the Hamilton Labour Market

Hamilton has an infrastructure that supports advanced manufacturing. Manufacturing accounts for 13.3% of jobs across all industries with 972 employers within the sector as of June 2012. A report from Hamilton's Economic

²⁰ (Conference Board of Canada, 2013)

²¹ (Conference Board of Canada, 2013)

Development division describes Hamilton's manufacturing sector as the driving force of the local economy, representing the equivalent of 4% of Ontario's GDP. A marketing approach to attract diverse businesses will continue to expand Hamilton's manufacturing sector.

The McMaster Innovation Park is a key resource in developing advanced manufacturing. It offers laboratory, office, teaching, training, and conference facilities that support research. Continued development of working partnerships will stimulate more research and innovation to generate new business. Hamilton's manufacturing sector expanded by 2.7 per cent in 2012.²² While the steel industry is slowly rebuilding, Hamilton's growth in manufacturing comes from new industry. Canada Bread opened a new \$100-million bakery in 2011. In 2012, Columbian Chemicals, a producer of carbon black for tires and Birmingham Foundations Solutions, a manufacturer of custom construction equipment both expanded their operations. Hamilton looks forward to the opening of Maple Leaf's processing plant which is expected to employ 670 people. The Conference Board of Canada forecasts a 2.5% growth in manufacturing for 2013 increasing to 3% for 2014.

Health Care Sector and the Hamilton Labour Market

Workforce Planning Hamilton's report 'Checking the Pulse: A Labour Market Profile of the Health Care Industry in Hamilton', provides valuable information on the health care sector. The report identifies "While employment decreased in 2010, the health care industry has recovered well from the economic downturn, growing over 10% since 2007, higher than the average employment growth across all industries of 3%."²³ Many positions in this sector are beyond the immediate grasp of most Ontario Works participants, but skill development training offers opportunities to break into this sector.

Agribusiness Sector and the Labour Market

Although a major contributor to Hamilton's economy, this sector has many challenges. The trend is toward fewer, yet larger farms. Traditional farming techniques have morphed into technologically advanced processes requiring

²² (Conference Board of Canada, 2013)

²³ (Workforce Planning Hamilton, 2013)

skilled workers. Workforce Planning Hamilton's report, 'A Taste of Agribusiness'²⁴ outlines that there are approximately 9,415 workers and 581 business operating within the agribusiness and food processing cluster in the Hamilton area. Key findings from the report show that younger recruits will be required as farmers retire, tech-savvy employees will be needed in addition to those with traditional farming skills, employees of all skill levels are required in this industry and that in-house training is typically provided for recruits. Employers look for good attitudes, and a willingness to learn and adapt.

Political Influences

Change in Government Leadership

Change in Provincial leadership has led to increased hope for lower income families. Several commitments aim to support Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program participants in achieving self-sufficiency including: Improving opportunities for people with disabilities and those on social assistance

- Safe, secure, affordable housing
- Priorities including education, early learning, childcare and safe, secure, affordable housing
- Recognition of community health, diversity and public engagement in decision making
- Working with municipal leaders and municipalities

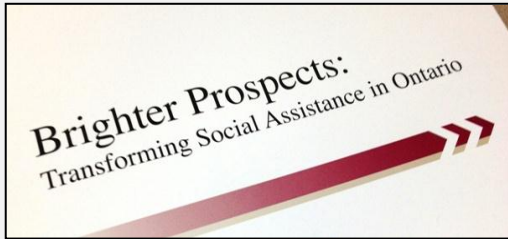
These positive commitments take place during a period of transition for government services. To avoid a billowing deficit, governments at all levels are recognizing that cut-backs and changes are required to reduce spending. A streamlining of services will allow for growth and greater supports for participants. Conversely, a reduction in services and staffing may impact the ability to action many of the outlined commitments.

Social Assistance Reform

Over the past two years, Commissions have produced recommendations on the reform of government services. Don Drummond, Chair of the Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, submitted a report entitled "Public Services

²⁴ Workforce Planning Hamilton, A Taste of Agribusiness, 2013

for Ontarians: A Path to Sustainability and Excellence”.²⁵ The report included hundreds of austerity measures to support streamlining of services and reduction of costs.



Similarly, the Ontario Government commissioned Dr. Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh and to conduct a review of Social Assistance in Ontario. On October 24, 2012, the Commission released its final report to the government, “Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario.”²⁶ The report offered many recommendations to improve the lives of people receiving social assistance. Political changes as a result of these reports will influence the ability of municipalities and boards to serve local Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program populations.

Transformation of Employment Ontario

In 2012, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities eliminated funding for Employment Resource Centres. City of Hamilton, Ontario Works and the Libraries were affected by this funding change. A decision was made to close the resource centres in the satellite offices in order to maintain the resource centre located in the Career Development Centre at 181 Main Street West as it is a critical part of the integrated employment services provided to people receiving assistance from OW and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Participants who had access to the resource centres at 1550 Upper James Street and 2255 Barton Street East were referred to an Employment Ontario office that provides the same level of support.

Employment Insurance Reform

Changes to Canada’s Employment Insurance policies will also bring change for Ontario Works participants as they are often frequent users of both systems due to lack of sustainable skills.

²⁵ Drummond, Don, *Public Service for Ontarians: A Pathway to Sustainability and Excellence*, Queens Printer for Ontario 2012.

²⁶ Dr. Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh, *Brighter Prospects: Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario*, October 2012

Claimants with three or more claims who received more than 60 weeks of benefits in the last five years are required to immediately expand their job search beyond their usual occupation and accept jobs at a lower rate than those who are occasional users. This may increase the numbers of working-poor who rely on social assistance to subsidize low wages. Increased pressure to secure undesirable employment may decrease the amount of time to employment for those receiving Employment Insurance and Ontario Works, but may simultaneously decrease job retention.

Some improvements include notifying claimants of employment opportunities before employers apply to bring in foreign workers, expanding the notification process for employment opportunities and offering increased labour market information, potentially leading to improved outcomes.

Discretionary Benefits/Community Start-Up/Housing Stability Benefit

Political decisions to reduce expenditures for discretionary benefits and supports to stabilize housing have generated much feedback from communities across Ontario including the City of Hamilton. Lack of resources to maintain basic health and stable housing contributes to longer periods of unemployment, as basics of life must be first met in order to successfully job search.

Hamilton City Council recognizes the importance of community health and granted 'one-time' funding to maintain current service levels for the first six months of 2013 for both discretionary benefits and the Housing Stability benefit that has recently replaced Community Start-Up and Maintenance benefit.

Emergency Shelter Residents

As part of the implementation of the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), people residing in an emergency shelter may be eligible for basic needs versus personal needs allowance. This change has increased the number of applications for assistance from shelter residents.

Changes to Ontario Works Policies and Business Processes

There is generally a link between policy change and outcomes. Changes such as an increase in social assistance rates have a direct and obvious impact, but less obvious changes can cumulatively lead to impacts. For example, changes to transfer of assets policies allow individuals to pay off debts and remain eligible for assistance. This increases the number of people who are eligible for assistance but does not affect the number of jobs available in the labour market. Although each change may affect only a small percentage of participants overall, as policies become more liberal, eligibility is expanded. Over the last three years, there have been several policies related to new income exemptions. While greater income increases the number of people who remain on assistance, it also provides participants with increased resources to secure employment.

Homelessness to Housing Stability Benefit

The City of Hamilton's Ontario Works Program administers funds for the Housing Stability Benefit to active Ontario Works Recipients under the Direction of the Administrator of the Hamilton Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funding and through approval by the Director of Ontario Works. Ontario Works Case Managers receive applications and determine eligibility for the Housing Stability Benefit (HSB) according to the guidelines provided by the Housing Services Division.

Case Managers issue funds to eligible HSB applicants through standard Ontario Works procedures according to the guidelines provided by the Housing Services Division. When an HSB applicant requests reassessment of their eligibility, Ontario Works Case Presenting Officers (CPO) review the original request and may overturn, vary or uphold the original decision. Hostel Case Managers process applications and issue the HSB to active OW and ODSP Recipients exiting the shelter system.

Social Services Solutions Modernization Project (SSSMP)

Changes to technology supports for the delivery of social assistance will have a profound impact on outcomes over the next two years. Change management strategies are currently underway to minimize disruption during transition to the new database. Regardless of efforts to minimize disruption, there is an expectation that an impact will be felt.

Success Story

Brad has always been an active member of his community. He had been volunteering for the Living Rock and began the College and Career Preparation program Assessment at Mohawk College in 2009.



Brad continued to upgrade at Mohawk College while looking for employment, completed the program and obtained his Grade 12 in 2010. He came to Employment Services in October of 2011 and accepted a number of temporary positions working in renovations and general labour. He was offered a full-time position with Public Mobile in October of 2011.

Section 3: Program Management



City of Hamilton's Strategic Plan (2012-2015)

OUR Vision

To be the best place in Canada to raise a child, promote innovation, engage citizens and provide diverse economic opportunities.

OUR Mission

WE provide quality public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Values

Accountability, Cost Consciousness, Equity, Excellence, Honesty, Innovation, Leadership, Respect and Teamwork

OUR Priorities

Strategic Priority #1 – A Prosperous & Healthy Community

WE enhance our image, economy and well-being by demonstrating that Hamilton is a great place to live, work, play and learn.

Strategic Priority #2 - Valued & Sustainable Services

WE deliver high quality services that meet citizen needs and expectations, in a cost effective and responsible manner.

Strategic Priority #3 - Leadership & Governance

WE work together to ensure we are a government that is respectful towards each other and that the community has confidence and trust in.

Oversight of Ontario Works

The City of Hamilton is committed to accountability in delivery of program and services which are effective and efficient. Annually, The City of Hamilton Council approves programs and services and the required level of service through the departmental operational budgets. In 2012, Council approved a new mission, values and priorities; all of which focus on sustainable and accountable services.

The City launched a Service Delivery Review in order to highlight and duplicate examples of how we are delivering services well and identify opportunities for improvements. City staff has undertaken a service inventory to create a complete profile of services, which will also include program costs and performance measurement information. The goal is to allow Council to make proactive and informed decisions on which areas to focus on for service improvements, efficiencies and investments.

A Call Handling Review has been initiated which is looking at the way the City of Hamilton handles calls today and look for opportunities to make our call handling practices more efficient and citizen-centered. All existing call handling groups and/or queues (including 3 queues managed by Ontario Works) are being reviewed in order to develop a detailed design and implementation plan to best meet the needs of our citizens. This initiative is closely tied to the review of the Web Services which is also underway.

The framework to support the City's accountability starts with the corporate policies and expectations. A key policy is the Code of Conduct; The City of Hamilton has high expectations of its employees for integrity and ethical conduct. The City of Hamilton utilizes the support of internal Audit Services to conduct audits based on a risk assessment. Internal Audit is responsible to review compliance with City policies and procedures. In addition, they provide objective information, advice, assurance and ideas to Council, management and staff with respect to operations, performance and accountability. Over previous years, they have completed audits on overpayments, cheque handling, cash handling, procurement cards, dental and parking. The workplan for 2014/15 includes an audit of Employment Services and social assistance payments.

It is important to note that in 2013, the City of Hamilton will be implementing a hybrid of the Auditor General model and a value-for-money audit program.

Through this new model, they will be examining services and programs to assess whether resources are managed in an efficient, economic and effective manner.

An external auditor is utilized to review the year-end financial statements. During this review, they confirm that the grants, allocations and contracts are aligned, accountable and reflective of the Ministry agreement.

As part of the ongoing financial sustainability plan, each department within the City of Hamilton must complete 3 budget exception reports, however, within Community and Emergency Services, 5 budget exception reports are completed. This is an opportunity to review the status of the spending, forecast variance and/or make corrective action.

From an operations perspective the following processes and structure define responsibilities to ensure accountability:

- OW Program Administration has been divided into distinct areas of oversight: Benefit Eligibility Division assumes the role of compliance and quality assurance while Employment and Income Support, Housing Services and Social Policy and Early Childhood Services Divisions retain responsibility for caseload management.
- Ontario Works staff is trained on legislation, regulations and directives. Training is provided by Hamilton's Quality Assurance and Compliance Unit.
- All work of new staff is monitored by managers for the first 60 days to ensure their work is in compliance with legislation and all applicable benefits have been issued. Delegation of authority is provided once each staff person successfully completes milestones.
- Managers and Supervisors are responsible to conduct five file reviews per employee, per year. Regular one-to-one manager/worker meetings are conducted to ensure challenges are addressed, minimizing the risk of ineffective case management habits.
- Annual file and program reviews of local processes measure compliance with the Ontario Works Act, directives and local policy and provides recommendations for corrective action and operational efficiencies. Standardized file review formats include sections on all participant activities, from the initial point of contact to employment. Results provide information to identify training and internal policy development needs in

- order to ensure program integrity. Regular and consistent file reviews ensure compliance with strategies and best practices.
- Regular monthly meetings between the Business Administrator and the Ontario Works administrator take place to ensure financial information is accurate and funding is allocated toward appropriate resources.
 - Claims are reviewed at several levels (business administrator, program manager, Ontario Works administrator) to ensure accurate financial information is captured and employment outcome information is correct.
 - The Quality Assurance and Compliance team ensure implementation of Ontario Works training is consistent with strategies developed.
 - Program Review Officers (PROs) within the Quality Assurance and Compliance team review provincial legislative and procedural changes and existing local policy and procedures to ensure that changes are incorporated into daily business and that local policy reflects compliance.
 - Ongoing training and education ensures that all aspects of the program are in compliance with the Ontario Works Act, legislation and directives. Training in Ministry initiatives and local policy and guidelines assists staff in making accurate and consistent determinations of eligibility.
 - Divisional operational plans are developed that ensure strategies are aligned with Corporate and Ministry objectives.

Analysis of Resources

The City of Hamilton has focused on investing municipal funding and provincial subsidy in programs and services that have been providing supports for marginalized clients, providing us with the highest returns possible on our taxpayer investment. Our strategy has long been to work with each individual and family and, in partnership with our community, create the right blend of programs and services to support our mutual goal of engaging our participants as active and contributing members of our community and workforce.

The 2013/2014 Ontario Works Cost of Administration allocation is based on a formula of \$2,054 per standard case plus an allocation for the supplementary caseload (ineligible applications, discontinued applications, cases referred to Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Disability Support Program participating in Ontario Works and Emergency Assistance Applications). Expenditures for the delivery of financial and employment assistance to Ontario Works recipients as well as administrative supports to the program are covered by

this budget. The funding formula contains an allocation for uploaded cost and 50% cost share.

Total annual allocations for 2013-2015

Provincial: \$28,644,225 (uploaded funding: \$8,443,525 and 50%: \$20,200,700)

Municipal contribution: \$21,518,476 (EA: \$1,317,776 and COA: \$20,200,700)

Total Available: \$50,162,700

Contracted Submission:

The budget submission for 2013-14 categorized costs by either Central Administration or Direct Administration.

Central Administration costs are comprised of:

- 20% of the General Manager of Community Services
- 20% of the Strategic Services Division (staffing related to project managers, communication specialists, Health and Wellness, Volunteer Coordinator and ergonomic furniture and equipment)
- Local System Support (Technical Services)

The above comprise a total of 9.13 full time employees.

In addition, there is an indirect cost allocation for:

- Legal Services; and,
- Human Resources

Direct Administration costs are comprised of:

- 328.87 staff (Frontline staff, supervisors, managers, directors and finance and administration)
- Lease of OW buildings
- Training and conferences
- Supplies
- Other related expenses for direct delivery

In addition:

Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) Funding

Provincial \$21,450

Municipal \$3,550

Total: \$25,000

Provincial: \$20,909,636
Municipal: \$13,916,894
Total: \$34,826,530

Total Unallocated Provincial Funding: \$7,734,589

Specified Funding

Addiction Services Initiative:
Staffing (12) and additional program costs
Provincial: \$1,038,721
Municipal: \$122,886
Total: \$1,161,607

Total Investment
Municipal: \$14,039,780
Provincial: \$21,948,357
Total: \$35,988.137

Ontario Works Service Delivery

Ontario Works is delivered in five accessible offices, all located on a public bus routes.

Main - 250 Main Street East office offers Income Support Services
East - 2255 Barton Street East office offers Income Support Services
Mountain - 1550 Upper James Street office offers Income Support Services
Downtown – 181 Main Street West, 3rd Floor offers Employment Services including an Employment Resource Centre
Downtown – 350 King Street East office offers income and social housing supports

Hamilton’s Community and Emergency Services Department delivers Ontario Works from four divisions: Benefit Eligibility, Employment and Income Support, Housing Services and Social Development and Early Childhood Services.

Benefit Eligibility Division

This division provides services that support Hamilton citizens in need of financial assistance and special supports to achieve self-sufficiency and maximize their quality of life. It provides:

- Initial Ontario Works applications (phone intake)
- Assistance in obtaining support for Ontario Works participants from spouses, sponsors and/or absent parents
- Recovery of Ontario Works overpayments
- Investigations of Ontario Works Program abuse
- Comprehensive financial reviews of Ontario Works caseload files
- The administration of discretionary and mandatory special supports and benefits for persons on Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program and persons with low-income
- Ontario Works core curriculum development and delivery, and refresher training to Ontario Works program staff
- Local System support for numerous Federal, Provincial and local applications designed to meet the business needs of the various units

Employment and Income Support Division

This division provides ongoing financial and employment assistance to support people in maximizing their self-sufficiency and enhancing their quality of life. It provides:

- Employment and financial assistance to all Ontario Works clients
- Specialty caseloads for targeted groups including participants who are applying for Ontario Disability Support Program, youth, immigrants and refugees, temporary care and self-employed
- Employment case management services
- Pre-employment programs
- Work placements to participants while providing home maintenance and services to seniors and disabled residents of the City
- Community or volunteer placements
- Employment placement services and job development
- Assessments, referrals and supports for job-skills training
- Employment supports for Ontario Disability Support Program clients
- Linkages with community agencies/organizations
- Employment Resource Centre

Housing Services Division

This division works with the community to provide a continuum of affordable and supportive housing options to the citizens of Hamilton.

Staff co-ordinate services and funding for:

- subsidized housing providers
- emergency shelters
- residential care facilities
- other supportive services for those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless

Policy development and strategic planning for homelessness initiatives take place within the Housing Services Division. The Social Housing waitlist for 2012 was 5,523 households.

The division is currently conducting an evaluation of Day Services for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness as this group requires numerous and comprehensive supports. Information from the evaluation will greatly assist in providing the best support at the right time. It will also identify service gaps for program improvements.

Social Development and Early Childhood Services

This Division supports child care and early learning initiatives and assists other divisions by providing skilled data support, analysis and evaluation of programs.

The Division provides:

- City-wide, early years and child care systems and comprehensive evidence-based support services to children families and the community.
- Child Care Services management including over-all system planning, implementation and system monitoring, administration and delivery of child care fee subsidies, child care wage subsidies, special needs resourcing, professional resource and systems supports, health and safety pressures, child care capital funding, and direct program delivery
- Leadership, expertise and support for broad-based departmental program development, program evaluation and social policy initiatives.

- Support to teen parents through the Learning Earning and Parenting Program (LEAP), including case management, life skills and parenting training/support
- Licensed Integrated Day Care Centre
- Life skills coaching; pre-employment supports and promotion of independence through supports to individuals, families and groups
- Community Partnership Granting Programs
- Data support to program delivery areas of the Department
- Policy analysis, program planning and evaluation
- Support to the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction
- Human Services Planning Initiative

Of significant relevance to the Ontario Works program is the Early Childhood Services (ECS) component. This area is responsible for the planning and managing of child care services in Hamilton. Ontario Works participants who are engaged in an approved Ontario Works activity can choose a child care arrangement that best meets their needs and circumstance. The costs for their child care are fully funded through a child care fee subsidy. The following details the number of Ontario Works children and families served.

2010: 732 families (926 children)

2011: 648 families (810 children)

2012: 565 families (719 children)

The child care budget is capped and a wait list for child care fee subsidy was introduced in June 2008. On December 31, 2012, there were 531 children on the wait list from families in receipt of Ontario Works/Ontario Disability Support Program.²⁷

The total child care subsidy waitlist for 2012 was 1,421.

Service Delivery Rationale

Intake

All calls for applications are handled through a central intake number. During 2012, the intake unit received over 48,000 calls. The intake unit also processes the on-line application for social assistance. Along with providing general information

²⁷ Ontario Child Care Management System

to the public, an intake clerk obtains preliminary information and completes a quick calculation in order to determine potential eligibility for Ontario Works. If eligibility exists, the applicant is schedule for an appointment in one of the three income support offices or, if required, a visit in the applicant's home. The appointment is scheduled within four days of the initial telephone call. When urgency is identified, the application is expedited and assigned to an OW Team Lead worker.

Reception

All offices are staffed with skilled receptionists to greet the public. Trained in customer service, receptionists respond to public inquiries, assist people in clarifying concerns, connect people with appropriate staff and contribute to the collection of intake data.

Applications & Emergency Assistance

In order to provide accurate financial and employment assistance, the OW Case Managers complete a full application for assistance by gathering and recording information required to determine initial eligibility. All mandatory forms are reviewed, explained and signed. Staff review and clarify the information on the Rights and Responsibilities Form concerning benefits and supports. Items such as childcare, employment related expenses, special supports and earnings exemptions are highlighted. The responsibilities of the applicant are also reviewed to ensure timely reporting of changes in the member or benefit unit's circumstances for accurate issuance of benefits.

The case manager provides an information package including information on direct bank deposit, Interactive Voice Response, completion of the Income Reporting Statement and Exception Based Income Reporting. The right to an internal review is outlined along with the appeal process. The applicant is provided with a Verification Checklist outlining any outstanding documentation and due dates.

A literacy test is administered where required. The results are used to inform an employability assessment tool completed for each applicant, spouse and dependent adult in the benefit unit to determine employability levels. The case manager shares information regarding available resources to better support the

applicant in their journey to sustainability. The case manager and applicant explore the use of Employment resource centres, basic education supports, language and literacy training, foreign trained professional program, community placements and local employment supports programs. Employment related supports are introduced such as earning exemptions, employment start-up, childcare start-up and help with participation related expenses.

Participation requirements and consequences for failing to commit to negotiated agreements are explained before the agreement is signed. Employable participants are referred to an employment development counsellor for enhanced employment supports. The case manager works with the participant to identify, address and remove barriers to employment in conjunction with internal resources and employment support staff.

Ongoing Case Management

In order to support the ongoing monitoring of financial eligibility, the case manager reviews documentation and third party information in a timely fashion to identify and resolve concerns and establish eligibility. Assistance is calculated on a monthly basis and financial benefits are issued. Participants are informed in writing of eligibility and ineligibility decisions.

Case managers review and re-negotiate outcome plans (participation agreements) in accordance with directives and make appropriate referrals to in-house employment supports and/or community agencies. They review deferrals and provide supports to resolve barriers to employment and participation in employment assistance activities. When case managers have difficulty with complicated cases they review them with their team lead or program manager to ensure compliance with directives, local business processes and policies.

Case managers review potential eligibility for Ontario Disability Support Program and initiate the Disability Adjudication Unit (DAU) referral and also make referrals to the Family Support Unit as necessary. In addition, they conduct initial reviews of fraud complaints and refer to the Eligibility Review Unit as per established process and guidelines.

Case managers ensure that phone calls and mail are processed quickly to ensure information into the database (SDMT) is accurate and up to date.

Community and Neighbourhood Outreach

Ontario Works participants are visited in their homes upon their request and also in neighbourhood hubs and community agencies. For example, Ontario Works Case Management Services are now being provided from multiple community sites. Employment counsellors currently work out of the McQuesten and Congress neighbourhood hubs alongside case managers and employment networking groups operate at twelve different community sites. The City of Hamilton continues to explore expanding outreach to other areas.

Case Management Support Team (C.M.S.T.)

Staff absences create undue hardship for co-workers and delays for Ontario Works clients. To minimize disruption for both of the above, a Case Management Support Team was created. The purpose of the team is to provide coverage for any staff absence greater than one-half day.

The team ensures that all scheduled appointments are maintained for staff and when absences are for an indefinite amount of time, the support team provides consistency for the vacant caseload. When staff returns from an absence, the support team member consults with returning staff regarding any concerns. The support team has created a less stressful work environment along with staff confidence that the coverage is appropriate during an absence. Case managers are now able to fully dedicate their time to their respective caseloads and other work related activities.

Sponsorship Breakdown

Sponsorship breakdown cases are consolidated into one caseload to ensure proper follow-up and maintenance of these cases. There are approximately 30 cases at the current time. Cases are reviewed and referred to Citizenship and Immigration Canada for follow-up and possible reimbursement of benefits paid. Ongoing case management continues to ensure accurate processing of such cases.

Newcomers

If language is a barrier, applicants may contact an Interpreter Service to assist them in applying for assistance. One team consisting of specialized caseloads

ensures an efficient and effective approach to this population's needs. Staff on this team work hand-in-hand with Canada Immigration and community agencies that support newcomers.

Ontario Disability Support Program (O.D.S.P.) Pending Team

The Ontario Disability Support Program pending caseloads are comprised of participants who receive benefits under the Ontario Works program while waiting for disability adjudication. In 2012, 1,521 cases were referred to the Disability Adjudication Unit, up 21% from 2011. Ontario Disability Support Program grants for 2012 increased by 18% and file transfers increased by 17%.

In addition to regular case management functions, staff assigned to this team is dedicated to the management of cases where an assessment for disability is pending. As such the team is responsible for meeting tight timelines, providing strong supports for a vulnerable population, updating knowledge regarding specific community resources and providing outreach through home, hospital and community visits. The relationship with the area's Ontario Disability Support Program office is crucial in ongoing management of the case files. Knowledge of both Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program policies and procedures is required in order to effectively serve applicants and their families. Clear understanding and communication of expectations, development of local processes and collaboration with Ontario Disability Support Program staff is critical to the success of this team and the people it serves.

Youth Receiving Ontario Works

Applicants under the age of 18 are eligible for Ontario Works financial assistance only if they meet specific criteria supporting their inability to remain living with their parents.

Specialized caseloads are maintained for participants under the age of 18 as this group of participants warrants a more holistic case management approach in order to offer the services and supports needed to identify and address barriers.

In Hamilton, approximately 80 – 90 youth meet these criteria at any given time. Specific requirements must be met, one of which is to be enrolled full time in a

recognized school. Their attendance and progress is monitored on a monthly basis, and regular contact with the case manager is maintained.

Case managers assist 16 and 17 year-old participants and all LEAP participants in meeting their participation requirements through frequent communication & liaison with other City of Hamilton staff and other community support services.

Community Partnerships are maintained with:

- School Boards (Regular school programs and alternative study programs)
- Youth Shelters and youth programs, including:
- LEAP Case Managers
- Young Parent Resource Centres – Grace Haven and St. Martin’s Manor
- Living Rock, Ace Ministries, Notre Dame House, Alternatives for Youth
- Good Shepherd Youth Trustee, Street Involved Youth Network Monthly Meetings
- The Living Rock Agency has incorporated a case manager into their Breakfast Program, providing Ontario Works program and service information
- Children’s Aid and Catholic Children’s Aid Societies.

In an effort to provide more client-centred service to our youth, Ontario Works youth workers are meeting with under 18 year old participants in the schools they attend.

Each high school in Hamilton has been assigned an OW worker as a liaison and contacts have been established with most schools. The OW worker provides information to staff and students about the OW program, picks up attendance monthly and is available to answer questions, provide in-service to staff or case conferencing. Staff can meet with students at the school for updates reducing time missed for appointments. School administrators have a direct Ontario Works contact to answer any questions or concerns and provide immediate support for specific youth. The goals of the Youth team are to:

- increase communication between the schools and the Ontario Works office
- identify ‘at-risk’ youth and provide options, resources and referrals
- encourage youth to stay in school - attendance is reviewed monthly to put supports in place if and when necessary

- educate both staff and students about Ontario Works
- Increase Ontario Works visibility in the community

Community response to date has been favourable. Strong ties have been developed with the larger schools and alternative schools.

Temporary Care

All Temporary Care cases are assigned to one of two specialized caseloads. The number of ongoing Temporary Care cases consistently averages about 2.5% of the total caseload. Specialized temporary care caseloads ensure that Temporary Care providers and children in their care are receiving enhanced services. These specialized Case Managers have a greater understanding of legal and custody issues, increased awareness of resources, and better community links to assist with the child and temporary care providers' needs.

Supports for this population often include:

- Home Management Workers – supports with home and life skills
- Children's Aid Societies - assistance with custody orders under the Family and Children Services Act, counselling, kinship care or services assistance and mediation services
- Legal Aid Clinics - custody and guardianship issues
- School Boards and social workers
- Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities

Ontario Works Emergency Hostel Caseload

The Housing Services Division has purchase of service agreements with emergency shelters to provide basic emergency shelter to individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Four specialty Case Managers support community emergency hostel beds.

The Case Managers are responsible for:

- determining initial and ongoing eligibility for Ontario Works
- providing service to a diverse caseload including victims of domestic violence and their families
- acting as a liaison to the shelter system
- approving basic needs assistance

- facilitating participants in their move from the shelter system to permanent housing in the community

Ontario Works Homeless Caseloads

Four specialized caseloads have been developed to work directly with those experiencing homelessness, participants with a history of homelessness and incarceration, and people at high risk of becoming homeless. This specialized caseload of marginalized individuals is supported in a holistic manner.

Homeless Case Managers provide case management and support in the community including:

- The Wesley Centre, a multi-service agency/drop in centre for the homeless
Applications and participation agreement updates are completed on site
- Claremont House, a harm reduction supported housing environment
- CityHousing Hamilton – residents at risk of losing their housing

This outreach model was developed to ensure that marginalized individuals who have grave difficulty maneuvering within the system are engaged and able to access financial assistance and benefits to which they are entitled. The goal is to support these individuals in:

- Accessing and maintaining housing
- Accessing appropriate medical intervention
- Receiving support through the ODSP application process
- Moving toward sustainable employment if able

Team Lead Workers

Team Leads have been assigned to each of the seven Ontario Works Case Management teams. The Team Lead role includes:

- Managing and maintaining a caseload of applicants/participants requiring enhanced or specific attention/ services due to mental illness, addictions, concurrent disorders, homelessness, etc.
- Completing crisis, emergency applications and applications due to intake overage

- Acting as a resource person for intake, reception, Program Managers and other areas within the Employment and Income Support or Benefit Eligibility divisions
- Supporting the professional development of Case Managers and students through leadership and mentoring
- Supporting team members in matters related to the effective delivery of service to applicants/participants and community partners of the Ontario Works Program
- Resolving complex SDMT/Overpayment issues with case managers
- Receiving and responding to staff inquires of a more complex nature and providing direction to case managers

Extended Health Benefits and Extended Employment Health Benefits Caseloads (EHB, EEHB)

Extended health benefits are provided to participants who have high prescription or other health related costs, are no longer eligible for assistance due to increased income from any source, qualify based on monthly income and health related costs and meet all other eligibility criteria. Extended employment health benefits are provided to participants who are no longer eligible for assistance due employment income and are not eligible for EHB.

Once eligibility for EHB or EEHB is determined, the case is transferred to a specialized Case Manager who monitors their ongoing eligibility monthly and makes appropriate referrals.

A file review process and corresponding tool has been established to standardize protocols for changes required with terminated files. One component of this process is to ensure clients are made aware of all available resources when they exit social assistance. This process enhances job retention.

Eligibility Verification Process (EVP)

Effective February 01, 2012, the Consolidated Verification Process (CVP) was replaced by the Eligibility Verification Process (EVP). The Eligibility Verification Process (EVP) is a risk-based approach to reviewing Ontario Works participant's eligibility for ongoing financial assistance and is the primary tool for staff to verify the ongoing financial eligibility of Ontario Works clients. EVP serves to ensure that

changes in OW recipients circumstances that affect their eligibility are reported and accurately reflected in the calculation of their amount of financial assistance.

Cases are prioritized for review using EVP's underlying risk assessment model, the Eligibility Verification Model (EVM) in the SDMT combined with other third party information, such as Equifax and CRA to identify high-risk cases where eligibility issues may exist. It employs a variety of statistical techniques to compare and analyze client information from various data sources to identify discrepancies, anomalies, and changes in a client's financial situation in order to predict the probability of an eligibility change occurring if the case is reviewed. The top three percent of the cases identified as high risk will be sent on the 1st of the month for review. Cases are ranked from 1 – 999 with 1 being the highest risk case and 999 being the lowest risk.

Once a review of the file has been completed by the EVP Case Manager, a telephone or in office interview will be scheduled depending on the outcome of the review.

Family Support Unit

Ontario Works participants are encouraged to pursue financial independence, thereby reducing their dependence on Ontario Works. The Family Support Unit assists Ontario Works recipients in obtaining financial resources if a support obligation exists under the:

- Family Law Act
- Divorce Act
- Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act
- Reciprocal Enforcement of Support Orders Act
- Federal Child Support Guidelines

The Family Support Unit currently consists of nine Family Support Workers who maintain a specialized caseload of individuals and families for whom a support obligation may exist under the Family Law Reform Act.

The Family Support Workers:

- Review cases
- Recommend a course of action in the pursuit of support

- Represent the City of Hamilton in the Superior Court of Justice
- Ensure support payments are made on a regular basis as ordered by the Court or obtained through private agreements
- Complete and file legal documents, (with the Court and Family Responsibility Office)
- Initiate, monitor and participate in legal actions such as court orders and enforcement proceedings
- Conduct investigations to ascertain the whereabouts of spouses/parents for the purpose of resolving support issues
- Initiate action to recover support arrears owing to the City of Hamilton, other CMSM's and the Ministry of Community and Social Services for ongoing and terminated cases
- Act as a resource and provide training to staff on all issues relating to support issues

Family Support Workers have developed excellent working relationships with court staff, including lawyers and judges, as well as other community and government agencies such as:

- Family Law Information Centre
- Legal Aid
- Family Responsibility Office
- Children's Aid Society
- ODSP

Eligibility Review Unit

As directed by legislation, the City of Hamilton provides an eligibility review function. This Unit currently has eight Eligibility Review Officers (ERO's). All referrals to the unit are screened to ensure sufficient rationale exists to support an in depth review. Appropriate referrals are then distributed amongst the eight ERO's.

Much of the work completed by the unit is initiated by Case Managers during the application stage. Review and consultation of these cases determines whether a participant is reporting accurate information or attempting to receive benefits to which he/she is not eligible. This process ensures that eligibility integrity is

maintained. Effort is taken to prevent fraud from occurring in the initial application stage.

For active Ontario Works files, any necessary third party information is requested, overpayments are calculated if and when applicable and a recommended course of action is prepared for the Case Manager. ERO's act as a resource and provide training to staff on issues relating to alleged social assistance fraud. Cases are prepared by the ERO for referral to the police department where intent to defraud exists.

For inactive files, all referrals are forwarded to the ERO's. Information is updated in Ontario Works technology and overpayments are applied where necessary. Cases are prepared for referral to the police department when intent to defraud exists. ERO's have developed good working relationships with the local police as well as other community and government agencies, including the Crown Attorney's office.

Overpayment Recovery Unit

The Eligibility Review Unit provides an overpayment recovery function. There are five Overpayment Recovery Officers who are responsible for:

- Pursuing the collection of overpayments on inactive cases and negotiating payment schedules
- Calculating and reconciling third party payments (e.g. Insurance Benefits, WSIB, EI, CPP, Liens, Defaulting Sponsors)
Receiving and processing payments from participants and third parties and updating all applicable databases
- Maintaining the overpayment recovery system CAPRS (Computer Assisted Payment Recovery System) and mailing out statements on inactive cases
- Receiving, reviewing and verifying the accuracy of all overpayments under the Portability of Overpayments Initiative
- Ensuring the physical file contains all supporting documentation to substantiate overpayments as per the Ontario Works physical file standards
- Processing and enforcing court ordered restitution payments
- Acting as a resource and providing training to staff on all issues relating to assignments and overpayments

The accuracy of overpayments is monitored through the following measures:

- The Case Managers review all overpayments at the time they are incurred.
- The New Overpayments Details Report is distributed to Case Managers for validation and/or correction.
- Case Managers verify and document new overpayments. All newly created overpayments must be accompanied by proper file documentation and a note in SDMT explaining the reason for the overpayment. Any overpayments that cannot be explained are forwarded to the Program Manager and/or the training unit for review.

Eligibility Review Officers and Overpayment Recovery Officers review eligibility decisions that have resulted in overpayments. They also identify decisions made in error and alert the Program Manager who will determine if the inaccuracy is an irregularity or if it is a training issue that needs to be addressed. Dependent on the findings, the Program Manager either addresses the issue with the Case Manager responsible for the decision and/or refers the matter to the training unit if the issue needs further communication to staff.

Upon case termination, dedicated overpayment recovery staff will review the validity of overpayments and commence the recovery process.

Quality Assurance and Compliance

Training – Ontario Works Training staff are responsible for the design, development and implementation of Ontario Works training. Ongoing training and education ensures that all aspects of the program are in compliance with the Ontario Works Act, legislation and directives. Training in Ministry initiatives and local policy and guidelines assists staff in making accurate and consistent determinations of eligibility.

Program Review - Program Review Officers (PROs) review provincially legislative and procedural changes and existing local policy and procedures to ensure that changes are incorporated into daily business and that local policy reflects compliance. PROs complete detailed analysis of data to identify operational changes and forecast financial impact on programs and services. Case file reviews and program specific reviews of local processes measure compliance with the

Ontario Works Act, directives and local policy and provide recommendations for corrective action and operational efficiencies.

PRO's administer all requests for disclosure of personal information collected under the Ontario Works Act in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

The SDMT Business Application Analyst provides quality assurance and expenditure accountability by providing response and resolution of day to day SDMT operational issues. Staff analyzes system-design changes; identify programmatic errors, including incident recognition and reporting, complete analysis and action SAMO ad hoc reports.

Case Presenting Officers (CPO's) - Ontario Works legislation requires that CMSM's have an internal review mechanism to ensure participants have the right of appeal by an independent party. All requests for appeal in the City of Hamilton are reviewed by the CPO. Where resolution cannot be achieved, CPO's, on behalf of the Administrator, prepare detailed submission for presentation at the Social Benefits Tribunal. Their role provides critical information to support the training needs of the program by identifying trends in decision making and legislative compliance.

Staff within the Quality Assurance and Compliance Unit manage Hamilton's 'OWNet' – an intranet-based repository designed to provide Ontario Works staff with the necessary functional information required to support the delivery of OW program in Hamilton. Publications include OW legislation, SDMT announcements, policies, business processes; standards, forms and letters, administrative information and cheque production dates.



The OWNet provides:

- a singular and standardized method for communicating programmatic changes
- a document management architecture which is accessible, up to date, secure, including archived material

- necessary links to community and employment resources to support client services
- business application linkages required for the delivery of OW

Data Centre

The primary role of the Data Centre is to produce (i.e. print and forward for delivery) all overnight benefit cheques for Ontario Works clients and vendors, and to liaise with Local Systems Support and a third-party cheque production company for the production and delivery of monthly Ontario Works client benefit cheques. In addition to physically printing the cheques, Data Centre clerks also post and generate manually produced same-day client cheques, and maintain confidential computerized client files in accordance with established records retention protocols.

In addition, Data Centre clerks are also responsible for completing stop payments for cheques which were not received by clients or were issued in error, and for following up with problem EFT (electronic fund transfer) transactions via the bank. The Data Centre also receives returned cheques and records action taken regarding the disposition of cheques via a series of log files and printed records. The Data Centre is also responsible for printing and processing all SDMT generated client letters.

Special Supports

The Special Supports Unit is responsible for the delivery of most mandatory health related benefits to Ontario Works participants and discretionary benefits to OW, ODSP and citizens of the City of Hamilton living with a low income. OW Case Managers are responsible for determining eligibility and issuing benefits for cribs, car seats, and utility arrears. Benefits available through Special Supports vary from cribs, car seats, bath equipment, hearing aids, vision care, utility arrears, non-medical transportation, medical taxi transportation, dental services, dentures, breast pumps, hospital beds, orthotics, funerals/burials, etc. Contracts are established with many suppliers to supply items such as eyeglasses and medical supplies.

The unit consists of eight Case Aides, one Team Lead, three Payment Clerks, one Program Secretary, one File Clerk, one Supervisor and one Program Manager. The

Case Aides are responsible for determining eligibility for requested items and processing the approvals/denial of benefits and determining financial eligibility for low-income applicants. The Payment Clerks are responsible for the payment of invoices once the specific approved item has been issued to the eligible participant. The Team Lead position was introduced in 2009 in response to the increasing OW caseload, complexity of the low-income applicants, reviews cases for possible reinstatement to the OW or ODSP programs and eligibility for EHB/EEHB and completes internal reviews on discretionary benefits (not appealable to Social Benefits Tribunal). The Supervisor position was introduced in 2012 to provide direct staff supervision to ensure compliance of legislation, contracts and budgetary obligations and provide monitor staff performance.

Referrals can be made to the unit by applicants, case managers, and community members such as physicians and occupational therapists.

Programs managed by the Special Support Unit are as follows:

- Emergency Energy Fund (Homelessness Service Contract)
- Utility Arrears Program
- Affordable Transit Pass Program
- Low Income Program

I.D. Clinic



Obtaining identification has always been a challenge for many people in receipt of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program supports. In addition, holding onto identification can be extremely difficult for someone whose life lacks stability. Without identification, it is difficult to receive assistance, become employed and obtain

certain medical services.

To assist with this challenge, the City of Hamilton holds I.D. Clinics (Canadian Birth Certificates). Appointments are booked for this after-hours by either case managers or employment development counsellors. Ontario Disability Support Program case managers can contact the Ontario Works office directly to book

appointments. The City of Hamilton covers the cost of obtaining the identification and assists with the completion of on-line or manual application forms.

Purchase of Counselling Services through Catholic Family Services

Many Ontario Works participants lack the ability to focus on employment goals and strategies due to personal issues that prevent them from moving forward. Although personal data is unavailable due to the confidentiality of personal counselling, participants have access to supports unavailable through their case manager or employment counsellor. Resolving personal issues is often the foundation for building a successful career.

Psychological Assessments

To assist in vocational assessments and/or to support people with major barriers, the City of Hamilton refers appropriate clients to services that conduct psychological assessments. These assessments are utilized to assist with case planning, which may include referrals to Ontario Disability Support Program.

Educational Assessments

The Adult Basic Education Association (ABEA) is a not-for-profit organization that acts as the learning network in Hamilton. ABEA is the first point of contact for information and referral for literacy and upgrading programs in Hamilton.

Case Managers and Employment Development Counsellors refer participants to ABEA for either their Free Information and Referral Service or their Fee Based Educational Assessment. The assessments assist with case planning for:

- Clients with significant difficulties with reading, writing or math
- Clients that have had difficulties completing the Literacy Screening Test
- Clients that have had minimal previous employment experience or experience job loss related to skills
- Assist client where they are lacking the educational skills required to achieve their employment goals

Youth Trustee Program

The City of Hamilton contracts with the Good Shepherd Centre to deliver the Ontario Works Youth Trustee Program for participants that are under the age of 18 with no guardian or responsible person to act as a trustee. Good Shepherd's

Youth Support Workers provide a wraparound service which is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.

Addiction Services Initiative

A significant number of participants on the Hamilton Ontario Works caseload have complex barriers to employment, including substance use problems. The Ontario Works - Addiction Services Initiative (ASI) program is delivered through the collaborative efforts of case facilitators and Alcohol, Drug & Gambling Services addiction counsellors. The foundation of the program is intensive case management including outreach services to assess, refer and support participant's connectivity with services in the addictions treatment continuum and elsewhere in the community that meets their individual needs. ASI supports independence through a process which recognizes and provides encouragement for small steps, provides financial support to maintain an individual's treatment plan and ensures that employment activities to increase skills, confidence and abilities are available at all stages of the program.

Addiction counsellors work on site and collaborate in both case planning as well as program development. ASI also collaborates with Housing Services Division to ensure that some of the most vulnerable individuals in our community, those experiencing homelessness, have access to addiction and trauma counselling. Clinical social workers provide services to individuals residing in emergency shelters as well as facilitate in-reach to individuals incarcerated for a short period of time. Additionally, ASI liaises with several addiction and social service agencies in the community to offer on-site service delivery including Hamilton Health Sciences Acquired Brain Injury Outpatient Clinic, McMaster School of Rehabilitation Science, The Hamilton Clinic, Alternatives for Youth, Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, Housing Help Centre and many others. The unit continues to focus on and develop strong partnerships as they move forward as they provide opportunities for participants to engage in skill building activities in a safe environment. New formal and informal supports are acquired through attendance at programs such as collective kitchen, art or music therapy or self-esteem workshops.

ASI normalizes SAIL through a focus on the 3 core areas:

- Community – systems thinking and service integration
- Knowledge – continuous learning

- Personal resources – a focus on the whole person

The program has an intentional focus on ‘who’, ‘what’ and ‘how’ – who people are connected with, what the connections tell people about themselves and how supportive connections help to re-build self-esteem, networks and coping strategies.

ASI has integrated an employment development counsellor to ensure that employment supports are available and remain a primary focus throughout a participant’s involvement. Currently, the ASI program does not provide service to individuals in receipt of ODSP benefits.

An evaluation framework is being developed which will provide the necessary steps to ensure the correct indicators are being measured. The program strives to include participants in the evaluation of their services by conducting routine satisfaction surveys.

The 2012 caseload averaged 323 participants and a wait list status was reached as of October 2012. Outcomes for this group for 2012 are as follows:

- Approximately 9% of the caseload left OW for employment (n=30)
- Approximately 3% left OW for other income or education (n=12)
- Approximately 37% obtained employment & remained on OW (n=118)

Employment Service Delivery

Self- Employment

Ontario Works participants are able to pursue a self-employment activity as a means of exiting Ontario Works assistance. Participants who are interested and have a business idea that merits further development are referred to supports to self-employment. There are two types of self-employment activities - independent self-employment and assisted self-employment.

Independent Self-Employment

Independent self-employment is intended to support participants who have an established business plan to move to profitable self-employment. With review and

approval and regular monitoring, participants can manage their own self-employment development. Participants may be eligible for other employment benefits in order to move towards independence.

Assisted Self-Employment

Assisted self-employment is intended to support participants who are ready to develop a business plan to move towards profitable self-employment. With review and approval, participants may register with a contracted service provider for self-employment development to undertake individualized self-employment planning.

Effective September 2002, the Small Business Enterprise Centre of the City of Hamilton's Economic Development Department began the delivery of the Assisted Self-Employment Development Program. The primary objective of the Self-Employment Development Program is to assist Ontario Works participants in achieving self-sufficiency within sixty (60) weeks. The program selection criteria, content and program expectations will reinforce the overall program objectives. The Small Business Enterprise Centre is paid on a fixed fee payment schedule based on designated milestones. Where a participant fails to meet the milestone or exits the program, the Employment and Income Support Division will issue payment to the Small Business Enterprise Centre up to and including that failed milestone or program exit, whichever comes first.

A specialized Ontario Works case manager monitors participant compliance with Ontario Works and achievements through the assisted self-employment process.

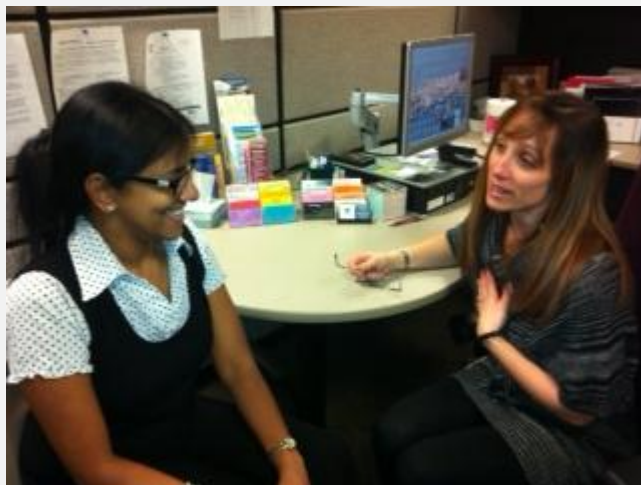
Learning, Earning and Parenting Program (LEAP)

LEAP is an employment program that helps young parents between 16 to 25 years of age obtain their Grade 12 diploma. In 2012, there was an average of 241 participants per month, of which only 7% were participating due to mandatory requirements (parent under the age of 18). All other participants opted for registration in the program because of the supports, such as child care, transportation, school supplies, and graduation fees which assist them in obtaining a high school diploma. There were 72 high school graduates in 2012, 69 in 2011, and 37 in 2010. The length of time a parent is involved with the program determines the number of graduates for any given year.

Collaborative case planning for LEAP participants is a priority, as the program works with Ontario Works case managers and community partners to support the success of its participants. LEAP coordinators use an intensive case management approach to develop individual service plans with participants that are tailored to the needs of the participant.

One-to-one Employment Counselling

Based on a primary assessment, the case manager determines suitability for referral to an employment counsellor. The participant is scheduled into an appointment through the intake unit for a refined assessment with an employment counsellor. Two teams of counsellors, each with a supervisor support one-to-one counselling. A series of follow-up appointments establish relationships through the resolution of barriers and understanding of interests, skills, goals, interests and needs. An individual employment plan is established with the participant and the employment counsellor and participant work together to reach the desired outcome. Outcome plans along with Participation Agreements are negotiated and all pertinent documentation is signed. Employment Services intends to provide a direct link to employment services and employment case management for new and ongoing Ontario Works (OW) participants. Employment counsellors work closely with program facilitators, job developers and case managers to guide participants toward employment self-sufficiency.



Social Capital Opportunities Regarding Employment (SCORE) is a peer social networking opportunity for participants working with employment counsellors. The intent of SCORE is to show



participants how their social network can assist them with reaching their goal of employment. Counsellors first provide an introduction of SCORE to participants and then set up bi-set up weekly networking sessions. Job Developers work in conjunction with counsellors to support participants toward self-sufficiency. During 2012, an additional ten staff were trained in SCORE case management principles. Networking groups are delivered in community hubs, libraries and community employment agencies.

Accreditation Services

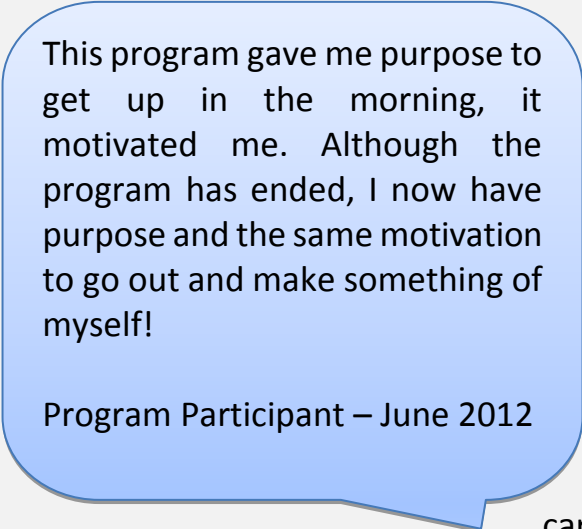
The Accreditation component of Employment Counselling provides ongoing support and interventions for participants with the goal of successfully completing licensing leading to gainful, sustainable and meaningful employment in their professional fields. One employment counsellor responsible for accreditation provides a direct link to employment services, employment case management and assesses funding for credentials and accreditation testing. The counsellor provides support until the participant is employed by assisting foreign-trained professionals in overcoming barriers that prevent the use of an existing foreign license, education, experience and marketable skills. Assistance and supports are offered to participants as they move through the process of gaining their Canadian license in the desired profession (as determined by their foreign credentials). Support may take the form of translation of their documents, assessment of educational documents and referrals to appropriate regulatory bodies or community resources. The counsellor must be knowledgeable regarding these regulatory bodies and keep updated on rules, regulations, fees, etc.

“Hi,
This is Patricia. I am pleased to tell you that I have been accepted in Quebec for Family Medicine. I am very grateful for the help that I received from the Licensing Program offered by the City of Hamilton.
Above all, I have truly appreciated your personality. Each time I came to your office, you always found the proper words to encourage me and to make me feel that there will be light at the end of the tunnel. I wish that the program will keep going in order to help many more professionals.
And for you, do not change... stay who you are, because your humane and comprehensive approach have made the program what it is today.
From the bottom of my heart:
THANK YOU!!!

Employment Workshops

A variety of employment workshops are available to Hamilton Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program participants. A variation in strategy from ‘demographic-based’ workshops to ‘attachment to the workforce’ programs was required due to economic changes. As the Ontario Works caseload became more diverse during the recession, previous programs geared toward specific groups failed to meet the needs of the new face of Ontario Works.

Current programs serve groups depending on their distance from the labour market. Those assessed as having the most difficulty entering the labour market may participate in ‘Making Change Happen’ – a workshop designed to assist people who have multiple barriers and may currently lack the social skills required to effectively participate in a work environment. Group activities include topics such as self-esteem, building relationships, personal hygiene, attitude, assumptions and giving and receiving feedback.



This program gave me purpose to get up in the morning, it motivated me. Although the program has ended, I now have purpose and the same motivation to go out and make something of myself!

Program Participant – June 2012

Those farther along the continuum may participate in programs such as ‘Career Essentials’. This workshop offers supports for participants who need focus on employment-related soft-skills and job search skills. Employers have noted that soft skills are of primary importance when hiring or promoting. Topics for this workshop include on-the-job conflict resolution, communication at work, planning a career and employer expectations.

For participants who have some work history and simply need assistance with resumes, interview skills and job search techniques, the ‘Job Hunter’ program is the key. This program focuses on finding work and is for participants who need assistance in re-attachment to the labour market.

The City of Hamilton believes that in addition to classroom learning, many participants benefit from on-the-job experience. Two programs aimed at providing this type of learning are offered to participants – Helping Hands and Workplace Essential Skills Training (W.E.S.T.)

Helping Hands

Recently awarded the OMSSA Local Municipal Champion award, the 'Helping Hands' program offers participants a chance to understand the job search process while gaining valuable experience working with the community. The program provides a full-time temporary work placement of 26 weeks to participants of the Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Programs (ODSP).



The purpose of Helping Hands is two-fold – it provides a valuable community service and offers OW/ODSP participants the opportunity to gain beneficial work experience and essential job retention skills. Ontario Works participants receive on-the-job training which may include indoor home maintenance, gardening/yard work and outdoor seasonal home maintenance. Their work supports senior citizens and persons with disabilities, enabling them to remain independent in their own home environment.

Helping Hands obtains police clearances for all participants as a condition of acceptance into the program. The program includes a \$15 daily incentive not deductible from participant's OW/ODSP monthly benefits, a monthly bus pass, new uniform, safety boots/shoes, a phone card, first aid/CPR and WHMIS training, interview and resume training (including a completed resume) and an employment reference.

Workplace Essential Skills Training (W.E.S.T.)

The W.E.S.T. program is an eight week (three full days per week) program designed to address essential skills such as workplace procedures, oral communication, numeracy, thinking skills, decision making, use of memory, working with others, and continuous learning. The program is a collaborative effort between the Hamilton Literacy Council, Mission Services and Ontario Works. In addition to facilitated sessions on the above essential skills, participants are given an opportunity to 'try on' their new skills in a real world work environment at Mission Services. Services include all the benefits of traditional employment counselling with hands on experience.

Community Participation

Community Placement provides participants with an opportunity to develop and improve skills and behaviours through an unpaid volunteer placement in community non-profit or publicly funded organizations. Community Placement staff present an information session semi-monthly to participants who have been referred by their employment development counsellor or case manager. The placement staff conducts individual screening interviews to assist with the matching of participant and agency needs and places volunteers in community positions. The staff regularly monitors and evaluates the progress of participants and promotes the program within the community. During 2010 the position was reduced from two counsellors to one. The information session format was changed from a PowerPoint presentation to an interactive facilitated session. The Community Placement screening tool and progress review forms were also updated.

During 2012, the community placement worker was moved from a counselling team to the job development team to ensure closer linkages to paid employment.

Job Development

Job Developers connect with employers to develop employment opportunities for Ontario Works participants and to provide recruitment assistance and financial training incentives to employers in Hamilton. They establish and maintain solid relationships with local employers in order to facilitate placements. Job Developers also assist in arranging job fairs, employer information sessions and conduct mock interviews.

By responding to employer's needs job developers generate repeat business and become employer's recruitment service of choice, giving Ontario Works Participants access to the hidden job market, thereby increasing placement outcomes. Retention is enhanced by the additional screening/matching function, along with thorough knowledge of Hamilton's businesses and company culture. The work of the Job Development team affects the bottom line for Ontario Works expenditures. It also enhances the bottom line for local businesses and in doing so, decreases the cost to taxpayers.

Vocational Training

In a recent report from Miner Management Consultants entitled '*People Without Jobs, Jobs Without People – Ontario's Labour Market Future*', author Rick Miner states: "By 2011, there will be a demand for 7.6 million workers. This will increase to 9.5 million by 2031. The remarkable feature of these projections is that demand for labour is projected to outstrip supply under all three projections of labour availability. The reason, of course, takes us back to the fact that the population is aging, the baby boom population "bulge" is about to enter the traditional age of retirement, and Ontario's labour force participation rate is therefore going to fall"²⁸.

One method of ensuring Ontario Works participants have access to training opportunities to fill the void is through funds for vocational training. Participants within this program have defined employment goals but lack the training and marketable skills to achieve those goals. Those who are unable to access funds through alternate resources attend an information session to understand funding requirements and receive labour market information regarding occupations in demand. Participants are required to complete a training package that includes research on the chosen career, proof of opportunities for employment in the geographic area and information on community trainers. Job-specific skill training supports higher earnings and increased job retention. Skilled workers who have transferable skills are more likely to secure employment after a lay-off, reducing recidivism. Earnings for skilled workers tend to be higher than average. Early intervention may decrease number of months on assistance.

²⁸ (Rick Miner, 2010)

ODSP Employable Spouses and Dependents

While Ontario Works offers supports to all Ontario Disability Support Program participants when required, this mandatory component supports non-disabled Ontario Disability Support Program family members. The program assists spouses and dependent adults with intensive employment supports (one-to-one counselling, referrals to community based employment services, job placements, and retention services).

Employment Counsellors develop an individualized employment plan for each employable individual, monitor the achievement of goals and provide updates to Ontario Disability Support Program case managers regarding progress. Supports are offered to connect participants with job search workshops, volunteer placements and job developers. The program provides participants with tools/strategies such as interview preparation, resume development, monitoring of job search, one to one counselling, job retention supports, referrals to employment opportunities, training funds and support with employment related expenses. ODSP is advised when earnings are reported.

Changes with referral processes have ensured that when Case Managers transfer files to the Ontario Disability Support Program, contact is made with an Ontario Works employment counsellor to maintain employment supports for employable spouses and dependent adults.

More focus has been directed towards developing step-by-step outcome plans that are tailored to the needs of each participant. In addition to supports received in-house, participants may also be directed to appropriate resources in the community for specialized needs.

Overview of Learning Supports

City of Hamilton staff understands the importance of learning and development as an important and effective mechanism to raise the quality of the workforce and lead to organizational strategic objectives. Efforts to engage staff in learning and development opportunities of their choice lead to motivated and engaged staff and greater retention. Training and development keeps staff informed of changes in their occupational fields and helps keep them motivated to achieve higher levels of success.

Performance reviews include learning and development plans to identify staff needs and desire for advancement. Types of learning and development requests are collated to determine if group learning opportunities can be offered at reduced costs. Many staff attends City-subsidized training after hours at community colleges and others attend conferences or training opportunities during regularly scheduled work hours.

Quality Assurance and Compliance

In 2010 the Quality Assurance & Compliance Training Team delivered training to a total of 1384 staff of which 44 received core Ontario Works Training, with the balance receiving specialized training on 11 initiatives or changes to Ontario Works regulatory and local business processes.

Specialized topics included Self Employment, Supportive Approaches to Innovative Learning (SAIL), introduction to the Social Services Modernization Project, and Inform Hamilton data base for client supports. From a developmental perspective, the training team introduced Professional Online Learning (POD). POD is a e-learning program offered to clerical staff to upgrade their Microsoft excel skills during working hours.

In 2011 the Quality Assurance & Compliance Training Team delivered training to a total of 1235 staff of which 66 received core Ontario Works Training, with the balance receiving specialized training on 11 initiatives or changes to Ontario Works regulatory and local business processes. Specialized topics include closing a file, SAIL, expansion of the POD, Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act, refresher training on Family Support, Overpayments and Special Diets, and Online Application for Social Assistance.

In 2012 the Quality Assurance & Compliance Training Team delivered training to a total of 1298 staff of which 74 received core Ontario Works Training, with the balance receiving specialized training on 13 initiatives or changes to Ontario Works regulatory and local business processes. Specialized topics include Discrimination and Harassment, Service Delivery Flags, Home Visit Training, Confidentiality and Managing Personal Information, Income Reporting Statement Review, CIVRS.

2013 will also see the Training Team focus on the implementation of the Social Assistance Management System. The task of replacing the SDMT with a new data base will be a mammoth and extremely challenging task from business continuity and scheduling perspective. The Trainers begin their immersion into SAMS in March and will finish active training in the later part of November 2013. During that time they will be attending Boot Camp for facilitators, designing curriculums, consulting with management on the re-alignment of existing business processes to maximize the features of SAMS, and providing training to 381 front-end users in coordinated waves depending on functions and availability. Post implementation, training staff will be providing front end user support triage, and then must execute a complete review and realignment of all existing training modules, support and training plans.

The Training unit increased the utilization and sophistication of e-learning modules during 2010-2012 with great results and excellent feedback. Individually, trainers achieved certification in Compassion Fatigue and Employment Counseling.

Trauma Training

Given the high rates of traumatic exposure among families who experience substance use, it has become clear that understanding trauma and its impact is essential to providing quality services. All case facilitators in the ASI program have therefore been trained in intensive case management interventions in trauma. This certificate training provided front line staff with the relevant knowledge and skills to effectively assess for and respond to participants with a history of trauma.

Brain Injury Training

ASI case facilitators were trained through the Substance Use and Brain Injury model (SUBI) of Community Head Injury and Resource Services. This training included education on the interaction between brain injury and substance, techniques for screening and for helping participants recognize and compensate for difficulties with memory, organization and self-awareness. Suggested modifications to standard case management interventions were also reviewed.

Suicide Prevention Training

The City of Hamilton has offered voluntary safeTALK and ASIST training to Ontario Works front line staff. The key objectives of the safeTALK training sessions are to help staff move beyond common tendencies to miss, dismiss or avoid suicide; identify people who have thoughts of suicide and connect a person with suicide thoughts to suicide first aid intervention and caregivers. The Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (A.S.I.S.T.) provides practical suicide first-aid training for all types of caregivers. Attendees learn how to recognize opportunities to help, assess risk of suicide, apply a suicide intervention model and practice skills.

Normalization of SAIL Competencies

Increasing the ability and comfort level of staff to effectively communicate with participants is critical in participant development. The City of Hamilton is committed to promoting SAIL competencies through initial staff training. SAIL competencies have been built into all introductory training modules for new staff. In addition, SAIL competency reviews are regularly scheduled as standing agenda items at team meetings. Case consultations are reviewed and conducted with a SAIL competency framework. Standards and indicators are being developed to incorporate SAIL competencies into performance measurement and competencies are being used to gauge learning and development requirements of staff.

A stronger focus on SAIL competencies through repeated exercises and discussions emphasizes that social inclusion is a factor of employability. Advanced intervention skills and earlier resolution of barriers support earlier entrance into the labour force. The development of good working relationships between participant and counsellors is practice for better working relationships between participant and employer. Reduction of barriers due to supportive coaching will create a greater comfort level for participants which supports on the job success.

Strategy to Deliver French Language Services (FLS)

The City of Hamilton is committed to providing active oral and written French-language services based on an understanding of French-speaking client needs.

On July 1, 2011, a new regulation for delivery of French Language Services (FLS) was passed requiring all non-designated delivery agents in a designated community to offer services in French by July 2014. The delivery of services in

French will support all outcome measures for French-speaking Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program participants. French language services will enhance customer service, inclusion and increase community collaboration. The City of Hamilton has been actively working to reach this goal through the following actions.

- Providing information updates to Council regarding French Language Services
- Incorporating the delivery of FLS into curriculum for staff training
- Developing local business processes to support FLS staff in the delivery of services
- Working with other City departments to coordinate the delivery of FLS in other areas.

In addition to work already completed, the City of Hamilton is committed to further enhancing strategies by:

- Determining the staff complement required to meet the needs of French speaking Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program recipients.
- Audit business processes for FLS.
- Evaluate services provided by conducting a customer review.
- Continue to inform Council of changes and updates to plan

Currently the City employs one bilingual Intake Clerk who is responsible for on-line applications and calls for application in French. The Intake Unit receives approximately four applications in French per month.

Also employed are two bilingual Case Managers, responsible for full service in French, and one bilingual Program Manager. There are currently twenty-three Francophone participants receiving service in French. Case Managers also complete outreach services with Francophone service providers including Centre de Santé and College Boreal. An additional nine staff have some level of French proficiency and are able to offer support. Caseloads comprised of French-speaking participants are maintained by bilingual case managers at the 1550 Upper James Street location.

Current plans are underway to increase French services by recruiting a qualified bilingual Employment counsellor and a bilingual receptionist through attrition.

The City's bilingual requirement is a component of training curriculum for all staff and an internal working group maintains regular updates on the status of FLS work plans for Human Services delivered by the City of Hamilton. Management encourages and supports French language training and continues to build French Language service capacity.

Services in French will allow Francophones to find resources and expedite their job search process. Services in French may open up job opportunities with French-speaking employers, creating more options for Ontario Works participants. These opportunities may lead to higher wages, increased job opportunities and job retention for those who may otherwise have difficult assimilating into an English-only environment.

Business Practices

It is a continuing need in the Ontario Works Program to review and adjust business practices and programming due to:

- Policy changes
- Needs of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program participants
- Labour Market changes
- Funding
- Changes in government strategies
- The need to improve customer service
- The need to find efficiencies

Employment Business Practices change to meet the changing economic environment. As caseloads are increasingly populated with hard-to-employ participants, changes have been made to incorporate programming that focuses on life skills. Six facilitators have received life skills certification to effectively deliver service.

A new business practice for Job Development referrals has allowed for greater ease in recruiting appropriate candidates for employment positions. Based on sector, participants are now streamlined into opportunities of their choice.

As previously mentioned, a support team was developed to assist case managers with caseload coverage issues, allowing for more concentrated efforts with people on their caseloads and a reduced need for everyone to provide coverage for each other.

Clerical pods have been introduced to support case management teams. This has allowed for enhanced customer service and varied duties.

Managers have been assigned lead roles to ensure that changes to business practices are fully documented and business processes are updated.

Section 4 – Strategies, Increased Employability and Outcomes



Service Strategies – Rationales, Actions, Resources and Effect on Employability and Employment Outcomes

Hamilton's Ontario Works staff recognizes the need for an emphasis on empowering and helping participants learn skills to analyse situations and interact in the most appropriate way for the environment. This is the foundation upon which the employment outcome measures can be built.

The following strategies are included in the City of Hamilton's plan for 2013-2014. As required, each strategy is followed by a rationale, actions that will be taken to increase both employability and employment outcomes and an outline of resources required to implement the strategy.

Strategy #1 – Successful and timely implementation of S.A.M.S.

Rationale:

Of primary concern over the next year is the successful implementation of S.A.M.S. technology and strategies to continue delivering effective service throughout the implementation. Although an improved system, much effort will be required to support staff in the change to this new technology. The more successful the integration to the new system, the more effective staff will be in delivering comprehensive services at an early stage. The City has developed the following action items to ensure the best possible implementation given the information provided to date.

Actions:

- Creation of an implementation team including leads for each division affected by the new technology
- Assignment of leads for business process development and implementation strategies
- Development of staff champions to support others through the transition
- Creation of local processes for receiving and disseminating information
- Development of community supports information to build on assessment and referral component of SAMS
- Ensure completion of business processes to capture all needs prior to conversion to new business processes
- Develop marketing for new system to engage staff

- Begin to familiarize staff with components of new system
- Schedule staff training
- Monitor for effective continuation of regular business during conversion
- Communicate changes with community partners
- Assist staff through the conversion and learning process

Resources:

Contributions of the Quality Assurance and Compliance Unit will exceed normal expectations as training will be a primary consideration of the conversion. In addition, funds to cover changes such as cheque production, printed materials, communications to the public and associated delivery costs will extend beyond regular Ontario Works business expenses.

Staffing hours to plan, implement, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of conversion to new technology will be required in addition to hours required for regular business.

The development of community resource information will be required to support the new system. As Phase 1 of SAMS does not include a link to Community 211 information, time will be needed to establish and manage the resources within the system. Staff time to acclimatize will detract from full business operations but strategies developed should minimize the disruption.

Effect on Employability and Employment Outcomes:

A rapid understanding and user comfort of new system will support all outcomes. For earnings, the immediate list of service providers based on distance to labour market will support early reduction of barriers and increase likelihood of increased pay.

Enhanced efficiency of system will reduce time spent on administrative duties, providing more time for meaningful conversations with participants and increased case management. Provision of a list of service providers after assessments will provide multiple options to support the participant and increase opportunities for employment. Services that may be a better match for participant needs may be identified through the assessments that otherwise may not have been utilized, including services to support job retention.

Strategy #2 – Commitment to Service Delivery Review

Rationale:

To accurately measure service outcomes of any type, standards and targets must be set. Other than the current seven Provincial outcome measures, legislated standards are generally based on the amount of time it takes to perform an action. Hamilton is committed to a 2013 Service Delivery Review to evaluate and set standards, determine benchmarks and continuously improve service. Service delivery reviews assist in the establishment and development of performance measures and identify new service levels required. Each year management will review service standards and set targets for continuous improvement. These standards and targets will be communicated, operationalized and monitored.

Actions:

Through the identification of standards and targets, staff will be better-prepared in supporting their participants search for employment. Actions taken to ensure progress in strategy include:

- Review and identify indicators and measures for financial case management.
- Review and identify indicators and measures for Special Supports.
- Review and identify indicators and measures for Employment.
- Continue to represent the region at the Provincial Employment Outcome Working Group to finalize standards and customer service surveys.
- Conduct a review of standards within other CMSM's and DSAAB's.
- Review ability of SAMS technology to provide indicators
- Develop additional metrics/indicators for evaluation purposes

Resources:

Staff volunteers are required to participate in local and provincial working groups. Staff resources are also required to communicate, operationalize, monitor and evaluate success.

Access to technology is critical in order to measure gains against standard. Reports within SDMT and the potential for reports in SAMS will support in measuring against standards and targets.

Effect on Employability and Employment Outcomes:

The establishment of standards will provide clear expectations and promote accountability for all staff. For example, if feedback from employers indicated that participants are ill-prepared for specific job interviews, a target of 75% positive employer feedback may enhance the number of participants employed by establishing standards for referrals to job developers.

Job retention may be enhanced by solidifying standards in that staff will be clear on the job-readiness of participants before referring to an employer. This will provide a 'better start' for employees as they are better equipped to handle the job and exhibit a higher level of confidence.

Imposing standards will better-prepare staff in supporting their participants. Although more time may be required to prepare a participant for job-readiness, fewer set-backs as a result of ill-preparation will compensate for the investment.

Strategy #3 – Neighbourhood Hub Development and Community Involvement

Rationale:

The City has a strong desire to engage in stakeholder planning rather than conveying a top-down approach. Staff strongly invests in continuous improvement by soliciting feedback from a variety of groups. From grassroots forums such as Town Hall and stakeholder advisory meetings to relocation within neighbourhoods, the City regularly collects valuable keys to building better programs. Supportive Approaches to Innovative Learning (S.A.I.L.) has equally reinforced Hamilton's engagement strategy.

Actions:

- The City of Hamilton has hired committed staff to oversee and develop the Hamilton Neighbourhood Action Strategy. Each neighbourhood continues to work around prioritizing the actions and activities that are most important to them and implementation in each neighbourhood continues to move forward. Community Hubs have been established in the following seven neighbourhoods: Beasley, Davis Creek, Keith, McQuesten, South Sherman, Stinson and Riverdale. One neighbourhood initiative, the 'Neighbourhood Home Improvement Program' is a collaborative project of

the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, the City of Hamilton, Threshold School of Building and Hamilton Community Foundation. The program is designed to provide free home renovations to low income families and seniors who own their homes and reside in lower city Hamilton neighbourhoods. Renovations are completed by trained individuals who are, or have recently been recipients of Employment Insurance Benefits. They are supervised by an experienced tradesperson employed by the Threshold School of Building. The program provides opportunities to develop new skills and increased job opportunities with higher wages.

- To date there are a total of 413 initiatives, actions and related activities identified in Neighbourhood action plans. Actions to build on the momentum include neighbourhood fairs, community barbeques, youth events, garden parties, community clean up events, yard sales and community 'crawls'.
- City of Hamilton Ontario Works staff is relocating within the neighbourhood hubs to answer questions, offer services and work more closely with participants living in the area.
- Employment networking groups and workshops are also expanding into the hubs to initially serve participants in their own comfort zone.
- The OW/ODSP Town Hall is an annual event that provides opportunities for our community to learn more about the OW/ODSP program through engaged discussion and information sharing. Annual Town Hall events create a better understanding of services and an opportunity to ask questions regarding programs and services.

Resources:

Agencies in Hamilton are highly collaborative and share resources. Apart from costs associated with staff relocation, community willingness to share resources has made change possible.

One full time management staff has been seconded from Ontario Works to the Neighbourhood Strategy.

Committed community members to work with staff from all participating agencies are required to invest in neighbourhood strategies.

Effects on Employability and Employment Outcomes:

The effects of neighbourhood strategies are extensive. Involving community members in decision making processes and garnering support creates a thriving environment that helps to overcome fear and isolation. Building contacts through networking assists in the development of strong life skills, employment opportunities, chances for advancement and supports job retention. Networking considerably reduces the amount of time to employment and associated time on assistance.

Strategy #4 –Focus on Program Delivery for the Hard-to-Employ

Rationale:

As the economy improves, the caseload increasingly consists of harder-to-employ participants. While some traditional supports are still valuable for more employable participants, the need for services is changing from the provision of ‘employment’ services such as job search, resume interview workshops to the provision of a more basic service that supports activities such as addiction supports, life skills programming, home management and intensive case management. Intensive services are needed to support this population in their attachment to the workforce. The success of programs such as the Addictions Services Initiative, Helping Hands and Making Change Happen are evidence of the basic requirements of current Ontario Works participants. The delivery of services has moved from an ‘in office’ approach to a community approach to engage participants in these activities. The delivery of services has moved from an ‘in office’ approach to a community approach to engage participants in these activities.

Actions:

- Continue monitoring the labour market, economy, community reports and specialized groups to evaluate the need for changes in programming
- Analyse system reports to identify any areas for improvement or new initiatives to support new needs as they emerge
- Monitor local, provincial, national and international resources to review and determine best practices for multi-barriered job seekers.
- Survey program participants to ensure program content meets their needs and change based on common suggestions for improvement
- Evaluate the effectiveness of programming against outcomes

Resources:

Providing intensive services for the hard-to-employ population is dependent on resources. Programs that serve this population are effective only if they are conducted over a period of time that builds relationships and networking. Community programs outside of the Ontario Works program tend to be 'short-term' and are often completed within a two-to-four-hour session. While programs of such short duration may be suitable for those with recent work history and minimal barriers, many Ontario Works participants require much more intensive supports. This requires a time commitment from staff and works effectively with lower caseload ratios. It may also involve increased staff training requirements.

Effect on Employability and Employment Outcomes:

The World Health Organization has defined life skills as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”.²⁹ Many Ontario Works participants face multiple changes due to their circumstances. Working with others to develop appropriate behaviour and a positive outlook helps people to become healthy both physically and mentally. Longer term programs promote self-confidence and leads to independence and effective decision making – all skills that increase employability, self-management and lead to good career decisions. More importantly, the establishment of good interpersonal skills and healthy relationships promotes early entry into the labour force, the capacity for increased earnings and job retention.

Strategy #5 - Motivate and manage caseloads through S.C.O.R.E.

Rationale:

S.C.O.R.E. is a case management tool used by employment counsellors to manage job-ready participants toward successful outcomes. Employment Development Counsellors manage their participants' activities through networking sessions. S.C.O.R.E. has two components. The first component is a two-day information session delivered by the employment development counsellor. Subsequent to the information session regular, bi-weekly sessions provide opportunities for discussion and sharing of job opportunities. Successes are celebrated and challenges are supported. These sessions are delivered at the Career Development Centre and various community locations. The session covers the importance of

²⁹ World Health Organization: *Skills for Health*, April 2003 (Organization, 2003)

setting realistic goals and realizing them through social networking. Specialty S.C.O.R.E. sessions are delivered for recent immigrants and persons with criminal records.

Networking is critical for career success. It creates an opportunity for participants to build trusting relationships and help one another achieve goals.

Actions:

- Continue to deliver S.C.O.R.E. sessions to participants who are ready to enter the labour market.
- Define additional specialty groups who may benefit from group networking opportunities

Resources:

Currently S.C.O.R.E. sessions are delivered by one-to-one employment counsellors. In addition to meeting individually with participants to review their successes and challenges, employment counsellors conduct these sessions for participants who are ready to enter the labour market. Community partners have been collaborating with the City of Hamilton to offer accommodations within specific areas of the city for these sessions.

Effect on Employability and Employment Outcomes:

During S.C.O.R.E. sessions, participants help one another find employment opportunities. This give-and-take activity promotes the development of reciprocity and promotes a sense of community and strengthens relationships – employability skills required for job maintenance with employers.

Networking promotes fresh ideas and new ways of thinking. New insights may lead to new employment opportunities, minimizing the amount of time spent on job-search. Information about employers and skill requirements brought forward at networking sessions can also support successful interviews and earlier entrance into labour force. Expanding contacts may also lead to opportunities for advancement, increasing the potential for higher wages.

Strategy #6 – Website Redesign

Rationale:

A growing population of tech-savvy participants requires changes to methods of information delivery and the ability to complete online transactions. The City of

Hamilton conducted participant focus groups to gather information on preferred methods of communication.

Focus group participants advised us that they wanted electronic information instead of paper products.

Immediate access to information on programs and services necessitates a website that includes up to date information. The City's Strategic Services Division has been working with Ontario Works staff to redesign a more effective website. The goal is to encourage participant traffic and promote the usage of services to increase employability.

Actions:

- Develop a website that offers information to promote self-sufficiency
- Include information that is motivating and encouraging
- Provide links to services that can support participants in barrier reduction
- Encourage use of website at one-to-one counselling sessions and case management interviews
- Market the website to the community

Resources:

Staff from within the Ontario Works program and other City departments is required to monitor and update website information. Staff required are within current complement and resources.

Effect on Employability and Employment Outcomes:

As the population becomes increasingly tech-savvy, participants are able to quickly find electronic resources to support their needs. The speed with which they are able to access resources contributes to:

- More extensive employer research to assist with targeting specific jobs
- More timely access to current job openings leading to increased opportunities
- The ability to search for supportive agency information to resolve barriers and support increased employability
- Their ability to regularly participate in social media for employment purposes. Networking supports promote access to opportunities, improved wages and job retention
- Greater access to website information that supports effective job search strategies

Strategy #7 – Strengthen Relationships with Employers

Rationale:

Ontario Works staff supports employers by advertising for vacant positions, screening and matching participants to positions, and trouble-shooting on-the-job issues. They also build relationships with employers and as they do so, have more confidence in referring a great candidate with fewer skills to an advertised position. It is the established basis of trust and confidence in the skills that we source to the employer that allows us to support participants who are a 'good fit' but may not otherwise have an opportunity.

Actions:

- Continue to work with employers to promote their business
- Work with employers to conduct job fairs and offer recruitment services
- Continue to bring employers to the Career Development Centre to conduct Career Information Sessions to showcase their business
- Develop SAIL competencies that will enhance relationships

Resources:

This strategy requires staff to build ongoing relationships. Staff required is within current complement and resources.

Effect on Employability and Employment Outcomes:

Strong relationships with employers lead to improved employment outcomes. Employers who trust local job developers are more likely to take chances on job candidates without all of the advertised qualifications or skills. This allows a job developer to increase the employability of participants who may otherwise be unsuccessful in an interview. Supporting employers with their hiring and retention needs leads to more opportunities for participants, resulting in increased outcomes.

Continued delivery of job fairs at the Career Development Centre assists in lessening participant anxiety regarding interviews and the job search process.

Strategy #8 – Strengthen Relationships with Community Partners

Rationale:

Sharing resources and opportunities between community partners is critical. As governments grow, streamline services and share technological solutions, breaking down silos is the first step to working collectively.

Actions:

- Develop stronger relationships with Employment Ontario agencies to ensure collaboration
- Continue to strategize with Workforce Planning Hamilton to monitor trends and solutions
- Work collaboratively with Ontario Disability Support Program to best prepare both disabled and non-disabled participants.

Resources:

Strategy can be met from within current complement and resources.

Effect on Employability and Employment Outcomes:

A concerted effort to include all social assistance recipients in all opportunities is vital in erasing current biases. When all individuals are able to access suitable services and job opportunities, barriers and hurdles diminish and diversity begins to thrive. Without collaboration and the acknowledgement of similarities rather than differences, preconceptions and prejudices imprison positive change.

Strategy #9 - Housing and Homelessness Action Plan

Rationale:

As a community, Hamilton has done much work to address affordable housing and homelessness and continues to be seen as a leader in implementing innovative approaches and solutions. The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan is a 10-year plan that will guide decision making on how the Hamilton community will address affordable housing and homelessness issues. The scope of the plan is broad given the City's mandate as Service Manager for affordable housing and homelessness.

It includes a full range of housing issues from homelessness to affordable homeownership, including:

- homelessness prevention
- access to supports beyond just ‘bricks and mortar’
- availability of affordable housing
- availability of emergency shelter arrangements

Actions:

The City of Hamilton will:

- identify short, medium and long-term priorities and strategies that address the full range of housing issues for households with lower incomes from homelessness to affordable homeownership
- define community outcomes and set targets
- assign and monitor specific actions that the City can regularly measure
- Identify ongoing successes, challenges and opportunities to share with community partners.

Resources: undetermined at this time

Effect on Employability and Employment Outcomes:

Safe and affordable housing is a foundation for personal development and employment outcomes. Without basic necessities, the ability to resolve barriers affecting employability, and seek out, obtain and maintain employment is considerably compromised

Additional actions

Action	Impact on Outcome Measures	1a	1b	2a	2b	2c	2d	2e
		Average Earnings	Average Earnings at Exit	% with Employment Income	% exiting to Employment	Avg. months from exit to re-entry	% of part who exit & return	Avg. time to employment
Targeted job development	Job developers assist in securing positions at higher than average earnings due to increased labour market knowledge. Marketing “for” participants to employers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Action	Impact on Outcome Measures	1a	1b	2a	2b	2c	2d	2e
	contributes to earlier employment and higher earnings. Job developers increase the number of employment opportunities available to participants. Marketing “for” participants increases the likelihood of job satisfaction, thereby increasing the probability of job retention.							
OW Enhanced Job Placement	Training incentives are negotiated with employers. Additional training leads to improved job retention and laddering to positions with higher earnings.			✓		✓	✓	
Skill Development Training Funds	Job specific skills training in coordination with labour market needs result in higher earnings and opportunities for laddering which increase job retention. Participants are individuals with defined employment goals however training is required due to lack of marketable skills. Skilled workers have transferable skills and are more likely to secure employment after a lay-off, reducing recidivism. Earnings for skilled workers tend to be higher than average.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Encourage participants to submit a final Income Reporting Statement (IRS) with their full wages	Ensure more accurate data to increase the outcome measure.	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Linkage of childcare subsidy	Suitable childcare at point of job search preparation allows for a more effective job search.			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
OW Self Employment Program	Allows Ontario Works participants to earn up to their potential in order to achieve self-sufficiency as well as stimulate the economy. Participants are more inclined to retain employment as a result of “ownership”			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Career Development Centre	Provides a wide range of labour market information and a variety of resources to secure and increase earnings.	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP)	Support young parents in completing high school and to develop an employment plan.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Helping	This program supports participants in the	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Action	Impact on Outcome Measures	1a	1b	2a	2b	2c	2d	2e
Hands	development of job specific skills in home and outdoor maintenance, job search tools and linkages with employers in the related job market.							
Job Fairs	These sessions provide participants with employment opportunities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Extended Health Benefits (EHB) & Extended Employment Health Benefits (EEHB)	Health benefits are offered to keep participants in employment. Job retention often leads to increased wages.					✓	✓	
Labour Market Info Sessions	Information sessions were available to outline labour market trends and give information on future job prospects.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Career Essentials	An Employment program teaching life-skills, job search, resume and interview techniques to support participants to effectively compete for employment at higher wages.			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Case Managers Providing Supports to Clients in order to remove barriers to employment	A focus on pre-employment supports to prepare more participants for job search activities. Collaboration with Inform Hamilton increased connections with community support agencies.					✓		✓
Catholic Family Services	A counselling service for employable participants who would benefit from looking at strengths as well as challenges to overcoming barriers to employment.			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Job Hunter	This pre-employment program teaches job search, resume and interview techniques to support participants to effectively compete for employment at higher wages.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Foundwork	Employment staff tool to document and report employment outcomes allows job developers to access potential hiring sources.	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
WIN Website	A community website offering resources for employment agencies.							✓

Action	Impact on Outcome Measures	1a	1b	2a	2b	2c	2d	2e
Community Placements	Opportunities for participant to “try on” a job through volunteerism. Provides recent work experience, skills and contacts and assists in the development of a resume.	✓				✓	✓	✓
Accreditation for Foreign Trained Clients	Assists with documentation required to pursue the goal of working in a field of expertise.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ontario Works Client Survey	The survey is client focused and enables the development of programs that are based on clients’ needs.							✓

Challenges

Despite concerted community efforts to improve services for both Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program participants, several challenges still remain.

Transportation

Transportation is reported by many recipients, community agencies and providers as one of the most significant barriers individuals face. In addition to the use of transportation to attend required appointments, the ability to attend community events and social activities decreases isolation that so many participants face.

Available funds prohibit the issuance of sufficient transportation supports for Hamilton Ontario Works participants. Transportation costs provided to recipients are for a variety of reasons including obtaining necessary verification documents for eligibility, attending employment related activities, returning to the Ontario Works office for appointments, visiting local food banks and attending medical appointments. Transportation is imperative so that parents and children can attend school and therapeutic programs. Requirements to job search and attend training are often unmet due to the unavailability of funds to reach destinations.

Changes to transportation services with the implementation of PRESTO cards will further jeopardize available funds as a \$6.00 administrative fee will be required for all participants in addition to the actual transportation fees. The responsibility of the \$6.00 fee and implications of the costs are potentially significant to the City of Hamilton’s budget and are still being reviewed and determined.

Caseload Ratios

Benefit Unit to case manager ratios currently stand at approximately 135:1. Participant to case manager ratios are approximately 159:1. Although there are still overdue participation agreements as a result of high caseload ratios, the number is decreasing.

Skills Mismatch

A changing worldwide economy has presented many global challenges, one of which is a skills mismatch between workers and new employment opportunities. Worker skills lag behind the skills required by employers. This trend is more pronounced within the Ontario Works population as many participants are without even basic educational requirements to enter into post-secondary training institutions.

Availability of Data

Systems data to support the distinction between part time and full time earnings would greatly assist in evaluating community success within this measure. Information on hourly wages rather than monthly wages would similarly allow for a more informed analysis. It is also expected that gathering community information will become more difficult without the long census form.

Section 5: 2013 2014 Outcome Measures



Due to political changes expected within the next two years and the implementation of a new technology, Hamilton will diversify both outcomes and measures.

Earnings Outcome

The City of Hamilton will focus on the following earnings outcome measures:

1A – Average employment earnings

Target for 2013 = .25%

Although a reduction in baseline is required due to the impact of 3rd quarter policy changes, efforts to more strategically link participants to specific job opportunities through the development of employer relationships will support increases in average wages. Continued collaboration with the City's Economic Development Department will allow for quick connections with new employers. Similarly, continued attendance at Chamber of Commerce meetings will allow for enhanced networking with local business owners.

From a participant perspective, a continued focus on foreign-trained professionals provides a higher than average wage once employed. Opportunities for skill development training will support overall average earnings. A skills mismatch is expanding demand versus supply, and as a result wages should increase.

Service delivery standards and related performance measurement will link service and accountability creating positive change.

Modest targets have been set as a result of the following challenges:

- Hamilton's areas of economic growth are often mismatched with the skills of Ontario Works participants
- Limited funding for skill development training to compensate for the above
- Although wages may increase, the trend toward precarious and part-time employment may decrease the overall average. Fewer hours of work per month and greater incentive to work as a result of policy changes may result in lower average monthly earnings.
- Caseloads are currently comprised of harder-to-employ

1B – Average employment earnings at exit

Target for 2013 = .5%

Employment development counsellors continue to encourage participants to apply for better paid employment opportunities and job laddering is promoted. Despite efforts to improve wages, employer reluctance may still play a part in delayed wage increases. Also, a trend toward reliance on sub-contracted and part-time positions reduces wages significantly.

As a result of the above, a minimal increase has been established of 0.5% for 2013. Efforts will be made to increase the average employment earnings at exit by:

- Continued networking with local employers
- Monitoring the labour market for fluctuations
- Assessing the impact of any minimum wage increases
- Encouraging participation in pre-employment programs and skill development training that improve job readiness and facilitate job laddering.
- Marketing for full completion of the final Income Reporting Statement

Employment Outcome

The City of Hamilton will focus on the following employment outcome measures:

2A – Percentage of caseload with earnings

Target for 2013 = .25%

A trend toward precarious and part-time employment may increase the number of people with earnings. The top two sectors of employment in Hamilton are retail/wholesale trade and manufacturing – two sectors that often employ Ontario Works participants. Although advanced manufacturing is becoming a more highly skilled occupation, skill development training will provide some opportunities for participants that may otherwise prevent them from entering these labour markets. This measure will see positive results due to incentive changes but will most likely be offset by increases in hard-to-employ participants.

2B – Percentage of terminated caseload exiting to employment

Target for 2013 = .25%

Modest increases on an adjusted baseline have been set as a result of a growing number of hard-to-employ participants and policy changes that will impact the third quarter in 2013. Although efforts will be made to increase exits to employment, rate increases and other incentives may result in a greater number of participants remaining on assistance while working. Increasing numbers of single people on the caseload, who may soon be eligible for assistance while working at minimum wage, may decrease outcomes.

2E – Average length of time to termination as a result of earnings

Target for 2013 = reduced by ½ month

Reducing the amount of time on assistance is a priority for Hamilton Ontario Works and ‘time to employment’ is closely related to this measure. Although outcomes were not achieved in 2012, the City of Hamilton will be placing the same target for 2013/2014 and increasing the number of points assigned to this measure. A baseline adjustment to compensate for participants with multiple barriers and a 3rd quarter \$200 flat rate exemption is requested, as many singles won’t exit social assistance with full time employment.

Strategies to immediately identify the preferred sector of employment for the participant and timely connections with Job Developers will streamline referrals. Availability of immediate mock interviews for those with pending interviews will help to better prepare participants for their interactions with employers. Assessment capabilities within S.A.M.S. should provide immediate referral resources to expedite employment.

Monitoring of Service Strategies

The City of Hamilton delivers outcomes through effectively managed programs and services. This enables the City and the Ministry to effectively deliver value for money.

Monitoring legislative requirements and the delivery of service strategies occurs in many ways. A regular and thorough review of the following information leads to

decisions regarding the accurate delivery of Ontario Works and improvement of local and provincial strategies.

- Ontario Works staff is trained on legislation, regulations and directives. Training is provided by Hamilton's Quality Assurance and Compliance Unit.
- All work of new staff is monitored by managers for the first 60 days to ensure their work is in compliance with legislation and all applicable benefits have been issued. Subsequent file reviews are conducted by Managers and Supervisors.
- Annual file and program reviews of local processes measure compliance with the Ontario Works Act, directives and local policy and provides recommendations for corrective action and operational efficiencies. Standardized file review formats include sections on all participant activities, from the initial point of contact to employment. Results provide information to identify training and internal policy development needs in order to ensure program integrity. Regular and consistent file reviews ensure compliance with strategies and best practices.
- Regular one-to-one manager/worker meetings are conducted to ensure challenges are met, minimizing the risk of ineffective case management habits.
- Regular monthly meetings between the Business Administrator and the Ontario Works administrator take place to ensure financial information is accurate and funding is allocated toward appropriate resources.
- Claims are reviewed at several levels (business administrator, program manager, Ontario Works administrator) to ensure accurate information financial information is captured and employment outcome information is correct.
- The Quality Assurance and Compliance team ensure implementation of Ontario Works training is consistent with strategies developed.

- Program Review Officers (PROs) within the Quality Assurance and Compliance team review provincial legislative and procedural changes and existing local policy and procedures to ensure that changes are incorporated into daily business and that local policy reflects compliance.
- Ongoing training and education ensures that all aspects of the program are in compliance with the Ontario Works Act, legislation and directives. Training in Ministry initiatives and local policy and guidelines assists staff in making accurate and consistent determinations of eligibility.
- Divisional operational plans are developed that ensure strategies are aligned with Corporate and Ministry objectives.
- Ontario Works legislation requires that CMSM's have an internal review mechanism to ensure participants have the right of appeal by an independent party. All requests for appeal in the City of Hamilton are reviewed by the CPO. Where resolution cannot be achieved, CPO's, on behalf of the Administrator, prepare detailed submission for presentation at the Social Benefits Tribunal. Their role provides critical information to support the training needs of the program by identifying trends in decision making and legislative compliance.
- Economic forecasts provided by specialists such as The Conference Board of Canada and Canadian Banking chief economists are reviewed regularly and may indicate the need to plan for potential changes in direction.
- Monthly reports from SDMT and future reports from SAMS will provide information on trends that may impact current strategies and indicate the need for changed direction
- Provincial employment outcome statistical information is reviewed as soon as available and information is provided to staff to gain a fulsome understanding of targets and achievements. Outcomes are reviewed monthly to ensure strategies are effective.
- Community reports through Workforce Planning Hamilton provide updated information on employer and skill development needs

- Locally based tracking systems such as vocational training outcomes and Hamilton's 'foundwork' data capture provide information on secured employment, sector, wages and employer.
- PROs complete detailed analysis of data to identify operational changes and forecast financial impact on programs and services.
- Extract data information made available through local improvements in data dissemination have allowed for a more thorough analysis of the Hamilton Ontario Works caseload. SDMT daily extract files are instrumental in monitoring trends, anomalies and supporting accountability for program expenditures.
- The SDMT Business Application Analyst provides quality assurance and expenditure accountability by providing response and resolution of day to day SDMT operational issues. Staff analyzes system-design changes; identify programmatic errors, including incident recognition and reporting, complete analysis and action SAMO ad hoc reports.
- The Employment Outcomes Working Group meets on a regular basis to monitor achievement of employment outcome targets. The group takes an active role in ensuring that employment outcomes are a focus of all OW service delivery. The group assesses the impact of policy and procedural changes on employment outcomes.

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