



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	June 19, 2020
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Ontario Works Facilities Update (HSC20015) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

Not Applicable

INFORMATION

This report provides a summary of plans to consolidate offices used to support the Ontario Works program in Hamilton.

Background

Ontario Works currently occupies four office locations in Hamilton:

- 250 Main Street East (central office)
- 1550 Upper James (mountain office)
- 2255 Barton Street East (east office)
- 181 Main Street West (Career Development Centre)

Staffing levels within Ontario Works has changed significantly since these offices were first leased. Since 2016, Ontario Works has reduced staffing levels by 61 positions through a number of changes and restructurings approved by Council. A further reduction of 36 positions (Report HSC20005) have been announced for later in 2020, related to the Provincial change in how employment services will be delivered in

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

Ontario. The cumulative effect of these changes results in a surplus of office space leased by Ontario Works.

Facilities Plan

In response to the surplus space, staff reviewed current and other office locations in the City that could meet the ongoing needs for the Ontario Works program. Factors considered when reviewing potential office locations included:

- Reducing the amount of space to what is required to meet current program needs;
- Ensuring locations are accessible to residents from across the City;
- Co-locating related workgroups within Ontario Works to maintain or improve efficiency; and,
- Reducing one-time move and facility renovation costs related to facility location changes.

Chosen Office Locations

After reviewing current and alternative locations identified by Facilities Planning & Business Solutions Section, Public Works, Ontario Works has chosen to consolidate into two of the existing locations:

- 250 Main Street East (central office) and
- 1550 Upper James (mountain office)

To accommodate all Ontario Works staff within these two locations, a small number of staff will continue to work from home after COVID-19 work arrangements return to normal.

Both the central office at 250 Main Street East and the mountain office at 1550 Upper James will require renovations to accommodate the increased number of staff located at each office. The estimated renovation costs and costs to vacate the offices scheduled to close, are \$468,000 and will be offset by in year program delivery savings. Including renovations, OW is still under the minimum expenditures required to maximize available provincial funding as projected through staff's forecasted savings based upon year to date financial position as of April 30, 2020. Project overruns can be funded through the additional savings to maximize provincial funding.

Community Outreach

250 Main Street East and 1550 Upper James are accessible by transit from all areas of the City serviced by HSR. A review of transit times to the two sites did not highlight any major accessibility concerns for Ontario Works participants or applicants.

Community outreach has always been a part of Ontario Works' program delivery as a way to improve accessibility for participants. Community outreach will be increased when possible, to continue to support participants across the community.

Next Steps

The lease for the east end office will be allowed to expire on September 30, 2020. The lease for the Career Development Centre will be terminated effective January 2021. Furniture will be removed and used where possible in the planned renovations at the two remaining Ontario Works sites.

Community stakeholders and the public will be advised of the Ontario Works service locations. Timing of announcements will correspond to the re-opening of offices under the Hamilton Reopens plan.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None