

REPORT TO E&CS COMMITTEE ON OMPF RECONCILIATION RE-INVESTMENT (CS11095) Dec. 7, 2011

Submitted by Dr. Sally Palmer, Chair, Social Action Committee, Ont. Assoc. of Social Workers, Hamilton & District Branch

- The Social Action Committee (SAC) agrees with the request by the Social Justice Strategic Committee (SJSC) that the City develop (a) a comprehensive Social Investment Strategy, and (b) formalized structures to maximize community participation, especially from low-income people, in developing programs to address poverty.
- The OMPF Reconciliation Re-Investment report (to be called “today’s report”) does not set out a comprehensive plan to address the needs of our low-income citizens; instead it proposes to use the \$4m. received this year from the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund (OMPF) to provide ongoing funding to three existing programs over the next 4 years.
- Our main concerns about today’s report are: (1) it gives priority to existing programs; and (2) it does not allow for community consultation in the allocation of funds.

1. Priority to Existing Programs

- Today’s report contradicts the stated purpose of the Social Services Initiative Reserve (SSIR) established in 2006. As cited in today’s report, “The purpose was defined as funds to assist with *urgent temporary/finite* program requirements...” (p.4).
- The 2006 definition of purpose fits well with the Board of Health’s plan for a one-year Farmers’ Market Gift Certificate program (\$20 per month) for individual recipients of Ontario Works, which still needs a funding source. A food supplement is desperately needed to help fill the \$115 per month gap between the needs of recipients and the inadequate social assistance rates, as set by the Province. A municipal supplement will add strength to the request made by Council to the Province in July 2011, requesting them to raise the rates to a realistic level.
- The Farmers’ Market Gift program also fits the criterion for funding stated in today’s report: “*No other funding source is available.*” While it is possible to seek charitable donations for programs such as food banks, this approach cannot be used to supplement inadequate rates of social assistance.

- If you accept Option 2 (recommended by staff) in today's report, the residual funds from the OMPF will be insufficient to cover the Farmers' Market Gift Certificate program. This supports our concern that today's report would give priority to existing programs against *urgent temporary/finite* ones.
- Today's report also contradicts the motion approved by Council in April 2011, that 50% of the OMPF funds were to be transferred to the Social Services Initiative Fund "to support *one-time* social services related costs."

2. **Lack of Community Consultation**: In April 2011, Council decided that "Consideration was to be given to establishing a public advisory committee to guide allocation of the OMPF funds, similar to the community board that guides allocation of federal homelessness funding." As Dave Cherkewski has pointed out, this is consistent with the emphasis on citizen inclusion and engagement in decision-making in the City's report, "The Playbook: A framework for human services planning in Hamilton".

- We are asking Committee members to support Option One in today's report (p.7). It includes a SSIR Community Planning Group to recommend funding priorities to City Council for approval; Option Two has no community consultation, citing cost as the reason.
- Without community consultation, the people most affected by programs to be funded by the OMPF—low income people—will have no voice in how the money is spent to counter poverty in our community.
- The staff report gives a misleading impression of addressing the SJSC wish for public consultation in allocating the funds, by stating: "To address their concerns, it is recommended that any new program funded through SSIR have a community engagement process with an emphasis on citizens who access the program such as those with lived experience" (p.3). This proviso does not ensure community involvement in decisions about the allocation of funds.

Suggested Amendments to Report

If the Committee agrees with Option One, the following amendments would be necessary to make the report consistent with this option.

- p. 1, "That the following programs continue to be funded through the Social Services Initiative Reserve (Account #112214) until December 31, 2015:
 - (i) Emergency Shelter and Intensive Case Management Services - \$350,000 annually;

(ii) Food Banks and the Christmas Hamper Program - \$350,000 annually;
and,
(iii) Affordable Transit Pass Program - \$300,050 annually.”

- p. 2, under “...eligibility criteria...” bullet 2: “Priority will be given to existing programs previously endorsed by City Council”
- p. 4, beginning with “To provide sustainable funding for [the above programs] it is recommended that the allocation of funding from SSIR be annualized funding for a four year time frame of 2011 to 2014...”
- p. 6, para. 2, under “Analysis/Rationale for Recommendation”: “It is recommended that priority first be given to existing programs with no permanent funding source and then to new programs...”

Appendix A should be rewritten, as it was developed to fit with Option Two.