



# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b> Mayor and Members General Issues Committee	<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b> CITY WIDE
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b> February 14, 2013	
<b>SUBJECT:</b> 2013 Pressures for Ontario Works Discretionary Benefits and the Housing Stability Benefit (CS13009) (City Wide)	
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b> Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community Services Department	<b>PREPARED BY:</b> Erica Brimley 905-546-2424 Ext. 4815 Bill Atanas 905-546-2424 Ext. 2941 Brian Kreps 905-546-2424 Ext. 4329 Gillian Hendry 905-546-2424 Ext. 4818
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## Council Direction

Hamilton City Council approved a motion on November 14, 2012 authorizing up to \$3.4 million in one-time funding to maintain current service levels for the first six months of 2013 for the Ontario Works Discretionary Benefits and for a Housing Stability Benefit to replace Community Start-Up (CSUMB). Funding for the continued operation for the balance of the 2013 transition year was to be referred to the City of Hamilton's 2013 budget deliberations with consideration of 2013 Ontario Works upload savings and/or Hamilton Future Fund as possible funding options for the second six months of the year.

Over the next few months, staff will review a number of options to control the costs associated with Discretionary Benefits while maintaining service levels, as well as undertake a preliminary evaluation of the new Housing Stability Benefit. Staff will be in a better position to identify what funding is required to maintain service levels for the period July 1, 2013 – December 31, 2013 after these reviews are completed and will report back to the Emergency Services Committee at its May 14, 2013 meeting with recommendations on the amount of funding required and a funding source.

## **Information**

### **Discretionary Benefits**

In order to control costs and identify options for potential cost reductions while maintaining service levels, staff, over the next two months, will:

- Implement an improved tracking and monitoring system
- Review bulk tendering for medical supplies and mobility equipment
- Meet with other comparator municipalities to identify what benefits are issued and the associated costs; how often benefits are issued; policy and processes that are used to contain costs; and, other efficiency opportunities
- Enter into discussions with the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) regarding their ability to cover the funding shortfall for the Adult Day Program
- Review processes to ensure that dental costs are controlled and monitored
- Review other cost effective means to provide dental services (e.g. partnerships with dentists)
- Etc.

### **Housing Stability Benefit**

At the November 7, 2012 General Issues Committee meeting, Item 8.12(a) of Report 12-032 approved the net levy portion of existing housing and homelessness programs to a total of \$3,351,080 be restated to CHPI effective January 1, 2013. This funding has been allocated to the new Housing Stability Benefit (HSB) which replaced CSUMB. This left a funding shortfall of \$44,800 from January to June 2013 to continue to offer the new benefit at the same expenditure level as what was provided under CSUMB.

Further, on December 27, 2012, the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) announced that the City of Hamilton would receive an additional \$3,190,280 in one-time funding to support the transition to implement CHPI. Municipalities have the flexibility to use the funds for a range of housing and homelessness supports based on local priorities. The additional funding has provided Hamilton with the opportunity to extend the delivery of the Housing Stability Benefit beyond the six months initially approved by Council and leaves a potential annualized shortfall of \$729,520.

Staff will report back to the May 13, 2013 Emergency and Community Services Committee with an updated forecast of funding required for the balance of the year in order to maintain service levels. The funding required will be impacted by the decreasing Ontario Works caseload and will be informed by an evaluation of the implementation of the new Housing Stability Benefit as well as a survey of promising practices in other municipalities.