

This report is subject to ratification at the Regional Council Meeting of April 1, 2004.
Following ratification, a link to Council Report will be added.

THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

REPORT 6-2004

Minutes of a meeting of the Community Services Committee held at The Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities Office at 60 James Street, St. Catharines, on Monday, March 22, 2004 commencing at 3:00 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Committee: Councillors Hildreth, Chair; Partington, Regional Chair; Almas; Bailey; Baty; Casselman; Gabriel; Katzman; Marshall; Mastroianni.

Staff: Ms. Reid, Commissioner of Community Services; Ms. Reilly, Legislative Assistant.

Staff

Part-time: Community Services: Mr. Batholomew-Saunders, Manager, Children's Services; Ms. Heidebrecht, Director, Children's Services; Mr. Hutchings, Director, Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities; Mr. Smith, Coordinator, Policy, Planning and Research; Ms. Stevenson, Manager, Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities; Mr. Tarajos, Manager, Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities; Ms. Watson, Manager, Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities; Mr. Ventresca, Director, Seniors Services.

Others: Ms. Tanya Drake, Converges Company.

COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

39. Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities Division

Ms. Reid, Commissioner, Community Services, welcomed everyone to the Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities (SAEO) office, commenting that a tour would be available to any interested Committee members after the meeting.

Mr. Hutchings, Director, Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities, provided an overview of the SAEO Division, noting that support is provided to a total of 29,694 persons through Social Assistance Cases, Ontario Disability Support Program and the National Child Benefit

Program. The Director outlined the Legislative Acts under which the Division is governed, most notably, the Ontario Works Act (1997). Also provided was a 2004 Fiscal Overview of the Mandatory Programs and information on the full time equivalent for the Division, being 169, the same as 2003. A chart was presented detailing the average annual caseload for 1990 to 2004, highlighting the Sole Support Parent Cases that were transferred from the Province in mid 1998.

Mr. Smith, Coordinator, Policy, Planning and Research, provided key program and financial information pertaining to the services and finances of the SAEO for 2003, noting that the division has continued to offer a range of services while achieving funding targets in areas mandated by the province.

40. 2003 Year End Report (January 1 – December 31, 2003)
Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO)

Moved by Councillor Marshall
Seconded by Councillor Katzman

That Report COM 18-2004, March 22, 2004, respecting 2003 Year End Report (January 1 – December 31, 2003) Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO), be received for information.

Carried.

Mr. Tarajos, Manager, SAEO, apprised Committee of the Holistic Approach wherein Community Program referrals are based on the needs of the individual in a broader family context and takes into consideration other important personal and community connections in their life. SAEO offers programs and services to improve the quality of life for clients and their families.

41. Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities:
Overview of Services, Priorities and Challenges

Moved by Councillor Casselman
Seconded by Councillor Bailey

That Report COM 19-2004, March 22, 2004, respecting Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities: Overview of Services, Priorities and Challenges, be received for information.

Carried.

(Refer to staff direction on page CSC 30.)

42. Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO)
2003 Consolidated Verification Process (CVP)

Ms. Stevenson, Manager, SAEO, provided information on the Consolidated Verification Process and outcomes achieved in 2003. Through strategic utilization of staff resources, Niagara was able to earn \$349,149, the maximum amount available for Consolidated Verification Process incentive funding for 2003. Niagara will continue to participate in this initiative until March 31, 2004, which will allow increased revenues and provide further assurances on processes.

Moved by Councillor Gabriel
Seconded by Councillor Marshall

That Report COM 20-2004, March 22, 2004, respecting Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities (SAEO) 2003 Consolidated Verification Process (CVP), be received for information.

Carried.

43. Ontario Drug Benefits – Provincially Operated Programs
Ontario Disability Support Program Update

Moved by Councillor Gabriel
Seconded by Councillor Bailey

That Report COM 21, 2004, March 22, 2004, respecting Ontario Drug Benefits – Provincially Operated Programs Ontario Disability Support Program Update, be received for information.

That the Regional Chairman be authorized to send correspondence to the Minister of Community and Social Services reconfirming Council's commitment to the recommendations of COM 44-2003. (Attachment #1 to this Report.)

Carried.

Ms. Watson, Manager, SAEO, spoke briefly to the working relationships that have been development with Community Partners to assist clients on Ontario Works to achieve sustainable independence.

Ms. Watson introduced Ms. Tanya Drake of Convergys Company, who apprised Committee of their company and its efforts to develop training programs to assist individuals on Ontario Works in their goal to obtain sustainable employment.

A Social Assistance recipient was in attendance to speak to her personal experiences with employment services and the positive reinforcement she received through her participation.

Mr. Smith described the Client Service Path from eligibility determination, the initial and ongoing meetings with the Casemanager, the Ontario Disability Support Program, Assistance to access other government programs, Employment Services and Supports, Employment Start-up Benefits, Family Supports, Ongoing Income Support and Eligibility Assessment and Community Start-up Benefits.

44. Community Services Bursary Program

Mr. Bartholomew-Saunders, Manager, Children's Services, provided information on the Community Services Bursary Program that is funded through the Community Participation Incentive Funding – Reinvestment Strategy. He advised the Bursary Program was a one-time initiative based on the philosophy that supporting additional education increases the likelihood that the cycle of poverty will be broken and the reliance on state sponsored social programs reduced. \$30,000 provided support for 62 low income residents of Niagara to begin or further their educational goals. 53 have gone on to post secondary education at the university and or community college level while 9 are studying in a variety of skills based programs.

Moved by Councillor Casselman
Seconded by Councillor Bailey

That Report COM 22-2004, March 26, 2004, respecting Community Services Bursary Program, be received for information.

Carried.

(Refer to staff direction on page CSC 30.)

Mr. Hutchings provided a detailed chart outlining the Community Participation Incentive Funding Summary.

CORRESPONDENCE

45. Moved by Councillor Bailey
Seconded by Councillor Marshall

That the following communications be received:

CSC 2-2004 Monique Smith, MPP, Parliamentary Assistant,
Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (February 19,

2004) regarding Minister Smitherman's review of long-term care facilities across the province.

CSC 3-2004

Niagara Regional Housing – Information Bulletin
“A Housing Strategy for the Niagara Community”

Carried.

ACCOUNTS

46. Moved by Councillor Mastroianni
Seconded by Councillor Katzman

That the Accounts Payable Expenditure Summary for the period ending February 29, 2004 in the amount of \$3,039,317.61, be approved.

Carried.

CLOSED SESSION

47. Moved by Councillor Bailey
Seconded by Councillor Marshall

That this Committee do now meet in Closed Session for purposes of receiving information of a confidential nature relating to a property matter.

Carried.

48. License Renewal – Social Assistance and
Employment Opportunities Office
5853 Peer Street, City of Niagara Falls

Moved by Councillor Bailey
Seconded by Councillor Partington

That Report OOM 23-2004, March 22, 2004 (PWA 54-2004, March 23, 2004) respecting License Renewal – Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities Office, 5853 Peer Street, City of Niagara Falls, be received and the recommendation therein approved.

Carried.

49. Moved by Councillor Marshall
Seconded by Councillor Katzman

That this Committee do now rise with report.

Carried.

STAFF DIRECTION

That staff be directed to:

- (i) Provide the original resolution regarding the rate structure for social assistance rates and background reports and information to assist in developing a further resolution to the new Provincial Government regarding the inadequacies of the current rate structure. Information was also requested on the number of persons applying for Ontario Disability Support and the criteria requirement. (Refer to minute 41.)
- (ii) That staff look for assistance through the Niagara Community Foundation and other sources such as colleges and universities to support the continuation of the Bursary Program. (Refer to minute 45.)

ADJOURNMENT

Committee adjourned at 5:05 p.m. to meet again on Monday, April 19, 2004 at 3:00 p.m. in Committee Room 4, Regional Headquarters Building.

Jill Hildreth
Chair

Gail Reilly
Legislative Assistant

Pam Gilroy
Acting Regional Clerk