



REPORT TO: Co-Chairs and Members of Public Health and Social Services Committee

SUBJECT: Council Business Plan Bursary Program to Support Youth in Low-Income Households to access Post-Secondary Education

RECOMMENDATION

That this Committee recommend to Regional Council that:

1. a current budget allocation in the gross and net amount of \$50,000 be approved for the Council Business Plan as submitted in the 2008 Current Budget; and that
2. approval be given to direct these funds to create a Bursary program to support youth living in low-income households to access post-secondary education.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In Niagara, approximately 14% of the population lives below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO).¹
- The four recommendations made in the report "*A Legacy of Poverty? Addressing Cycles of Poverty and the Impact on Child Health in Niagara Region*" are:
 1. Decrease poverty through advocacy;
 2. Ensure appropriate and flexible supports which address the broader determinants of health for adults living in poverty;
 3. Mitigate the negative effects of low income on children and youth through programs and services; and
 4. Monitor progress.
- Recommendation four included a focus on increasing people's access and attachment to education and the labour force
- During the 2007 Current Budget process, Community Services received Corporate Management Team (CMT) approval to access \$50,000 of the Council Business Plan funds to create a Bursary program for youth living in low-income households to access post-secondary education.

¹ "A Legacy of Poverty? Addressing Cycles of Poverty and the Impact on Child Health in Niagara Region", June 2007 p 5. The LICO measure is a relative calculation as it is based on the percentage of income that individuals and families spend on the basic needs or necessities in comparison with the rest of Canadians. LICO defines poverty as the income level where household needs for food, clothing and shelter, will, on average take a share of pre-tax income that is 20% higher than the average family.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report seeks approval to initiate current spending in the amount of \$50,000 to be financed from the Council Business Plan identified in the current budget process.

The Council Business Plan pool of funds in the current budget totals \$1,174,000. Initiated amounts to date total \$714,000 and include: NHS funding CSD 85 – 2007 \$500,000, web content management CSD 27 – 2008 \$74,000, youth homelessness COM 17 – 2008 \$90,000 and marketing and communications CAO 5 – 2008 \$50,000. The Council Business Plan pool remaining is \$410,000 after this report.

PURPOSE

This report has been prepared to provide details to support the investment of \$50,000 of the Council Business Plan funds to re-establish the *Community Services Bursary Program* for youth living in low-income households to access post-secondary education.

BACKGROUND

A Community Services Bursary Program was established in 2003 to support students studying at the post-secondary education, training or skill acquisition level (see COM 12-2003 Appendix A). The initiative was based in the philosophy that additional education improves the social determinants of health and builds stronger communities by increasing the likelihood that the cycle of poverty will be broken.

The Community Services Bursary Program was a one-time initiative that invested \$30,000 to 62 low-income residents of Niagara Region to begin or further their education. Of these bursary recipients 53 went on to post-secondary education at the university and/or community college level and 9 enrolled in skills based programs.

The *Community Services Bursary Program* was an excellent example of collaboration between Children's Services, Niagara Regional Housing and Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities. Feedback from the individuals who accessed the bursary was extremely positive and demonstrated their commitment to life-long learning.

The *Community Services Bursary Program* was modeled after the Dr. Albert Rose Program which was marketed by NRH on behalf of the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The focus of this program was to support residents of rent-geared-to-income housing to access post secondary education or short tem skills-based programs

REPORT

Community Services recommends that the program launched in 2003 be reinstated using Council Business Plan funds. In order to qualify, applicants must demonstrate that they are:

- a grade 12 or OAC graduate or a mature student (a person 18 years of age or older who has been away from formal education for a period of one or more years);
- a Canadian Citizen or legal resident of Canada;
- a resident of the Regional Municipality of Niagara;
- a holder of a valid Social Insurance Number; and
- in financial need as demonstrated by being a Social Assistance Recipient, a member of a low income household through child care income testing, a tenant in rent-geared-to-income housing in Niagara Region (and not in receipt of a Dr. Albert Rose Bursary), or awaiting placement in Niagara Regional Housing as demonstrated by confirmation of current status on the centralized waiting list for NRH.

The full \$500 bursary will be available to students entering their first or second year of post-secondary education leading to a certificate, trade diploma or degree. Third year students or students studying beyond third year are not eligible.

To be eligible for a part bursary, the student is required to be entering a short-term academic upgrading, trade, apprenticeship or skills based training program that is a minimum of 4 weeks in duration. The bursary program is flexible enough to recognize all learning styles, including distance learning and correspondence programs.

Working with a total budget of \$50,000, it is recommended that awards of up to \$500 per student be awarded to a maximum of 100 students. Past experience has shown that this program is a very positive step in supporting youth living in low-income households to access post-secondary education and build a better future for themselves and Niagara.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

Brian Hutchings
Commissioner, Community Services

Mike Trojan
Chief Administrative Officer

*This report was prepared by Sarah Pennisi, Director, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities and reviewed by Lora Beckwith, **** Niagara Regional Housing and Patricia Heidebrecht, Director, Children's Services.*

Appendix A COM 12-2003



THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA

REPORT TO: Chair and Members
Community and Health Services Committee

SUBJECT: Ontario Works Community Placement Funds – Reinvestment Strategy

RECOMMENDATION

That this Committee recommend to Regional Council that the proposed reinvestment strategy for \$2,011,800 in 100% provincial funding be approved.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to outline a reinvestment strategy for funds generated through a Provincial incentive program related to community placements. The proposed allocation of the funds is presented for Committee and Council approval.

BACKGROUND

Provincial Community Placement Incentive Program

The Province placed a strong emphasis on the development of community placement capacity in communities across Ontario during the last three fiscal years. Commencing in the 1999-2000 fiscal year, targets were established for placements for every CMSM/DSSAB across Ontario. The targets were calculated based on a percentage of the participants as of the end of the preceding fiscal year. The 2001/02 fiscal year (ending March 31, 2002) was the final year of the program.

To promote target achievement, the Province provided incentive funding to jurisdictions that exceeded current and prior year targets. The incentives were \$500 for every placement exceeding the prior year targets and \$1,000 for every placement in excess of the current year target. The targets for the last three years and the achievements for Niagara are depicted in the chart that follows:

**Community Placement Targets, Achievements and Related Incentive Funding
 1999-2002**

	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002
Percentage of Caseload (Used to calculate target)	15%	22.5%	30%
Placement Target	902	1515	1642
Actual Placements	200	1683	3567
% Target Achievement		111%	217%
Total Incentive Funding Earned	N/A	\$515,000	\$2,347,500*

- **Note:** \$422,500 of the total was funding related to placements in excess of the 1999-2000 target. This portion of the funding has been utilized to support client related costs to access and maintain housing (rent/ utility arrears). The balance of \$1,925,000 relates to performance over the 2001-02 target of 1,642.

As the chart indicates, Niagara has earned incentive funding in the 2000-01 and 2001-02 fiscal years. The achievement for the year ending March 31, 2002 totals \$2,347,500 of which \$1,925,000 is being included in this reinvestment strategy.

A Committee report in June 2001 outlined the proposed use of the funding earned in 2000-01 of \$515,000. As of the end of the 2002-year, \$422,500 of the total funding generated has been spent. This leaves a total of \$92,500, which has not been spent due to delays in receiving funding from the Province in the 2000-01-year and resulting delays in project implementation. This funding will be added to the \$1,925,00 for a total reinvestment allocation of \$2,017,500.

The Provincial guidelines regarding the use of this funding is that the increased funding should be invested in local priorities that address unmet human services needs in local communities. Human services are defined as:

“those services which relate directly to health, social and community support including, but not limited to, social assistance, child care, public health, housing and land ambulances”

Provincial guidelines also indicate restrictions for the use of the funds including: major capital projects; policing enforcement; development/maintenance of roads, sewers or any other items that are traditionally referred to as hard services; municipal reserve funds.

In addition, the Province requires that the funds be spent within a two-year period.

REPORT

Strategic Framework for Reinvestments

- The reinvestment strategy is being proposed to support a broad range of human service programs and initiatives that will improve the quality of life of individuals, families and communities in Niagara.
- The reinvestment plan builds on current contractual arrangements and funding approaches in the community and therefore does not require the Region to enter into the provision of community grants, consistent with prior direction from Council.
- The specific areas that are proposed for funding are generally one-time in nature and will not create a dependency on this source of funding.
- The largest share of the reinvestment is related to employment, given that the source of revenue generation was Community Placements within the Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities Division. Funding in the employment area has been targeted to support employment preparation for growth sectors of the local economy, consistent with the recommendations of the Job Challenge report.
- Funding allocations are estimates and may require some adjustment during the two-year period to reflect refined program costs and requirements.
- Wherever feasible, investments will be utilized to leverage funding from other sources.

Based on the above factors, the following is the proposed reinvestment plan for the 2003 and 2004 years:

2003-2004 Reinvestment Plan

Funding Area	Allocation
Children's Services	
Scholarships for Children in Social Housing (matching Provincial funds)	\$20,000
Playground naturalization at selected child care centres Many playgrounds do not meet current safety standards and operators have difficulty in raising funds to retrofit.	\$90,000
Start up funding for Informal Child Care Operators	\$15,000

\$300 for mandatory inspections x 50 providers will help support expansion of the system and placements for an additional 250 children.	
Early Years Centre equipment upgrading New play activities and books for Early Years satellites to ensure all Centres have the necessary equipment.	\$125,000
Youth Connection Program Funding to support a one year continuation of the current model for the school nurse program. Funding for 2004 will be addressed in the budget process.	\$161,000
Early Years infrastructure and Community Development Related to Findings of Understanding Early Years Research Funds to match local municipal contributions.	\$60,000
Sub-Total Child Services	\$471,000
Employment Supports	
Contribution to Coordination of Work In Niagara Initiative	\$50,000
Targeted training (Consistent with Job Challenge/Work In Niagara Initiatives) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction, Trades • Manufacturing • Hospitality/Tourism • Health and Social Services • Service/Technology 	\$560,000
Refugee Claimant Supports Funding to leverage Federal funding for Border Infrastructure for items such as information regarding local employment, facility upgrading and transportation. (COM-82-2002)	\$50,000
Sustainability of Community Placement Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landcare Niagara • Project I.C.E (Industrial Certification) 	\$300,000

Employment Maintenance Pilot To reduce the 30-40% of participants returning to social assistance within one year through instituting continuing supports on a voluntary basis.	\$100,000
Research Project Related to employability or reasons for return to assistance.	\$50,000
Sub-total Employment Supports	\$1,110,000
Supporting Low-Income Families	
Opportunities Niagara <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial investment • Further strategic investment 	\$75,000 \$75,000
Funding to prevent power termination/homelessness Financial assistance for low-income families to address accumulated utility arrears (COM- 13-2003)	\$80,000
Federation of Canadian Municipalities Quality of Life Reporting System Region of Niagara participation.	\$25,800
Health Bus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding to support additional service needs. • Dental care for low-income families 	\$10,000 \$15,000
Sub-total Poverty Reduction	\$280,800
Seniors Services	
Dementia care/wound care training	\$100,000
Contribution to Dementia Care Centre (Family Space)	\$50,000
Sub-Total Seniors Services	\$150,000
Grand Total Reinvestment Strategy	\$2,011,800

Total Available

\$2,017,500

SUMMARY

The Region wishes to strategically invest funds acquired through a Provincial program related to community placements. The proposed reinvestment strategy is broad-based and will serve to increase the quality of life for many individuals and families in Niagara.

Submitted by:

Approved by:

Susan R. Reid, Commissioner
Community Services Department

Mike Trojan
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared by Lorraine Graham-Watson, Director, Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities Division.