
Niagara Region

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

SUBJECT: Community Services Variance Analysis and Program Update for the First Quarter 2008

RECOMMENDATION

That this Committee recommend to Regional Council that this report be received for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report provides year-to-date operating results and a comparison to budget for the first quarter of 2008.
- This report provides program and operational updates by Service Area on 2008 activities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications directly associated with this report.

PURPOSE

This report provides year-to-date financial results and a comparison to budget for the first quarter of 2008, as well as program and operational updates on Service Area activities for Community Services.

BACKGROUND

Quarterly reporting of budget to actual financial information is provided to Committee and Council to keep Councillors informed of any variances or financial risks that Community Services may be experiencing during the year. In addition, regular reporting supports external auditors in their work to ensure that financial information is communicated and any associated risks are managed in a timely manner.

The reporting of Service Area programs and activities on a quarterly basis provides an opportunity to inform Councillors of Community Services' work in the community.

REPORT

Corporate Services has provided a guideline to all departments for variance analysis, whereby all variances greater than 10% and greater than \$100,000, either favourable or unfavourable, beyond the year-to-date budgets are to be addressed. Programming and activity reporting is intended to update and inform Councillors on Community Services work in the Niagara community.

Departmental Overview

Community Services as a whole is not anticipating any surplus or deficit at this time for the year ended 2008. There are a number of labour negotiation unknowns at the end of the first quarter that may impact the financial operations as the year unfolds, in particular, the results of the ONA 9 Homes conciliation currently underway and CUPE 1287 negotiations which have not yet started. The interest arbitration award for CUPE 1263 has been received and will be reflected in the 2008 second quarter statements.

Summary of Financial Variances

Community Services as a whole is currently in a surplus position of \$4,167,552, which is driven largely by surpluses in Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities (SAEO) \$1,249,383, Senior Services \$1,559,336 and Provincially Operated Program (POP) \$779,500. The surplus in SAEO is related to the stable caseload for the first quarter of 2008. This caseload will continue to be monitored and a determination of surplus funds may be possible after the second quarter of experience. The surplus in Seniors is not expected to be sustained, as it pertains to timing of grant revenue receipts and in addition the labour retroactive adjustments are anticipated to be processed for CUPE 1263 in the second quarter. The surplus in POP is the result of the caseload mix and related benefits which will be monitored. It may be possible to determine a surplus after the second quarter activity.

Individual Results and Program Updates by Service Area

Social Assistance and Employment Opportunities

POP's are not currently experiencing any significant variances from budget. At this time caseloads for ODSP are in line with budgeted increases for 2008.

SAEO and Housing, Hostels and Homelessness are not anticipating any significant variances that would impact the year end position. All current variances are the result of timing of expenditures and outstanding contract negotiations with CUPE 1287, rather than a change in circumstances. OW caseloads remain similar to the prior year and are below the budgeted caseload increase for 2008, creating a minor variance. However this may not be sustained through to year end due to experience throughout the remainder of 2008.

The announcements in the Provincial budget of a 2% increase in OW and ODSP clients will not have an impact on the 2008 financial year. These increases effective late 2008 will not be cost shared with municipalities until 2009.

SAEO was successful in a proposal for Employment Innovation funds with the Province receiving \$200,000 to be spent prior to March 31, 2008. This funding was used to build upon the success of the Job Bus project and expanded employment opportunities for OW and ODSP participants living across Niagara. The Job Bus initiative is a partnership project involving collaboration between three levels of government across 12 municipalities in Niagara to provide direct, daily, roundtrip transportation for social assistance clients to Niagara employers. Preliminary end of project data shows that the project exceeded the negotiated full-time employment target by 5 placements seeing employment with 135 OW and ODSP participants.

The Ontario Child Benefit, a new non-taxable benefit for eligible low-income families with children under 18 years of age will commence in July 2008 and is a major implementation project for SAEO in 2008. The introduction of the benefit will result in the restructuring of social assistance benefits to clients. In an effort to prepare families for the upcoming changes, SAEO staff have been working to ensure that these changes are communicated to eligible families. To date communications strategies have included; two information sessions aimed at service providers within the Niagara Region, an information video to be shown in all SAEO lobbies and has been made available to community service providers, posters in all lobbies, printed brochures to community partners, teams and front desks, two staff training sessions and staff are contacting all current families in receipt of OW with no record of a tax return on file, to make them aware of the need to file income tax returns.

Children's Services

Children's Services is not anticipating any significant variance from the budget at year end, as services provided to the community are based on the extent of grant revenues available. The service contract for 2008 has not been finalized with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and as such not all budgeted programs have been fully implemented.

Three main priorities for Children's Services in 2008 include system stability, quality, and partnerships/planning. Over 60% of clients accessing child care fee subsidy are low income families. A strong early childhood education system contributes to the economic growth of society through supports to young children and their families. In partnership with over 100 organizations, Children's Services will continue to contribute to Niagara's future through ensuring access to high quality, affordable, licensed child care services and supports to parents across Niagara.

Seniors Services

Senior Services is not anticipating any significant surplus or deficit for 2008. The first quarter financial variance does indicate a surplus; however this will normalize once the CUPE 1263 interest arbitration award is accounted for along with recognizing that contracts for ONA 9 and CUPE 1287 remain open at this time.

Seniors Services received confirmation of the Provincial Case Mix Index (CMI) revenues resulting from the concentrated computerized care planning effort by nursing staff in all of the long-term care homes. The revenues of approximately \$1.7 million in 2008 is the result of the Ministry recognizing the increase in resident acuity and the resultant need for more nursing care. Accordingly, the Provincial funding is being applied to the addition of 20.6 FTE of front line nursing staff to provide the much needed care to the residents, without any impact on the need for additional Regional contribution.

The Ministry of Health and Long Term Care announced a new funding program aimed at creating more full time employment opportunities for Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs) and much needed additional care for residents in long term care homes. This funding, which was channelled through the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant Local Health Integration Network (HNHB LHIN) allowed Seniors Services to add 8 FTEs of RPNs (i.e. one for each home).

The HNHB LHIN approved the Seniors Services' submission for Aging at Home and Emergency Department Assistance Program funding. Submissions totalling \$895,779 and reported in COM 15-2008, were approved to enhance four community support services including Alzheimer's Respite Companion Program, Alzheimer's Overnight Respite (T. Roy Adams Regional Centre for Dementia Care), Adult Day Service and Supportive Housing in West Niagara that are intended to alleviate pressures from emergency departments, long term care wait lists and hospital beds accommodating people who could be supported at home and in the community. The funding allowed Seniors Services to add and continue to support 7.1 FTEs to enhance these services to seniors and their families, without any additional cost to the Region.

Operating Statements

The following financial information, by object of expenditure for the quarter ending March 31, 2008, is attached:

- Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities 2100C (Schedule 1)
- Children's Services 2200C (Schedule 2)
- Housing, Hostels & Homelessness 2300C (Schedule 3)
- Seniors Services 3000C (Schedule 4)
- Provincially Operated Programs 2220C (Schedule 5)

Submitted by:

Approved by:

Brian Hutchings
Commissioner, Community Services

Mike Trojan
Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared by Cathy Cousins, Director, Operational Support Services

Appendix I Social Assistance & Employment Opportunities 2100C (Schedule 1)
Appendix II Children's Services 2200C (Schedule 2)
Appendix III Housing, Hostels & Homelessness 2300C (Schedule 3)
Appendix IV Seniors Services 3000C (Schedule 4)
Appendix V Provincially Operated Programs 2220C (Schedule 5)