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ONTARIO WORKS ENHANCED SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE PERSONS FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

The Community and Health Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation contained in the following report dated September 30, 2009, from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

1. Regional Council approve up to \$1,064,000 over two years in gross expenditures relating to the Province's new Ontario Works Enhanced Employment Services for Vulnerable Persons initiative, offset by 100% provincial subsidy with no impact to the regional tax levy.

2. PURPOSE

This report requests Council approval to implement the new 100% provincially funded Ontario Works Enhanced Employment Services for Vulnerable Persons initiative beginning in 2009 with no impact to the regional tax levy.

3. BACKGROUND

NEW 100% PROVINCIAL FUNDING FOR ONTARIO WORKS

In July 2009, the Province announced new time-limited 100% funding for Ontario Works delivery agents

In July 2009, the Ministry of Community and Social Services announced that Ontario Works delivery agents across the province will be provided with new Enhanced Employment Services for Vulnerable Persons funding. This is time-limited two-year funding that will be allocated on a fiscal basis as 100% provincial subsidy. York Region has been allocated \$532,000 annually for fiscal years 2009/10 and 2010/11 for a total allocation of \$1,064,000 beginning in the fall of 2009.

Funding is to provide enhanced services for vulnerable Ontario Works participants with no or marginal attachment to the labour market and who have multiple barriers to employment

Enhanced Employment Services funding has been allocated to municipalities to provide enhanced services for those Ontario Works recipients who have no or limited attachment to the workforce and who are experiencing multiple barriers to employment. Many individuals will require upfront intensive supports to prepare for and support their ongoing participation in pre-employment activities and ultimately to achieve labour market success.

Municipalities are being given the flexibility to plan services that meet the needs of a range of vulnerable client populations on social assistance depending on local demographics and client need

Service delivery agents may plan services targeting the training and employment needs of a range of clients (e.g., persons with mental health and/or substance abuse issues, persons with criminal records, individuals with suspected learning issues, etc.) and are expected to tailor a portion of their enhanced employment services to persons with disabilities, including Ontario Disability Support Program recipients. Delivery agents may provide service in-house, purchase specific services from other providers, or use a combination of these approaches.

4. ANALYSIS AND OPTIONS

Enhanced Employment Services funding is designed to bolster the range of services provided under the current Ontario Works employment assistance funding allocation

The intent of Enhanced Employment Services funding is not to duplicate existing employment services. Service delivery agents are therefore required to demonstrate that Enhanced Employment Services funding expenditures are over and above their current approved employment assistance funding envelope. York's current annual provincially approved employment services funding allocation is \$3.1 million (2009 provincial share).

To be eligible for funding, service delivery agents are required to submit an employment service plan amendment describing their Enhanced Employment Services plan and projected expenditures

To qualify for funding, each municipality is required to amend their current Ontario Works two year employment service plan with the Province to include a plan for the implementation of Enhanced Employment Services projected expenditures and services. Staff are currently preparing the Region's service plan amendment to inform the Enhanced Employment Services plan, including the projected number of individuals that

are expected to be served and the service delivery approach. Though no specific timelines have been communicated given the very recent in-year announcement of the funding, preliminary discussions with the Central East Region Ministry office suggest that delivery agents will be required to submit updated service plans to the Province for approval in the fall.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

100% provincial funding means no impact on the regional tax levy

It is estimated that approximately 15% of the total allocation of \$1,064,000 or \$160,000, may be spent in 2009. The 2010 budget request will include the 2010 estimated expenditures offset by 100% funding and actual expenditures will be managed within provincial funding limits ensuring no tax levy impact. It should be noted that funding through the Enhanced Employment Services initiative may be utilized to support program administration as well as direct program delivery costs.

6. LOCAL MUNICIPAL IMPACT

All local municipalities will benefit from the Province's new Enhanced Employment Services initiative which supports vulnerable York Region residents on assistance toward their goal of labour market success.

7. CONCLUSION

In July 2009, the Province announced its Enhanced Employment Services for Vulnerable Persons initiative. This initiative will provide Ontario Works service delivery agents with time-limited provincial funding to provide enhanced services to support the pre-employment needs of vulnerable social assistance recipients who have limited or no attachment to the labour force. York Region has been allocated \$532,000 annually, in 100% provincial Enhanced Employment Services funding, for the years 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 to be used, upon Council approval, to increase services for vulnerable residents on assistance who are moving toward their labour market goals.

For more information on this report, please contact David Rennie, General Manager, Social Services at Ext. 2013.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.