

## Report #2 of the Health & Social Services Committee

For consideration by Regional Council

February 28, 2024

The Health & Social Services Committee recommends approval of the following:

1. Primary Care Outreach Program (2024-MOH-1)
  - A) That the Region of Durham advocates for the provincial government to provide sustained provincial funding for the expansion of the Primary Care Outreach Program to meet the growing needs of Durham Region residents experiencing homelessness and needing urgent health care, mental health and addictions supports; and
  - B) That a letter from the Regional Chair on behalf of Regional Council, along with a copy of Report #2024-MOH-1 of the Commissioner and Medical Officer of Health be sent to the Premier of Ontario, Minister of Health, Associate Minister of Mental Health & Addictions, all Durham MPPs, and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), for their information and consideration.

2. Motion Calling on the Province to Increase Ontario Works Rates

Whereas the Region of Durham is one of the fastest growing communities in Ontario;

And whereas Ontario Works financial assistance rates have been frozen since 2018 and economic challenges are disproportionately impacting our vulnerable residents by contributing to increasing income insecurity, housing unaffordability, homelessness and food insecurity;

And whereas a basic income program can ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing income inequality and financial instability;

And whereas Ontario Works recipients only have a \$200 income exemption compared to \$1000 for recipients of Ontario Disability Support Program;

And whereas improved financial stability would result in improved social, economic and health outcomes for Durham's vulnerable residents as well as increased opportunities for vulnerable residents to contribute to and invest in their local economies;

And whereas Social Assistance Modernization was introduced by the province with the intention to reduce municipal administrative burden to allow staff to focus efforts on providing intensive stability supports for vulnerable residents;

And whereas administrative efficiencies for municipalities have not been realized under the Social Assistance Modernization;

And whereas the Social Assistance Modernization program has had unintended consequences including delays to processing applications and eliminating essential people-centred supports such as bus fare that are jeopardizing individuals' ability to move out of poverty;

And whereas leadership is urgently needed from the provincial government to develop, resource, and implement a comprehensive and inclusive plan to address increasing levels of poverty for people living in Ontario, in particular for those receiving Ontario Works;

Now therefore be it resolved that the Region of Durham calls on the provincial government to urgently increase Ontario Works rates to a liveable rate and commit to indexing rates to inflation annually in line with the Ontario Disability Support Program; and further that the Ontario Works earning exemption be aligned with the Ontario Disability Support Program to allow individuals in the workforce to keep more of their earning and potentially encourage more participation in the workforce;

That the Region of Durham calls on the provincial government to evaluate the effectiveness of Social Services Modernization in consultation with Municipal Service Managers, particularly to what extent the partial upload of the Ontario Works application process has resulted in streamlining, efficiencies and maintained service standards;

That the province ensure an adequate level of employment services funding is maintained by restoring funding within the Ontario Works program that was reduced as a result of the transfer of responsibility for employment services to the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) Service System Managers; and

That a copy of this motion be sent to the Minister of Children, Community, and Social Services, Minister of Finance, Durham Members of Provincial Parliament, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association.

Respectfully submitted,

E. Roy, Chair, Health & Social Services Committee