



The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: Health and Social Services Committee
From: Commissioner of Social Services
Report: #2024-SS-2
Date: March 7, 2024

Subject:

2024 Social Services Department Business Plan and Budget

Recommendation:

That the Health and Social Services Committee recommends to the Finance and Administration Committee for subsequent recommendation to Regional Council that the 2024 Business Plan and Budget of the Social Services Department be approved.

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to obtain Health and Social Services Committee concurrence of the 2024 Business Plan and Budget for the Social Services Department. The Social Services Department 2024 Business Plan and Budget will be referred to the Finance and Administration Committee for consideration during deliberations of the 2024 Property Tax Supported Business Plans and Budget.

2. Overview

2.1 The recommended 2024 Social Services Business Plan and Budget meets the Council approved guideline for the 2024 Property Tax Supported Business Plans and Budget.

2.2 The 2024 Social Services Business Plan and Budget supports following five goals of the Regional Municipality of Durham's (Region) Strategic Plan, as well as works to address the social crisis that have been magnified by the COVID-19 pandemic, namely:

- a. Goal 1: Environmental Sustainability
- b. Goal 2: Community Vitality
- c. Goal 3: Economic Prosperity
- d. Goal 4: Social Investment
- e. Goal 5: Service Excellence

- 2.3 The recommended 2024 Social Services Department Business Plan and Budget includes \$584.9 million in gross expenditures requiring \$158.7 million in property tax funding with the remaining funded by program fees, provincial and federal subsidies, reserves and reserve funds.
- 2.4 The recommended 2024 Social Services Department Business Plan and Budget provides operating and capital funding for the following divisions:
- a. Children's Services
 - b. Emergency Management and Program Support Services
 - c. Family Services
 - d. Housing Services
 - e. Social Assistance
 - f. Long Term Care and Services for Seniors

3. 2023 Accomplishments

- 3.1 Human service provisions within Social Services included responding to diverse community needs throughout 2023.
- a. Children's Services developed the five-year Early Learning and Child Care Service Plan (2023-2027) that outlines four key service priorities.
 - b. Supported expansion of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care System (CWELCC) by adding 623 new childcare spaces. Overall spaces were increased through childcare centres and home childcare agencies, which resulted in more than 17,522 CWELCC enrolled spaces.
 - c. Emergency Social Services (ESS) responded to 18 emergencies to support displaced residents, 16 of which were residential fires.
 - d. ESS partnered with the Income, Employment and Homelessness Supports Division (IEHSD), the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion division from the CAO's office and community providers to support a humanitarian response to over 700 individuals seeking asylum in the Region, inclusive of Ukrainians and those primarily from African nations.
 - e. ESS and the Regional Long Term Care Homes (LTC) ran a full-scale emergency exercise to meet the training requirement under the Fixing Long Term Care Act, 2021. Several Social Services divisions and community partners, such as the Canadian Red Cross and the Salvation Army participated.
 - f. Program Supports Services coordinated 3 community events and several tax clinics across Durham to support low-income residents access government services, such as financial benefits.
 - g. 3,609 Primary Care Outreach Program (PCOP) client interactions in addition to pandemic-related activities including vaccines and test swabbing to at risk and/or homeless populations.
 - h. Provided outreach safety planning, and support to partners of 583 individuals attending the Partner Assault Response program addressing and preventing intimate partner violence.

- i. Supported 223 at risk individuals with developmental disabilities to access and maintain housing through homelessness prevention support, housing subsidies and life stabilization case management.
- j. Delivered 9,362 counselling sessions to individuals, couples, and families delivering supports to improve mental health, employability, stability and safety of individuals, couples and families.
- k. Provided counselling and mental health services to 866 Ontario Works clients in receipt of social assistance, promoting healthy progress towards community participation and successful re-entry or retainment of employment.
- l. Supported 1,437 Mental Health Outreach Program (MHOP) client interactions by providing outreach mental health and addiction counselling and service navigation to individuals who were homeless, newly housed or at risk of homelessness.
- m. The Seniors Safety Office, in collaborative partnership with Durham Region Social Services and Durham Regional Police Services, received 765 crisis calls to provide support and assistance to seniors experiencing safety related issues.
- n. Completed the application process for the 2023 At Home Incentive Program which will invest up to \$8 million to develop affordable housing. 10 applications were received for the program. The recommendations will be presented to Council in the spring of 2024.
- o. Provided housing opportunities to 380 households on the Durham Access to Social Housing (DASH) waitlist.
- p. Ended homelessness for 248 individuals from the By Name List by moving them into various housing programs.
- q. Assisted over 8,500 households with homelessness supportive services ranging from prevention to housing outreach.
- r. Opened an overnight Warming Centre at Regional Headquarters that serves up to 30 vulnerable residents each day.
- s. Provided supports to over 100 victims of human trafficking in 2023.
- t. Long-Term Care (LTC) staff continued to provide much needed care for 847 senior and vulnerable residents with complex conditions and multiple medical needs.
- u. Increased nursing and personal care hours for residents of the Region's Long-Term Care homes from an average of 3.8 hours/per resident/per day to 4.1 hours.
- v. Long-Term Care homes underwent an accreditation review and received an Accreditation with Commendation award, with a rate of 99% compliance with the standards.
- w. Provided community support services to 46 clients through the Homemaker Program and 100 clients in the Adult Day Programs.
- x. The LTC Division provided 223 placement opportunities to post-secondary students in nursing and allied health programs.

4. 2024 Strategic Highlights

4.1 Children's Services

- a. \$0.1 million in Provincial subsidy, and related outflows, related to an increased investment received for the delivery of EarlyON and Child Care programs.
- b. \$0.1 million in Provincial subsidy, and related outflows, related to an increased investment received for the delivery of Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care programs.
- c. An adjustment of \$11.0 million in Provincial subsidy, and related outflows, related to the revised Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) funding received from the Province to account for the actual number of providers who entered into the program and uptake.
- d. A decrease of \$3.6 million in Regional funding contribution, and related outflows, as a result of the increased investments made by the Provincial government in the CWELCC program.
- e. A \$0.7 million increase expenses related to the Early Learning and Child Care Centres (ELCC) to expand operating capacity.
- f. An increase of \$1.4 million in revenue at the ELCCs is anticipated as a result of CWELCC fee subsidy funding (\$1.0 million), Provincial subsidy (\$0.2 million) and parent fees (\$0.2 million).
- g. \$0.4 million is proposed in the 2024 budget for state of good repair items at the ELCCs such as lighting retrofits, kitchen renovations, storage shed replacements.
- h. \$0.1 million is proposed in the 2024 budget to replace components of the security platform at the ELCCs and the electrical distribution & fire alarm system at Whitby ELCC.
- i. The Ministry of Education had previously announced proposed reductions in cost-sharing for early learning and childcare administration in 2021. The planned reductions lower the threshold for allowable administration funding that municipalities could spend on childcare from 10% to 5%, with the 50/50 cost share still in effect. From 2021 to 2023, the Province provided yearly one-time transitional grants to offset these reductions. On November 30, 2023, the Ministry announced that they would no longer be providing one-time transitional grants of \$3.2 million per year to mitigate these changes and they would come into effect for 2024.

4.2 Emergency Management and Program Support Services

- a. Building capacity within Social Services staff and community partners through committees, training and exercises to enhance skills and knowledge to best support residents during and following an emergency.
- b. Integrating research focused on community resiliency in collaboration with Regional partners and Durham College to help improve program supports.
- c. Increase of \$0.1 million in one-time costs for the development of a poverty prevention strategy.
- d. Increase of \$0.5 million related to the development and implementation of a Community Social Investment Program.

4.3 Family Services

- a. \$0.1 million in Provincial subsidy, and related outflows, related to an increased investment received for the delivery of the Partner Assault Response program.
- b. \$0.1 million in revenue for the delivery of the financial trustee program on behalf of Adult Protective Services clients.

4.4 Housing Services

- a. \$0.6 million is proposed for Community Housing Provider Payments from a decrease in federal funding (\$1.3 million), partially offset by a reduction in provider payments (\$0.7 million).
- b. \$0.6 million is proposed in Rent Supplement programs, partially offset by Provincial subsidy (\$0.3 million), providing rent supplements to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- c. \$2.4 million is proposed for the operational costs, partially offset by Provincial subsidy (\$2.0 million) and rental revenue (\$0.1 million) related to the Beaverton Supportive Housing project.
- d. \$0.2 million is proposed for personnel related and professional service costs related to the work of the Affordable Housing Development and Renewal Office.
- e. \$2.1 million in Provincial subsidy, and related outflows, related to investments received for the delivery of the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) and Ontario Priority Housing Initiative (OPHI).
- f. Changes to the Housing Services Act allow Service Managers to enter into Service Agreements with Community Housing Providers when they reach the end of their original mortgage. This provides the opportunity to reinvest mortgage savings into sustaining the community housing stock and increasing the number of affordable housing units.

4.5 Social Assistance

- a. A decrease of \$4.5 million in Provincial subsidy related to the transfer of responsibility for Employment from Ontario Works to Integrated Employment Services, partially offset by line-by-line savings and position transfers to provincially subsidized programs including Integrated Employment Services and Homelessness.
- b. The ongoing partnership with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to modernize social assistance will support clients towards success by creating a more person-centred approach with an overall shift to life stabilization, individualized help and system navigation including better connections to Employment Ontario. Further centralization and automation of administrative systems will allow front-line staff more time to focus on stability support activities for clients. Implementing a renewed service delivery vision is a significant change management initiative that will impact staff work, resources, and organizational culture.

- c. Ontario Works Outreach Workers continue to have a presence in all lower tier municipalities via various locations and libraries as a way to connect residents to a variety of social services, supports, and resources. Information and assistance continue to be provided on a number of topics including: financial resources, housing, food security, counselling and children's services referrals. The Outreach Workers also contact community agencies on behalf of clients and assist with online government application forms.

Integrated Employment Services

- d. An increase of \$8.0 million in Provincial subsidy, and related outflows, for the integrated service delivery of Employment Services.

Homelessness Investments

- e. A Regional contribution increase of \$3.2 million is proposed in the Regional Investment in Homelessness Supports budget to maintain programs for people experiencing, or at risk of becoming homeless.
- f. An increase in Provincial subsidy of \$7.1 million, and related outflows, related to the investment in the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) to reflect actual allocation received, which was noted after the 2023 Budget was approved ([2023-SS-7](#)). Included in this amount is \$4.4 million for the operations of the emergency shelter and building maintenance of 1635 Dundas.
- g. A decrease in Federal subsidy of \$0.2 million, and related outflows, to reflect the actual allocation received for the Reaching Home program in 2024 / 2025 ([2023-INFO-23](#)).

4.6 Long Term Care and Services for Seniors

- a. \$0.4 million is proposed in the 2024 budget to continue with the implementation of an emotional model of care for residents.
- b. Increase of \$0.1 million in Provincial subsidy, and related outflows, for the Supporting Professional Growth Program to support ongoing education and training in the Long-Term Care Homes.
- c. \$0.4 million is proposed in the 2024 budget to provide increases for infection control & cleaning supplies, food, equipment maintenance & repairs, and building maintenance.
- d. The 2024 budget proposes an investment of \$2.4 million, partially offset by Provincial subsidy (\$0.4 million), to replace aging equipment such as beds, ceiling lifts, kitchen appliances and equipment, shower chairs, and furniture to help care for LTC residents.
- e. \$6.9 million in debt servicing costs for a portion of the debt financing approved in 2023 for the new Seaton Long Term Care Home
- f. Increase of \$4.3 million in Provincial subsidy to support the ongoing costs of Nursing and Resident care.

4.7 Staffing

- a. An increase of one (1) new Supervisor position, one (1) new Early Childhood Educator and one (1) new Child Care Program Assistant to operate the Village Union Early Learning and Child Care Centre, in the City of Oshawa.
- b. An increase of seven (7) new Early Childhood Educators and six (6) new Child Care Program Assistants to increase operating capacity in regionally operated Early Learning and Child Care Centres.
- c. An increase of one (1) Program Manager – Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Program Support Services to implement DEI strategies within Social Services and informed by jurisdictional scan data, an Indigenous Engagement Protocol, an employee census, Regional demographics and the results of the 2023 Durham Region Equity Audit.
- d. An increase of one (1) new Emergency Management Coordinator position, offset by a reduction in part time funding, to support work with Ontario Power Generation.
- e. An increase of one (1) new Family Counsellor 2 position to provide counselling and mental health services to community clients in Durham Region.
- f. An increase of one (1) new Program Assistant to provide additional administrative support for the oversight of the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) and Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI), offset by an increase in Provincial subsidy.
- g. An increase of three (3) new positions for the Housing Services ([2023-COW-28](#)) to establish an Affordable Housing Development and Renewal Office.
- h. An increase of ten (10) new Outreach Worker positions for the Income, Employment and Homelessness Supports Division ([2023-COW-19](#)) to establish a Regional outreach team.
- i. An increase of two (2) new Outreach Worker positions, offset by funding from Durham Region Transit, to expand services of the outreach team to buses and transit routes.
- j. An increase of three (3) new Resident Care Coordinator positions in Long Term Care to improve support to frontline nursing staff and meet the regulatory demands of the Fixing Long Term Care Act, 2021.
- k. An increase of five (5) new Personal Support Worker positions in Long Term Care, partially offset by Provincial Subsidy, to provide additional care for residents living with high intensity needs.
- l. An increase of three (3) new Personal Support Worker positions in Long Term Care to provide care to residents.
- m. An increase of two (2) Recreation Programmer positions in Long Term Care to improve residents' quality of life and well-being.
- n. An increase of one (1) Maintenance Worker 2 position in Long Term Care to address building maintenance issues within Hillsdale Estates.
- o. An increase of one (1) Food Services Supervisor position in Long Term Care, partially offset by a reduction in part time funding, to allow for greater focus on internal food quality service level improvements.

- p. An increase of two (2) Clerk 2 positions in Long Term Care to assist with the increased volume of workload in scheduling staff.
- q. The transfer of one (1) Supervisor from Housing Services to Social Assistance (BAFM) to reflect work currently performed.
- r. The transfer and upgrade of one (1) Advisor from Long-Term Care to a Manager in Emergency Management and Program Support Services to support emergency management programs and initiatives corporately and departmental planning and oversight of Emergency Social Services.
- s. The transfer of one (1) Financial Analyst 1 position from Social Assistance to Family Services to reflect the work currently performed.

5. 2024 Risks and Uncertainties

- 5.1 The most significant risk in Social Services is the uncertainty of provincial investment. The 2024 budget submission includes provincial funding based on current funding levels and information available from the Province. During the past few years, the Region was subjected to considerable uncertainty as the Provincial government unilaterally announced changes to funding levels, cost-sharing formulas and program design. The sustainability of these provincial funding increases is uncertain which affects Social Services' ability to plan and deliver services benefitting the Durham community.
- 5.2 The province is committed to increasing the average hours of daily direct nursing care to four hours over four years and to increasing allied care hours to 36 minutes over the next year. Phase 2 of The *Fixing Long-Term Care Act, 2021* came into force in the spring of 2023, and is impacting the operations of the homes through changes to regulations and inspection protocols. Regional staff, in partnership with long-term care partners, will continue to advocate for provincial funding and regulatory changes that meet the needs of our long-term care residents.
- 5.3 The impact of Bill 23, More Homes Built Faster Act limits the Region's ability to collect development charges to support the delivery of infrastructure and critical housing for vulnerable populations.
- 5.4 To prepare for the challenges ahead, the Social Services Department, in partnership with the Internal Audit Division of the Finance Department, will continue to undertake a review of key processes, systems, data, budgets and best practices to integrate services for improved client outcomes.

6. Future Budget Pressures

- 6.1 Annualization of 39 new positions proposed in the 2024 budget (excluding the 13 positions approved during 2023) is estimated at \$1.7 million. Of the 39 positions identified, there are 31 impacted by future annualized costs and 8 are budgeted for a full year in 2024.
- 6.2 Continued pressure to address and reduce the wait list across several program areas. With population growth and funding constraints, wait times for services, such as Family Counselling services, Long-Term Care, and community housing will become longer.

- 6.3 Continue to advance the redevelopment of underutilized and obsolete DRLHC sites into modern, safe mixed income communities while increasing the amount of affordable housing units. Engagement will continue in 2024 involving residents, the community, the City of Oshawa and other interested parties to develop the vision, concepts and business cases for the redevelopment and revitalization work at Malaga Drive and the Hill site, with a specific focus on Christine Crescent.
- 6.4 There is a need for additional provincial funding to better address infection prevention and control measures, new staffing models and resources that fully address the increasingly complex medical acuity levels of residents, population diversity and regulatory requirements in Long-Term Care.
- 6.5 Continued and sustained resources and supports are required to prevent and end chronic homelessness in Durham Region. Innovative approaches for community outreach, supportive, transitional and affordable housing are required across Durham Region to meet growing need within the homelessness support system.
- 6.6 The Ontario Works (OW) and Social Housing client population continues to see an increase in complex mental health and addiction issues with one third of adults receiving OW being unable to work due to medical issues. Provincial supports for those with mental health and addiction issues and their families need to be augmented to achieve improved outcomes.
- 6.7 Uncertainty regarding pending provincial changes to the OW program design and funding model complicates business and budget planning.
- 6.8 The longer-term vision for 1635 Dundas Street, in the Town of Whitby, continues to be worked on through engagement and consultation work. A comprehensive renovation/retrofit plan based on the services and supports identified to be delivered at the site will be developed and included in future budget requests.
- 6.9 A new LTC home in Seaton, approved in December 2022, will require a significant Regional investment for both capital construction and operating costs with net Regional operating estimated at between \$22.5 million and \$24.8 million as noted in Report [2022-COW-32](#).
- 6.10 As precarious and intermittent employment becomes more common in the labour market, it is anticipated that Durham residents will increasingly turn to the social services sector for help with different forms of income stabilization and other support services.
- 6.11 The Family Services Division will continue to address mental health and wellbeing supports. However, referrals for new individual, couple or family counselling cases are continuing to grow putting pressure on waitlists and system capacity.

- 6.12 Children's Services staff continue to actively participate on provincial tables and in the childcare and early years community while awaiting announcements and information related to a new provincial funding formula, and revised guidelines that offer direction to plan and implement system changes.
- 6.13 Children's Services staff continue planning efforts for the addition of two new directly operated Regional Child Care Centres through local partnerships.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The recommended 2024 Social Services Department Business Plan and Budget meets the Council approved guideline for the 2024 Property Tax Supported Business Plans and Budget and supports the Department's role to ensure a range of programs, services and supports are available and accessible to those in need.
- 7.2 It is recommended that the Health and Social Services Committee approve the 2024 Business Plan and Budget for the Social Services Department and forward this report to the Finance and Administration Committee for consideration during the budget deliberations of the 2024 Property Tax Supported Business Plans and Budget.
- 7.3 This report has been reviewed by the Finance Department and the Commissioner of Finance concurs with the recommendation.

8. Attachments

- 8.1 The detailed 2024 Business Plan and Budget for the Social Services Department is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou
Commissioner of Social Services

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

Elaine Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer