

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR PARTRIDGE

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR WHITEHEAD

Whereas Discretionary Benefits and the Community Start-Up Benefit are important elements within the social assistance system within Ontario and have historically been cost-shared with the province;

And Whereas, effective July 1, 2012, the Province of Ontario implemented a funding cap on discretionary benefits paid to Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Payment (ODSP) recipients;

And Whereas, effective January 1, 2013, the Province of Ontario will consolidate five existing housing and homelessness programs into a new Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative;

And Whereas, effective January 1, 2013 the Province of Ontario will eliminate the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit from the Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program;

And Whereas these provincial funding reductions will result in a municipal cost pressure of \$7.6 million annually;

And Whereas a reduction or elimination of these benefits would result in serious consequences to the most vulnerable residents in our community;

Therefore Be it Resolved:

That effective January 1, 2013, the fee schedule used for Adult Emergency Dental Services provided to OW adults, ODSP dependant adults and low-income adult residents be harmonized with the fee schedule used by the province for dental services provided to ODSP adults and OW children, which is 60% of the Ontario Dental Association fee guide;

That effective January 1, 2013, the net levy portion of existing housing program costs in the following amounts be restated to the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative:

- (i) \$892,270 from the Emergency Shelter Program;
- (ii) \$1,363,800 from the Domiciliary Hostel Program;
- (iii) \$138,250 from the Domiciliary Hostel Reinvestment;
- (iv) \$96,760 from the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program;
- (v) \$860,000 from the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit;

That one time municipal funding in the amount of up to \$3.4 million be provided to maintain the current service levels for Discretionary Benefits and Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefits for a period of six months beginning January 1, 2013, to be funded from Community Services Department surplus, corporate surplus, tax stabilization reserve, social services initiative reserve, OMPF reconciliation, or any combination thereof;

That the funding required for continued operation of Discretionary Benefits and the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefits for the balance of the 2013 transition year be referred to the 2013 Budget deliberations, with consideration of funding from 2013 Ontario Works upload savings and / or the Hamilton Future Fund;

That should any tax levy increase result from changes in provincial funding for Discretionary Benefits or the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefits, a notice be included in Hamilton municipal tax bills indicating the reason for this increase;

That the General Manager of Community Services, or designate, be authorized to implement spending caps, benefit frequency limits or other controls necessary to ensure costs are contained within the approved budget amounts; and,

That the outstanding business item identified as "Funding options for discretionary benefits for OW and ODSP for 2013 budget", be considered complete and removed from the Outstanding Business List.