



City of
Peterborough

TO: Members of the Joint Services Steering Committee

FROM: Ken Doherty, Director of Community Services

MEETING DATE: June 12, 2008

SUBJECT: Report CSSSJSSC08-012
Ontario Works Discretionary Benefits Review

PURPOSE

A report to endorse the recommendations from the review of the Ontario Works Discretionary Benefit program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Joint Services Steering Committee endorse the recommendations outlined in Report CSSSJSSC08-012 dated June 12, 2008, of the Director of Community Services, as follows:

- a) That letters be submitted by the Mayor and the Warden to the provincial government requesting an amendment to the Ontario Works regulation to cease providing Ontario Works discretionary benefits to ODSP families and to offer the range of discretionary benefit items and services through a separate benefit fully funded by the provincial government and administered by provincial ODSP staff.
- b) That the original discretionary benefit policy, as set out in report SS00-03 and approved by City Council on October 23, 2000 and County Council on November 1, 2000, and all subsequent revisions be rescinded.
- c) That the attached Discretionary Benefit Policy (Appendix A) and the Schedule of Discretionary Benefits (Appendix B) including proposed enhanced benefits be endorsed and the accompanied procedure is received for information purposes.

- d) In addition to the ongoing enhanced discretionary benefit an additional Children’s Fall Health Benefit be endorsed for 2008 only. The Children’s Fall Health Benefit will provide \$250/child on social assistance in September 2008 for appropriate seasonal clothing and funding for social inclusion in community activities.
- e) That with the exception of subsidized Ontario Works transit passes commencing effective August 1, 2008, the remaining changes take effect as of October 1, 2008.
- f) That the increase in funding for 2008 required for additional discretionary benefits be paid for out of the Social Assistance Restructuring savings as outlined in the budget and financial implication section.
- g) That, if after budget approval, it appears the total actual discretionary expenditures in any year will exceed the approved budget allocation for the year, the Ontario Works Administrator be authorized to limit discretionary benefits as required so as to stay within net budget requirements.
- h) That the approval provides for the increased level of service for 2008 only.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There will be an increase in municipal funding required to implement the enhanced discretionary benefits proposed in this report. In the 2008 budget, Council had previously approved funds to subsidize transit passes for Ontario Works clients; however, a policy change is required to proceed. This item could be implemented effective August 1, 2008.

Assuming an October 1 start date for the remaining changes, the following chart outlines the projected increase in expenditures:

2008 Gross Budgeted	Revised 2008 Gross Expenditures	2008 Projected Increase* based on Oct. 1 start	Annualized Spending*
\$1,288,878	\$1,439,874	* \$150,996	\$313,486
Net Municipal Portion	\$287,975	* \$30,199	\$62,697

*The Ministry announced in December 2007 that the municipality is expected to save in mandatory benefits due to social assistance restructuring as outlined in report CSSSJSSC08-011. There is sufficient savings to fund discretionary benefit

enhancements without impacting the 2008 municipal budget. This recommendation covers costs from the savings for 2008 only and the 2009 increases will be included in the 2009 budget deliberations.

The 20% of municipal components of the Children’s Fall Health Benefits will be funded from the National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS) reinvestment funds as outlined in report CSSSJSSC08-03, assuming Ministry approval.

	Number of Children on Social Assistance	Benefit at \$250/child	Gross Benefit Cost	Municipal Share
OW City	1454	X \$250	\$363,500	\$72,700
OW County	293	X \$250	\$73,250	\$14,650
Total OW	1747	X \$250	\$436,750	\$87,350
ODSP City	518	X \$250	\$129,500	\$25,900
ODSP County	114	X \$250	\$28,500	\$5,700
Total ODSP	632	X \$250	\$158,000	\$31,600
Grand Total	2379	X \$250	\$594,750	\$118,950

City Cost = \$98,600

County Cost = \$20,350

The administration costs will be absorbed within existing budgets.

The provincial government also announced in its spring budget that the social assistance rates will increase by 2% in December 2008 with the municipal share of the increase effective January 2009. The impact of the 2% rate increase will be \$71,803 for the City and \$15,235 for the County. This increase will also be addressed in the 2009 municipal budget process.

BACKGROUND

The Ontario Works Act

The Ontario Works Act authorizes the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) delivering Ontario Works to issue at the discretion of the Ontario Works Administrator discretionary benefits to persons in receipt of assistance under the Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program Act. There are three broad categories of discretionary benefits that are specified in the legislation: health related benefits; non-health related benefits; and “other special services, items or payments”.

The provincial share of health related discretionary benefits costs is 80% with the municipality responsible for the remaining 20%. For non-health related benefits, there is a monthly cap of \$8.75 per social assistance case (total of OW and ODSP) with the provincial share of costs at \$7 a month per case. Based on fluctuating demand for non-health benefits, the expenditures to the cap can be averaged over the twelve-month period.

After the introduction of the Ontario Works Act in 1998, the City elected to offer a range of discretionary benefits and a local policy was established. The discretionary benefit policy has undergone several changes since then. As well, Ministry directives have been issued that have expanded the number of items and services that may be provided at the discretion of the municipality. As a result, the 2007 Social Services Division work plan outlined the need for a review of the discretionary benefit program and policies.

The Review Process

The review process included: a staff review of the provincial policy directive changes to discretionary benefits and feedback from staff, clients and community stakeholders. On October 22, 2007, a community consultation was held with 26 community agencies and approximately 20 recipients of Ontario Works and ODSP to provide an overview of the discretionary benefit program and to solicit their feedback. The results of the facilitated sessions are attached. (Appendix C). Ontario Works staff was also given an opportunity to provide feedback and identify gaps in service.

During the consultation, the groups reviewed the guiding principles. There were concerns that the policy had an emphasis on employment and that ODSP clients' asset level would be considered as part of the eligibility process. The provincial Ontario Works Branch has referred to the Ontario Works as a "labour market adjustment" program that provides temporary financial and employment assistance between periods of unemployment or underemployment. There has been a demand for expanding the items and services, however, given the limited financial resources, the priority of this policy is to assist families to become more employable and job ready. In addition, since ODSP clients have a higher asset threshold, the amount of liquid assets available to the client should be a factor when determining eligibility under this policy.

Concurrently, the Mayor created a task force to look at poverty in this community and, in Report COU08-03 dated February 4, 2008 six short-term priorities were identified. Three of those priorities - Dental Health; Discretionary Benefits and Transportation have been programs and services that Council has supported to varying degrees in the local Discretionary Benefit policy over a number of years and are addressed in this report.

Recommended ODSP Changes

The mandate of Ontario Works is to “provide employment assistance to people in financial need to increase employability and obtain sustainable employment and provide temporary financial assistance”. (OW Directive 1.0) While current regulation allows Ontario Disability Support families to access discretionary benefits through the Ontario Works delivery agent, these services do not fit within the mandate of Ontario Works. Staff recommend that the Mayor and Warden write the provincial government requesting similar benefits be provided through mandatory benefits and/or create a discretionary benefit program for ODSP families fully funded by the provincial government and administered by provincial ODSP staff. This change will improve access to benefits for ODSP clients by providing a one-stop access point through their own program. This recommendation would further complement the provincial government’s decision to phase in the uploading of ODSP Administration and income support including benefits that will occur in 2009 and 2010.

Proposed Enhanced Discretionary Benefits

Staff considered many factors in formulating the recommendations in this report including: legislative requirements, legislative intent, client needs, health and safety priorities identified through the community consultation, Mayor’s Action Committee priorities and staff and agency input.

Schedule A, A Summary of Discretionary Benefits, outlines the range of existing benefits as well as the proposed enhanced benefits and their respective costs. The Ontario Works Discretionary Benefits Deliberations chart, (Appendix D) provides a summary of the range of items and services considered. An October 1 start date will allow staff time to develop the necessary procedures and staff training and prepare communications to impacted clients and community partners.

Impacts of Social Assistance Restructuring

In addition to the proposed enhanced ongoing discretionary benefits, staff are recommending a new one time (2008 only) Children’s Fall Health Benefit. This benefit is being recommended to support families managing the social assistance restructuring transition as outlined in report CSSSJSSC08-11.

The Winter Clothing Allowance (\$108/child previously issued in November) and Back to School allowance (\$73 or \$134/child previously issued in August) are additional benefits that have been previously issued to families on social assistance. The timing of the social assistance restructuring will result in the elimination of these benefits without sufficient time in receipt of Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) to compensate for the loss. This fall, social assistance recipients will be in a worse financial position as they attempt to pay for additional fall expenses related to their children.

On May 15, 2008 MCSS provided written clarification regarding the use of discretionary benefits to support some families experiencing challenges during the first few months of implementation of the OCB. Confirmation is pending from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services that NCBS reinvestment savings can be used to offset the 20% municipal share.

SUMMARY

The inclusion of discretionary benefits has served as a crucial support to social assistance clients for the past decade. Through the Mayor's Action Committee, enhanced discretionary benefits have been identified as a recommended short-term priority in its fight to alleviate poverty in this community.

Submitted by,

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Attachments:


Appendix A- Discretionary Benefits Policy

Appendix B- Schedule A: Summary of Discretionary Benefits and Discretionary Benefits Policy

Appendix C-Community Consultation

Appendix D-Ontario Works Discretionary Benefits Deliberations Summary

APPENDIX A

 Draft Policy	<h2 style="margin: 0;">Discretionary Benefits Policy</h2>
Department: Community Services	Approval Level: Council
Division: Social Services	Effective Date: 2008-10-01
Section/Facility:	Policy #:

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1. This policy is made pursuant to Section 59 of Regulation 134/98 of the Ontario Works Act, 1997 , which enables the City of Peterborough, as an Ontario Works delivery agent, to provide a program of discretionary benefits to eligible recipients. The purpose of this policy is to ensure fairness, consistency, and accountability in the provision of discretionary benefits to eligible recipients.

2.0 APPLICATION

2.1. This policy is limited to persons in receipt of assistance under the Ontario Works Act, 1997 or the Ontario Disability Support Plan Act, 1997, unless stated otherwise under a particular discretionary benefit.

3.0 DEFINITIONS/ACRONYMS (As Required)

3.1. **Discretionary Benefits** – Means payments that Ontario Works Administrators have the discretion to approve on a case-by-case basis to recipients who meet the eligibility criteria for the particular benefit. Discretionary benefits may be health related benefits, non-health related benefits, or other special services, items or payments.

3.2. **Health Related Benefits** – Means one of the categories of discretionary benefits provided for under the Ontario Works Act, 1997. Examples include:

dental care for adults, vision care for adults, prosthetic appliances, and funerals and burials.

- 3.3. **Non-Health Related Benefits** – Means one of the categories of discretionary benefits provided for under the Ontario Works Act, 1997. Examples include: vocational training and retraining, travel and transportation that is not for health related purposes, and moving expenses.
- 3.4. **ODSP** – Means Ontario Disability Support Plan.
- 3.5. **OW** – Means Ontario Works.
- 3.6. **OW Administrator** – Means the position within the OW Delivery Agent's organization designated to meet the requirement of the legislation, usually the Social Services Division Head for the City of Peterborough.
- 3.7. **OW Delivery Agent** – Means an organization designated by the Minister to administer the Ontario Works Act and provide assistance in that geographic area.

4.0 POLICY STATEMENT(S)

- 4.1. Within the authority of the OW Administrator, discretionary benefits shall be provided to eligible recipients to support them in times of crisis or with costs that cannot be accommodated within regular financial assistance, subject to available funding and as outlined in Schedule A of the Discretionary Benefits Procedure under Section 5.0.

5.0 APPENDIX, RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES & LINKS


- 5.1. Ontario Works Act, 1997.
- 5.2. Ontario Works Regulation 134/98
- 5.3. Ontario Works Directives 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.5, and 7.7
- 5.4. Ontario Disability Support Plan Act, 1997
- 5.5. Discretionary Benefits Procedure including Schedule A – Summary of Discretionary Benefits
- 5.6. Key search words for this policy: Discretionary Benefits; benefits.

Appendix B

SCHEDULE A – SUMMARY OF DISCRETIONARY BENEFITS				
No	Benefit or Service	Health	Non health	Application/ Detail
1	Basic dental services for OW adults and ODSP dependent adults	Yes		OW adults are eligible for basic dental services as per MCSS Schedule of Dental Services and Fees and the MCSS Schedule of Services and Fees for Dental Hygienists Who Self-Initiate as well as approval from the Dental Plan Administrator for “pre-determination” of any procedures that exceed \$400 per treatment plan
2	Dentures	Yes		Coverage for a maximum of \$750 per upper and \$750 per lower denture for OW and ODSP clients, every 5 years, when prescribed to relieve pain or for medical or therapeutic purposes or to increase employability.
3	Vision care for OW adults and ODSP dependant adults	Yes		Coverage for a maximum of \$250 in a 24 month period for the cost of vision care and an additional \$200 within the 24 months for the replacement of lenses if there is a change in prescription. Glasses may also be replaced if lost or destroyed at a cost up to \$200 during the 24 month period.
4	Prosthetic Appliances	Yes		Coverage for the cost of prosthetic appliances not covered under any other program up to a maximum of \$300 per item. Coverage includes braces, orthotics alerting devices for hearing impaired and air conditioners for severe asthmatics.
5	Hearing Aids and batteries	Yes		OW Adults and dependent children are eligible for up to \$500 per hearing aid in a 3 year period; and for on-going costs of hearing aid batteries up to \$15/month and for an additional \$500/ 3 year period for the replacement of hearing aids if there is a change in prescription.
6	Travel and Transportation		Yes	<p>Coverage for a subsidy of \$34/ month for OW and ODSP adults, not eligible for other funding to purchase a monthly City transit pass.</p> <p>Coverage for the reasonable and cost effective transportation costs to assist a recipient to move to another municipality</p> <p>Coverage for the transportation costs for clients to attend court in another municipality for the purposes of pursuing spousal or child support and</p> <p>Coverage for the travel costs for an OW or ODSP client to attend a hospital or funeral for a parent, child or sibling.</p>
7	Basic funeral and burials services	Yes		Maximum fees include: up to \$2,250 towards funeral services and up to \$1,000 towards the cost of cemetery and burial fee; cost of the crypt if required by cemetery.
8	Baby Supplies and equipment	Yes		<p>Benefits to include infant car seat to a maximum of up to \$125 and booster seats up to \$50 once per family (unless multiple children are in car seats at the same time)</p> <p>Coverage also includes cost of a CSA approved crib to a maximum of \$200 once per family (unless multiple children are in cribs at one time) and the cost of purchase or rental of breast pumps.</p>

SCHEDULE A – SUMMARY OF DISCRETIONARY BENEFITS				
No	Benefit or Service	Health	Non health	Application/ Detail
9	Paternity testing		Yes	Covers the cost of DNA testing of OW recipients and the dependent child to establish paternity in order to pursue child support – one time only, with the intent of recovering costs.
10	Prescription Drugs	Yes		Covers the cost of prescribed medications for benefit unit members of OW and ODSP when cost not covered under Ministry of Health and Long Term Care Drug formulary and there is no alternative that can be prescribed for up to three months
11	Moving and storage costs		Yes	Covers up to \$500 once in a calendar year towards the reasonable costs of moving and/or storage fees less any amount previously issued in the preceding 24-month period under the mandatory benefit “Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit.”
12	Home repairs for OW families who own their own homes	Yes		Up to \$3,000 for necessary repairs for the preservation and maintenance of the dwelling place when no providing the support would be to the detriment of the health and wellbeing of the client or dependants. This benefit is available one in a lifetime but additional occurrences may be considered under exceptional circumstances by a supervisor.
13	Vocational training		Yes	Consider on a case-by-case basis if not eligible under mandatory benefits or employment related expenses.
14	Birth Verification		Yes	To assist with the cost of obtaining a birth certificate only up to the amount following the fees of the Ontario Office of the Registrar General for dependent children of OW or ODSP, once per child
15	Replacement or repair to fridge or stove	Yes		Up to \$200/ appliance in a 12 month period for the replacement or repair of a fridge or stove
16	Replacement of household contents in an emergency situation	Yes		Up to \$200/ member of the family per event for the replacement of personal effects in emergency situations, such as floods or fires, when other benefits and insurance are not available.
17	Rent deposits	Yes		Covered for OW or ODSP clients, if deposit required as condition of tenancy and other mandatory benefits are not available, up to maximum shelter allowance under OW Reg 42.
18	Heat and utility deposits or payment to prevent eviction or disconnection of services	Yes		Covers up to \$600 per service or \$1,200 if the heat and utility are with the same service provider, in a calendar year less the amount previously issued in the preceding 24 month period under the mandatory benefit “Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit.”
19	Recreation and social activities subsidies for children		Yes	Provides up to \$200 per OW or ODSP dependent child in a calendar year to participate in recreational or social activities.
20	2008 only Children’s Fall Health Benefit	Yes		Provides \$250/child on OW or ODSP for warm seasonal clothing and funding for social inclusion in community activities.

Appendix B

 <p>Draft Procedure</p>	<h2>Discretionary Benefits Procedure</h2>		Procedure #
	Department: Community Services	Effective Date: yyyy-mm-dd	
	Division: Social Services	Approval Level: Division	
Section/Function: Provision of Benefits			

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 This procedure is in response to the City of Peterborough's Discretionary Benefits Policy. The purpose of this procedure is to provide direction and clarification to ensure that the Discretionary Benefits Policy is administered in a fair and consistent manner.

2.0 APPLICATION

- 2.1 This procedure applies to Social Services staff of the City of Peterborough, or any other individual or agency, that are responsible for approving, providing, and/or processing discretionary benefits under the Discretionary Benefits Policy.
- 2.2 Discretionary Benefits are limited to persons in receipt of assistance under the Ontario Works Act, 1997 or the Ontario Disability Support Plan Act, 1997, unless stated otherwise under a particular discretionary benefit.

3.0 DEFINITIONS/ACROYNMS (As Required)

- 3.1 **Discretionary Benefits** – Means payments that Ontario Works Administrators have the discretion to approve on a case-by-case basis to recipients who meet the eligibility criteria for the particular benefit. Discretionary benefits may be health related benefits, non-health related benefits, or other special services, items or payments.
- 3.2 **Health Related Benefits** – Means one of the categories of discretionary benefits provided for under the Ontario Works Act, 1997. Examples include: dental care for adults, vision care for adults, prosthetic appliances, and funerals and burials.

- 3.3 **Non-Health Related Benefits** – Means one of the categories of discretionary benefits provided for under the Ontario Works Act, 1997. Examples include: vocational training and retraining, travel and transportation that is not for health related purposes, and moving expenses.
- 3.4 **ODSP** – Means Ontario Disability Support Plan.
- 3.5 **OW** – Means Ontario Works.
- 3.6 **Ontario Works Administrators** – Means the position within the OW Delivery Agent’s organization designated to meet the requirement of the legislation, usually the Social Services Division Head for the City of Peterborough.
- 3.7 **OW Delivery Agent** – Means an organization designated by the Minister to administer the Ontario Works Act, 1997, and provide assistance in that geographic area.

4.0 PROCEDURE

- 4.1 Discretionary benefits will be administered in accordance with Schedule A and the particular Procedure for each discretionary benefit under Section 5.0. Each discretionary benefit may have different eligibility criteria, processing requirements, notification processes, and methods of payments.
- 4.2 Clients will not be required to seek alternate funding sources before accessing discretionary benefits, except when required by provincial policy or legislation. Where the client is able to pay a portion, a discretionary benefit may be for a reduced amount.
- 4.3 When determining eligibility for ODSP clients for discretionary benefits, the value of their available assets will be considered according to the prescribed limits for assets under Section 38 of Regulation 134/98 of the Ontario Works Act, 1997.

5.0 APPENDIX, RELATED DOCUMENTS & LINKS

5.1 Related References and Other Documents

5.1.1 Ontario Works Act, 1997

5.1.2 Report CSSSJSSC08-012 - Ontario Works Discretionary Benefits Review
(will become a link to the Council report and minutes once approved)

5.2 Related Policies

5.2.1 Discretionary Benefits Policy

5.3 Related Procedures

5.3.1 Schedule A – Summary of Discretionary Benefits

5.3.2 Basic Dental Services for OW Adults Procedure

5.3.3 Dentures for OW and ODSP Clients Procedure

5.3.4 Vision Care of OW Adults and ODSP Dependant Adults Procedure

5.3.5 Prosthetic Appliances Procedure

5.3.6 Hearing Aids and Batteries for OW Adults and Dependent Children Procedure

5.3.7 Travel and Transportation for OW and ODSP Adults Procedure

5.3.8 Basic Funeral and Burial Services Procedure

5.3.9 Baby Supplies and Equipment Procedure

5.3.10 Paternity Testing for OW Recipients and the Dependent Child Procedure

5.3.11 Prescription Drugs for OW and ODSP Benefit Unit Members Procedure

5.3.12 Moving and Storage Costs Procedure

5.3.13 Home Repairs for OW Families who Own Their Own Homes Procedure

5.3.14 Vocational Training Procedure

5.3.15 Birth Verification for Dependent Children of OW or ODSP Procedure

5.3.16 Replacement or Repair to Fridge or Stove Procedure

5.3.17 Replacement of Household Contents in an Emergency Situation Procedure

5.3.18 Rent Deposits for OW or ODSP Clients Procedure

5.3.19 Heat and Utility Deposits or Payment to Prevent Eviction or Disconnection of Services Procedure

5.3.20 Recreation and Social Activities Subsidies for OW and ODSP Dependent Children Procedure

5.3.21 2008 Children's Fall Health Benefit

5.4 Related Forms

5.4.1 Link to the specific procedure above to obtain copies of the necessary forms that must be completed to apply for a particular discretionary benefit.

5.5 Key search words for this procedure:

Appendix C COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

OCTOBER 22, 2007

TABLE DISCUSSIONS – AM SESSION

Group A:

1. Are the guiding principles still valid? What should be changed?

- “Address the financial need” could be the main guiding principle
- No they are not valid as they discriminate against those that are not able to pursue employment, due to disability
- It is currently crisis-driven, while it could be more preventative
- The goal could shift to helping people access other income sources
- It should not be assumed that ODSP recipients have more assets
- Having to verify the asset level is prohibitive to applying for the benefit
- There is a reason for the higher ODSP asset limit, so it should not be a criteria for the issuance of the benefit
- Workers will encourage and facilitate access to discretionary benefits and provide information more consistently, e.g., regular item of discussion, at least annually

2. What items/services should Peterborough cover?

- Dentures – expand coverage to those not seeking employment, i.e. include as health related
- Dental – change services to include preventative care
- Transportation – bus passes to all OW and ODSP recipients
- Driver’s license – all costs
- Passport, ID
- Vision care
- Respite/support re elder care
- Allow top up of CSUMB with discretionary benefits
- Funeral package expanded to include extra visitation (increase cap)
- Child care cost for medical/legal appointments
- Car seats
- Hearing aids/batteries – increase cap
- Alerting systems for the hearing impaired
- Medical extra billing for tests and documentation

3. Prioritize items/services

- Doing this exercise turned out to be more about identifying hot items, all suggestions had priority.
- Need yearly community consultation at time of review of policy
- Need flexibility to add to or revise policy mid year

Group B:

1. Are the guiding principles still valid?

- Recognize that base funding is insufficient, therefore population is in financial crisis so individual, case by case needs must be addressed
- Reduce systemic barriers by opening up policy
- Examine appeal process
- Increase budget in order to address needs as they arise
- Review budget and increase if necessary, more frequently
- Mission statement
- Respecting the dignity and rights of the individual
- Community start up and other mandatory benefits should not affect discretionary benefits paid
- Address financial crisis to consider safety, wellness and basic community standards
- Expand current policy so that concurrent or repeated instances of the same issue does not impact payments
- Facilitate ODSP applications
- Car seats are needed – up to age 8 or 80 lbs.
- Disconnection of services
- Emergency food

2. Identify the items and services that Peterborough should cover.

- #1 priority -Transportation - expanding for mobility, seniors, children. Open up and explore county transportation
- #2 priority - Air conditioning as a health item (medical need)
- #3 priority - Dental – expand policy to include relines
- #4 priority - Prescription drugs not covered by drug plan
- #5 priority – Prevention of disconnection – expand (use as top up)
- #6 priority – car seats up to age 8 or 80 lbs.
- #7 priority – Emergency food
- #8 priority - Equipment for home maintenance (garbage)

3. Prioritize the ones we can afford, using the \$1.14 M budget.

Group C:

1. Are the guiding principles still valid? If not, what should be changed?

- Expand discretionary benefits to ODSP not in employment stream to avoid conflict with Human Rights
- Consider combining discretionary and mandatory benefits
- Issue actual bus pass vs \$\$
- Consider co-payment under ADP
- Consider overall health eg. health and independence (*no other program)
- Apply discretionary benefits to prevent, use of harm and instability due to homelessness
- Inclusion of average market rates of housing costs in the local policy guidelines and decision making

2. Identify what items and services Peterborough should cover.

- Urgent & immediate - County clients, low income, seniors need transportation
- Transportation for accessibility
- Pot of money for out of ordinary requests (health or non-health)
- Dentures for ODSP not in employment stream
- Cover costs of medical form completion
- Cover cost (not reimbursement) for providing OW with required documentation
- Gap for low income (not social services clients) to access services
- Keep any item or service for health related purposes when the Social Services Director has verified need and failure to provide would result in a detriment to the health of the client or family member
- Cover cost of vocational tests/fees
- Don't take anything off the current list
- Cover medical & non medical issues
- Cover costs of storage

3. Given current budget (\$1.144M) prioritize what items and services should be delivered?

- Increase budget for discretionary benefits
- Lobby other governments – provincial & federal
- Changes to dental fee services
- Greater focus on health and wellness concerns
- Retain and maintain housing, transportation
- Assessment concerns

Parking Lot issue – track outcomes, requests and denials.

Group D:

1. Are the principles still valid?

- Does any financial crisis need to relate only to employment
- Discretionary benefits need to be for low income, not just OW and ODSP
- Define “financial crisis” – anyone on OW is in financial crisis
- Need flexibility outside of “approved by Ministry and endorsed by Council only”
- Clarity in eligibility criteria – be open and transparent
- Ensure information is accessible
- Ensure consistently applied
- Need a guiding principle on application for discretionary benefits from beginning to end
- Consistent format through intake process
- Ability to “top up” mandatory benefits and authority to shift funds between mandatory and discretionary
- ODSP assets – clarify not including capital assets

2. Items or services that we should cover.

- Dentures for anyone who may need them
- Keep adult dental
- Cosmetic dental for children
- Children’s car seats & booster seats
- Cover ADP balances
- Increase vision allocation to \$350/2 years
- Amounts need to be reviewed to consider making them close to market rates (not sure)
- Investigate contract with providers for lower rates for items (vision, dentures)
- Recreation subsidies – expand to include adults
- Winter clothing allowance for adults
- Child care for medical appointments and surgery recovery
- \$15 birth registration fee
- Physiotherapy for people in pain
- Vitamins and food not covered that complement prescriptions
- Expand prescriptions not covered to include smoking cessation
- Expand appliances to include washer
- Pre natal vitamins – on special diet form?

3. Priorities for items or services, given our \$1.14M budget.

- Dental
- Dentures
- Vision (with increase)
- Hearing aids

- Home maintenance benefits (fuel, hydro, eviction)
- Cosmetic dental for children
- Transportation for everyone – not just employment related
- Expand baby supplies to include car/booster seats, diapers and formula

5 PM SESSION

Group A:

1. Are the guiding principles still valid? If not, what should be changed?

- Dignity and address individual needs in a respectful and understandable manner.
- Address financial need, not crisis
- To safeguard well-being of our citizens and enable them, including employment (paid and unpaid), social inclusion and other life activities as directed and as able by the participant.
- Cost of the item/service paid in full with some exceptions and no penalties for contributions from outside
- Have appeals reviewed by a committee or panel of stakeholders and community partners
- For ODSP, value of assets may be used to determine what portion, if any to pay toward
- * When mandatory benefits are exhausted, or not available, or insufficient, top up through discretionary can be considered
- Consider benefits not approved by Ministry/local council where required to meet the intent of the benefit/solution/service responsibilities placed upon us
- Adult dental, vision and hearing aids do not change except to include ODSP dentures and relines for those dentures

2. Identify what items and services Peterborough should cover.

- Priority – Crisis Solution Fund (basically an “other/miscellaneous category)
- Accessibility (parking)
- Parking for Dr’s appointments, tests and visiting ill family members when it doesn’t reach the \$15 threshold
- Costs for nutritional supplements (not covered)
- Medical or non medical services like chiropractor, massage therapy
- Priority – winter clothing (outerwear) for adults
- Recreation subsidies for adults and for disability functions like support groups and conferences
- Transportation for non disabled caregivers
- Priority - Dentures for health/social
- Priority – Prescription drugs
- Priority – disconnection of services, prevention of eviction and repair of household appliances and top up mandatory

- Priority – car seats (you don't have to have a car)
- Community resources for little wee ones (car seats you could borrow from Health unit/PFRC while children are still small and growing super fast, afterwards funds for car seats ongoing until age 8)
- Meals and other necessities when out of town for medical appointments
- ODSP mileage for medical review – top up or change local policy
- Appropriate furniture and personal aids according to medical needs
- ** ODSP must start providing info regarding discretionary and other benefits (like employment). There are significant service delivery issues in the local ODSP office.

Group B:

1. Are the guiding principles still valid? If not, what should be changed?

- Consistency
- Financial crisis – not just related to pursuing employment
- Take out reference to ODSP assets
- Basics should be covered (food, shelter, laundry)
- Basic household appliances – expand to include washer, increase amount
- Flexibility to cover items not stated
- Make people aware of what's available
 - Shouldn't have to ask, should be offered
 - OW and ODSP workers advise of what is available
- Application form for transparency and accessibility and accountability
- What's offered for OW offered to ODSP also
- Staff training every year – customer service and respect, courtesy, full disclosure of information, no inflection of impatience
- Application process – ODSP – over phone
 - Go back to hard copy, face to face interview, not always a phone or computer

2. Identify what items and services Peterborough should cover.

- Furniture, not just emergency – natural wear for beds, couches
- Toilet, tubs, sinks
- Dentures for disabled people on ODSP (remove employment requirements)
- Dental – preventative care, not just emergency (OW and ODSP)
- Change to dental rates so there is not discrimination against clients (ie dentist not accepting OW/ODSP clients)
- Vision – client should have right to say when prescription is wrong
- Basic household appliances – expand to include washer and increase amount
- Special clause for items not listed in the benefits – including special diet items and vitamins and prenatal vitamins
- Top up \$\$ to shelter allowance to meet market rent

- Medical or non-medical treatments – massage therapy, physiotherapy, dietician, foot care
- Diapers for adults
- Extend baby supplies to include car seats, booster seats, formula, diapers
- Bus passes for everyone, not just employment
- Child care to attend appointments and surgery recovery
- Recreation subsidy expanded to include adults (OW and ODSP)
- Smoking cessation

Prioritize what items and services should be delivered.

- Adult dental and dentures – preventative and emergency
- Vision
- Food, laundry, shelter top up
- Transportation – anyone outside of employment
- Medical or non medical treatments (physio, massage, foot care)
- Special clause for items not listed (vitamins, special diet items, cough medicine, water, etc.)
- Furniture (freezers, bed, chair, couch, etc., etc.)
- Extend baby supplies to include car seats, diapers, formula
- Child care – relief

APPENDIX D - ONTARIO WORKS DISCRETIONARY BENEFITS DELIBERATIONS SUMMARY

No	Benefit or Service	Health	Non health	Original Policy	Recommend Policy	Mayor's Action Committee Priority	Priority of Service	2008 Cost Projected Increase (3 months)	Gross Annualized Projected Increase
Staff Recommendation for Policy or Cost Change									
1	Dentures for Ontario Works clients without mandatory participation requirements	Yes		No	Expand to include those OW clients who are deferred from mandatory participation and pay up to \$750 per upper and \$750 per lower denture	Yes	High	\$5,000	\$10,000
2	Dentures for ODSP clients	Yes		No	Expand coverage to ODSP clients and pay up to \$750 per upper and \$750 per lower denture when prescribed to relieve pain or for medical or therapeutic purposes or to increase employability.	Yes	High	\$135,250	\$270,500
3	Dentures for OW clients and ODSP dependent adults with mandatory requirements	Yes		Yes	Change amount from \$1500 total to up to \$750 per upper and \$750 per lower denture	Yes	High	\$0	\$0
4	Baby Supplies and equipment	Yes		Yes	Expand to include infant car up to \$125 and booster seats up to \$50. Increase cost of crib to \$200 from \$150.	No	High	\$2,500	\$10,000
5	Travel and Transportation		Yes	Yes	Expand to provide funding to OW adults with subsidized transit passes when funding not available under mandatory benefits or employment related expenses.	Yes	High	Funding already approved in 2008 budget	\$0

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No	Benefit or Service	Health	Non health	Original Policy	Recommend Policy	Mayor's Action Committee Priority	Priority of Service	2008 Cost Projected Increase (3 months)	Gross Annualized Projected Increase
6	Vocational training		Yes	No	Consider on a case-by-case basis if not eligible under mandatory benefits or employment related expenses.	No	Low	\$0	Only used to shift funds from EA budget if there is room under the cap
7	Vision care for OW adults	Yes		Yes	Increase to maximum \$250 in a 24-month period from \$200.	No	High	\$4,500	\$18,200
8	Replacement or repair to fridge or stove	Yes		Yes	Increase to \$200 in a calendar year from \$150.	No	High	\$1,235	\$4,939
9	Replacement of household contents in an emergency situation	Yes		Yes	Increase to \$200 per benefit unit member from \$150.	No	High	\$1,524	\$6,097
10	Home repairs for OW families who own their own homes	Yes		Yes	Remove reference to once in a lifetime and allow for additional requests to be referred to the supervisor for approval.	No	High	Marginal	\$0
11	Prosthetic Appliances	Yes		Yes	Introduce a cap of up to \$300 per item. Expand coverage to include alerting devices for OW hearing impaired and air conditioners for severe asthmatics.	No	High	\$0	\$0
12	Birth Verification		Yes	Yes	To assist with the cost of obtaining a birth certificate only up to the amount following the fees of the Ontario Office of the Registrar General for dependent children of OW or ODSP.	No	High	\$987	\$3,750

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Staff Recommendation of no Change to Item or Service and Cost									
13	Basic dental services for OW adults	Yes		Yes	Maintain Existing Policy	Yes	High	N/A	\$0
14	Basic funeral and burials services	Yes		Yes		No	High	N/A	\$0
15	Hearing Aids and batteries	Yes		Yes		No	High	N/A	\$0
16	Prescription Drugs	Yes		Yes		No	High	N/A	\$0
17	Rent deposits	Yes		Yes		No	High	N/A	\$0
18	Moving and storage costs		Yes	Yes		No	High	N/A	\$0
19	Heat and utility deposits or payment to prevent eviction or disconnection of services	Yes		Yes		No	High	N/A	\$0
20	Paternity testing		Yes	Yes		No	Low	N/A	\$0
21	Recreation and social activities subsidies for children		Yes	Yes	No	Medium	N/A	\$0	
Staff Recommendation to Not Provide Item or Service									
22	Driver's license fees		Yes	No	This item is not a priority given the non-health funding cap.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
23	Passport ID fees		Yes	No	This item is not a priority given the non-health funding cap.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
24	Respite/support for elderly care		Yes	No	This item should be considered under the MOHLTC program and services.	No	Low	N/A	\$0

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25	Child care costs for medical appointments and surgery recovery		Yes	No	Possible referral to Children Services to assess if there are any funds to support the need based on their criteria.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
26	Cost of extra billing for medical tests	Yes		No	These costs should be covered under OHIP.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
27	Cosmetic dental for children		Yes	No	This is not an approved cost shared procedure under this benefit.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
28	Winter clothing allowance for adults	?	?	No	This item is not a priority given the non-health funding cap.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
29	Recreational subsidies for adults		Yes	No	This item is not a priority given the non-health funding cap.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
30	Payment for medical services not covered by OHIP. Examples: physiotherapy, chiropractic, massage therapy services.	Yes		No	These are services that should be covered by the MOHLTC.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
31	Vitamins, nutritional supplements and food	Yes		No	Some of these items may be covered under the drug formulary and the special diet policy.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
32	Purchase of washers and freezers		Yes	No	This item is not a priority given the non-health funding cap.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
33	Parking costs		Yes	No	This item is not a priority given the non-health funding cap.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
34	Furniture such as beds, couches, toilets, sinks, tubs.		Yes	No	This item is not a priority given the non-health funding cap.	No	Low	N/A	\$0

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35	Funding for "out of ordinary requests" or a "crisis solution fund".	?	?	No	Operationally this is too broad a category to provide for the consistent delivery of this benefit.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
36	Top up of shelter to market rent		Yes	No	The Ministry will not extend cost sharing for amounts that are greater than the shelter allowance tables.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
37	Expand baby supplies to include diapers and formula	Yes		No	Some formulas may be covered under the special diet policy and funds for diapers are part of the basic allowance.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
38	Increase funeral rates to allow for expanded visitation.	Yes		No	The primary focus is to ensure coverage for a basic funeral and burial for those who cannot afford it.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
39	Expand transportation for low income, elderly and children.		Yes	No	Discretionary benefits cannot be issued to persons not receiving OW or ODSP. Children's costs for transportation may be available under mandatory benefits but as a discretionary benefit item, this need is not a priority due to the non-health budget cap.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
40	Equipment for home maintenance		Yes	No	This item is not a priority given the non-health funding cap.	No	Low	N/A	\$0

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41	Cost of providing OW with required information		Yes	No	Staff should explore alternative methods to obtain the necessary information to reduce the need for the client to pay for obtaining duplicate information	No	Low	N/A	\$0
42	Fund to assist clients to purchase "smoking cessation" products	Yes		No	These products should be included in the Ontario Drug Benefit formulary.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
43	Transportation for non-disabled care givers		Yes	No	This item is not a priority given the non-health funding cap.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
44	Increase in dental rates that are not covered by MCSS Fee schedule	Yes		No	These amounts would not be cost shared with the Ministry.	No	Low	N/A	\$0
45	Payment for completion of medical forms		Yes	No	MCSS will pay for the completion of specified OW and ODSP medical forms through the OHIP billing process.	No	Low	N/A	\$0