

County of Peterborough

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Peterborough, ON
K9H 3M3
705-743-0380 ext. 328



City of Peterborough

500 George St. N.
Peterborough, ON
K9H 3R9
705-742-7777 Ext. 1870



January 7, 2013

Premier Dalton McGuinty
Legislative Building
Queens Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty:

We wish to express our appreciation for the December 27, 2012 government announcement of the one-time additional funding to develop and implement our Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI). The additional \$1,513,219 allocated to Peterborough is a welcomed and critical investment to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our community.

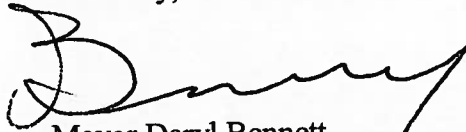
During our 2013 budget deliberations we heard from numerous delegations concerned about the elimination of Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefits (CSUMB) and the reduction of provincial contribution towards Ontario Works discretionary benefits. We appreciated the visit by Minister Milloy in late December to meet with and listen to the concerns of members in our community. Through the budget deliberations, our Councils did their part and approved additional homelessness local investment of \$350,000 and another \$320,386 for discretionary benefits from our Social Services Reserve. We recognize this is not enough nor is it sustainable to maintain this level of social service and health service from the municipal tax base.

The announcement of additional one time funding will allow us to more effectively respond to the immediate demand to help people pay the cost of housing and homelessness in 2013. Since your announcement was a onetime allocation, we remain concerned about the short and long term ability of municipalities to address issues of homelessness especially for social assistance families when the amount of financial assistance remains inadequate. We had hoped to hear a response to reverse the discretionary benefit funding cap as we heard from many in our community who rely on these important health benefits to support them to access and remain attached to the labour market.

Now that the government has received the final report of the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance, we strongly urge that recommendations addressing the need for "building a better benefit structure" be considered and decisions be implemented as quickly as possible including the provision of important health and dental benefits for all low income citizens outside of the social assistance system.

Our community is looking for real long term action to address the systemic issues of poverty and homelessness, as well as leadership that will bring about lasting change to improve the health and well being of its citizens.

Sincerely,



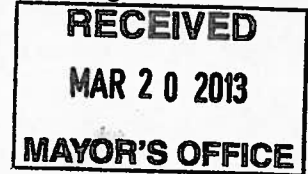
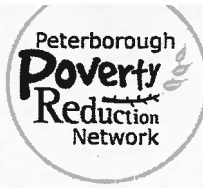
Mayor Daryl Bennett
City of Peterborough
500 George St N
Peterborough, ON
K9H 3R9



Warden J. Murray Jones
County of Peterborough
470 Water St
Peterborough, ON
K9H 3M3

cc:

Jeff Leal-MPP
Laurie Scott-MPP
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA)
Tim Hudak-Ontario PC Leader
Andrea Horwath-Ontario NDP Leader



March 12, 2013

Mayor Daryl Bennett
c/o City Hall,
500 George Street North
Peterborough, Ontario
K9H 3R9

Dear Mayor Bennett:

I am writing on behalf of the Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network (PPRN).

Since the March 2012 announcement from the provincial government that it was capping funding for Discretionary Benefits effective July 1, 2012 and eliminating the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) effective January 1, 2013, our Discretionary Benefits/Housing Benefits subcommittee has committed considerable time and effort in four areas: 1. informing the community about the changes; 2. receiving feedback from people with lived experience and from agencies who provide services to people affected by the cuts; 3. pressing the provincial government to reverse the cuts, and; 4. pressing the municipal government to develop a sustainable plan to fund discretionary and housing benefits.

Since the December 27, 2012 provincial announcement of the one-time additional funding to assist with the transition towards the elimination of the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB) for people who receive support from Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program, we have had an opportunity to meet with Social Services staff to discuss how this one-time funding should be spent. In our view, the transitional funding (\$1.5M) is a reprieve. With this additional funding the municipality can continue to provide critical CSUMB-like benefits at close to 2012 levels (\$2.8M) in 2013. Furthermore, it gives the municipality time to develop a **sustainable budget plan** for both discretionary and housing benefits going forward in 2014 and beyond. In our view, the municipality must prioritize funding for these necessary benefits through a combination of: funding allocations at similar levels to those approved in the 2012 budget prior to the provincial cuts (ie. \$370,000 for discretionary benefits and \$270,000 for housing benefits); allocating the 2014-2018 upload savings for these benefits; drawing on the social service reserves when necessary.

Accordingly, our recommendations to Council are:

1. \$1.5M Transitional Funds: The \$1.5M in transitional funding is intended to compensate for the loss of critical housing benefits (CSUMB). ALL of these dollars should be allocated for that purpose. In particular, they should be placed in the Housing Stability Benefit (HSB) fund, and be utilized for direct benefits for singles and families on OW and ODSP and with low incomes (for deposits, moving costs, arrears, etc.).



2. \$.9M for CHPI in lieu of CSUMB: The full amount of funding provided by the province to date in lieu of CSUMB (\$.9M for CHPI) should be allocated to the HSB, and be utilized for direct benefits for singles and families on OW and ODSP and with low incomes (for deposits, moving costs, arrears, etc.). This should be a permanent line in the City's budget going forward in 2014. We disagree with the recommendation by staff for budget 2013 (Report CSSJSSC12-010 dated December 3, 2012) which was adopted by Council, to allocate only \$5.8M of provincial funding to the HSB fund, and to top this up with \$350,000, \$290,000 of which came from the City's social services reserve fund.

3. Permanent Budget Line for Discretionary and Housing Benefits: The municipality should establish a permanent budget line to supplement provincial funding for discretionary benefits and housing benefits.

4. Social Services Reserves: In 2013 any shortfall in funding discretionary benefits should be taken from social services reserves. As we have stated before, the ongoing upload of OW and ODSP caseload costs to the province greatly reduces the municipal risk in the event of a caseload increase, and for this reason there is no need for the municipality to maintain reserves at current levels.

5. Allocate Upload Savings to Discretionary and Housing Benefits: Additional funding for discretionary and housing benefits in 2014 and beyond should come from municipal savings flowing from the ongoing upload (approximately \$1M per year from 2014-2018). We further recommend that municipal expenditures of upload savings dollars be tracked by staff and reported to Joint Services and City Council.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our recommendations. We look forward to continuing to work with you to support the well-being of some of our most vulnerable populations in Peterborough City and County.

Sincerely,

Stephen Kylie Chair
Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network