



City of
Peterborough

TO: Members of the Joint Services Steering Committee

FROM: Ken Doherty, Director of Community Services

MEETING DATE: June 13, 2013

SUBJECT: Report CSSSJSSC13-008
Employment Support Services for Ontario Works Clients

PURPOSE

A report to recommend Peterborough Employment Resource Centre (PERC) office be closed, the legislatively required employment support services for Ontario Works Clients be retained in-house and the balance of the employment services be provided by outside service providers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Joint Services Steering Committee (JSSC) endorse, and recommend to their respective Councils, the recommendations outlined in Report CSSSJSSC13-008 dated June 13, 2013, of the Director of Community Services, follows:

- a) That as per the January 10, 2013 Joint Services Steering Committee direction, the Peterborough Employment Resource Centre (PERC) office be closed, effective July 31, 2013.
- b) That the legislatively required employment support services for Ontario Works Clients be retained in-house and the balance of the employment services be provide by Employment Ontario (EO) service providers.

BUDGET AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no additional financial implications arising from this report in 2013. Current PERC expenditures have been budgeted for the full calendar year. The recommendation will result in an employment support budget of \$102,069 in 2014, a \$75,783 reduction from the current \$177,852, and 1 FTE. The 50% Municipal cost share will be \$51,034, with \$8,676 from the County and \$42,358 from the City.

BACKGROUND

Joint Services and Council Direction

As described in Report CSSSJSSC12-003 dated March 8, 2012, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) informed the City on January 30, 2012, that contracts with employment resource centres such as the PERC would be terminated on July 31, 2012, and that services would be shifted to existing Employment Ontario (EO) service providers. Report CSSSJSSC12-003A, dated April 11, 2012 outlined several options for service delivery beyond July 31, 2012, when 100% provincial funding for the centre ended.

The JSSC endorsed a plan that included: services being scaled back but available to Social Services clients and the general public in the current location; that an interim report would be produced including details to determine if there is duplication with similar private sector services and; a further review of the resource centre services would be completed at 12 months. These recommendations were contained in Report CSSS12-006 and approved by City Council on May 14, 2012.

Progress Report CSSSJSSC13-002 was presented to the JSSC on January 10, 2013, to update members the Resource Centre activities and the impact of the planned program wind-down.

Instead of just adopting the interim report for information, as was the staff recommendation, the JSSC passed the following resolution:

That the provision of PERC services be ended following the current extension to August 2013, subject to a report at the June 13th meeting providing details on the provision of employment services.

Although the January 10, 2013 JSSC recommendation has not been forwarded to both Councils for approval, staff have assumed the PERC will close July 31, 2013 and this reports outlines how the service will be continue after closing.

Ontario Works Employment Services Requirements

The OW Act requires the Social Services Division to ensure OW participants have access to employment resource centre services. The Ministry of Community and Social Services has confirmed that OW delivery agents have flexibility to directly deliver, develop service agreements, tender or purchase services for specific employment assistance activities, based on caseload characteristics and local conditions. These activities do not have to be provided on-site. Specifically, Section 26 of the OW Regulation outlines the range of employment assistance activities that a designated delivery agent is required to make available to eligible OW recipients and non-disabled members of an Ontario Disability Support Program benefit unit. Section 26 does not require that these all have to be delivered in the same building.

Required employment assistance activities and supports include:

- Structured job search and job search support services;
- Employment information sessions;
- Community participation (volunteer activities that allow people to contribute to the community and improve their employability);
- Employment placement and job retention services;
- Self-employment activity and supports for self-employment development;
- Referral to basic education or approved training programs;
- Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP) program;
- Literacy screening, assessment and/or training;
- Job-specific skills training; and
- Screening for substance abuse and referral to assessment and treatment.

As a condition of eligibility for OW basic financial assistance, participants are required to participate in employment assistance activities that they are physically and mentally capable of undertaking. The Social Services Division uses a mix of in-house staff and third party service providers to ensure the full range of required employment supports are available to OW participants. Most OW applicants require assistance to update their job search skills, develop an effective job search strategy and personal return to work plan.

The services most often required by applicants, currently available on-site, include the following:

- Information on available employment supports and the local labour market
- An inventory of available community supports, such as:
 - training
 - literacy
 - counseling services
 - addiction assessment and/or treatment programs
 - child care

- Inventory of community placements and referrals to community placements
- Equipment to support job searches (e.g. telephones, faxes, computers, and photocopiers)
- Structured help on preparing and searching for work
- Workshops on job search strategies, letter writing and job interview techniques
- Job boards, job banks and referrals to paid employment opportunities

How PERC services can be delivered after July 31

Current employment resource services are heavily integrated into the daily operations of Social Services Division. Registration of clients, delivery of workshops, one-on-one support to prepare resumes and job search planning can happen prior to or, immediately following an initial application for Ontario Works. Because of that integration, staff recommend some employment service continue to be delivered in house.

If adopted, the recommendations in this report will result in a reduction of 1 staff from the current FTE of 2.5 to 1.5 ESW position. Services provided in house will be restricted to OW participants only. (Which represents about 60% of the current PERC users.) Most employment support activities will be on-site only, and outreach services in Buckhorn and Ennismore will end.

The existing ground floor centre space currently used for PERC operations will be reconfigured to address other facility pressures so there will be no additional rental facility cost savings. A smaller resource centre will be relocated to the second floor of 178 Charlotte St close to the existing workshop group rooms to provide the integrated employment services to OW clients.

All other employment service currently handed by PERC will be redirected to other Employment Support Service providers. Staff estimate approximately 3,360 community members will use the outside Employment Services agencies.

Employment Ontario Service Providers

Current Employment Ontario service providers have physical space capacity restraints and are less experienced dealing with the challenges of some clients that are not as employment ready. To date they have not expressed strong interest to City staff in providing this service, but some have indicated to City and County Council members they have the capacity and can deliver the service.

EO Service Providers include:

Fleming CREW (Community Resources for Employers and Workers)

1550 Lansdowne Street West, Peterborough, ON K9J 2A2

Employment Planning & Counselling Peterborough

138 Simcoe Street, Peterborough ON K9H 2H5

Northern Lights Canada

The Brookdale Plaza, 863 Chemong Road, Unit 20-A, Peterborough, ON
K9H 5Z5

During the JSSC January 10, 2013 JSSC discussions, it was suggested the EO providers be invited to attend the June JSSC committee. Accordingly, representatives from Employment Planning and Counselling, Northern Lights and Fleming CREW have been invited, and plan to attend the June 13, meeting to discuss ongoing integration efforts and employment and training services.

SUMMARY

This report recommends the PERC office be closed effective July 31, 2013, the legislatively required employment support services for Ontario Works Clients continue to be provided in-house and the balance of PERC services be handled by outside services.

Submitted by,

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