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March 27, 2012

MEMORANDUM TO: Ontario Works Administrators  
-Municipalities and DSSABs  
-First Nations

Regional Directors  
Municipal Program Managers

FROM: Jeff Butler  
A/Director  
Ontario Works Branch

RE: **2012 Provincial Budget – Implications for Social Assistance**

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The 2012 Ontario Budget released today announced changes that would affect both Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program. These changes include:

- Removal of the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit and home repair benefit from social assistance; and
- Revision of the cost sharing formula for Ontario Works non-health and health-related discretionary benefits.

In addition, the Budget announced that there would be no increase to social assistance rates in 2012.

The Budget also noted that the government will be looking at opportunities to integrate Ontario Works and ODSP employment services with the broader Employment Ontario network. MCSS will work with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and other provincial and municipal partners with a view to better integrating these services to improve employment outcomes for clients while making the best use of resources.

## **Removal of the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit and Home Repair Benefits from Social Assistance**

The Budget announced that, as part of the first phase of consolidation under the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit is being removed from social assistance, with a portion of funding to be included in a new consolidated program administered by municipalities to provide housing and homelessness services and supports.

The Budget also announced that home repair benefits are being removed from social assistance. There are other programs that will continue to assist eligible Ontarians with home repairs including Ontario Renovates and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for First Nation communities.

In addition, people with disabilities may seek funding for home modifications from the Home and Vehicle Modification Program, which is funded by MCSS and administered by the Ontario March of Dimes.

The ministry will retain homelessness-related funding for First Nations and will be engaging First Nations delivery partners on how best to provide these services.

## **Revision of the Cost Sharing Formula for Ontario Works Non-Health and Health-Related Discretionary Benefits**

The maximum provincial cost-share for non-health related discretionary expenditures is currently determined by using \$8.75 per case multiplied by the combined Ontario Works and ODSP monthly caseload within a delivery agent's geographic area.

The Budget announced that effective July 1, 2012, the existing formula for determining the maximum provincial cost share of non-health related discretionary benefits will be replaced with a new formula of \$10 per case of the combined Ontario Works and ODSP caseload for all non-health and health-related discretionary benefits.

The range of needs that can be addressed through Ontario Works discretionary benefits will not change (with the exception of the removal of home repairs per above). Delivery agents will continue to set local policies based on their clients' needs and their priorities.

## **Social Assistance Rates**

The Budget also announced that, for 2012, social assistance rates will be maintained at their current levels.

Attached are questions and answers related to these announcements. Further details on implementation of the changes will be provided in the coming months.

For Ontario Works related questions regarding the above information, please contact Anna Cain, Manager, Ontario Works Branch at 416-325-6086 or [anna.cain@ontario.ca](mailto:anna.cain@ontario.ca).



J. Butler  
A/Director, Ontario Works

Enc.

- c. Patti Redmond, Director, Ontario Disability Support Program Branch, MCSS  
Maxine Daley, Director, Social Assistance and Municipal Operations Branch, MCSS  
David Carter-Whitney, Assistant Deputy Minister, Social Policy Development Division, MCSS  
David Zuccato, Assistant Deputy Minister, Operations Division, MCSS

## **2010 Ontario Budget and Social Assistance Questions and Answers**

### **Social Assistance Rates**

#### **Q. Are social assistance rates increasing in 2012?**

The 2012 Budget announced that social assistance rates will be maintained at current levels in 2012.

### **Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB)**

#### **Q. What changes are being made to CSUMB?**

The 2012 Budget announced that, as part of the first phase of consolidation under the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, the Community Start Up and Maintenance Benefit is being removed from social assistance, with a portion of funding to be included in a new consolidated program administered by municipalities to provide housing and homelessness services and supports.

#### **Q. What is the effective date of change?**

CSUMB will be removed from social assistance as the new consolidated housing and homelessness program is introduced in January 2013.

#### **Q. What is included in CSUMB?**

CSUMB is a mandatory social assistance benefit that provides funding to eligible recipients to assist with the costs of:

- establishing a new residence
- preventing eviction or discontinuation of heating or utilities
- maintaining an existing residence

#### **Q. How many clients receive CSUMB each month?**

All Ontario Works and ODSP clients may be eligible to access CSUMB which provides up to a maximum of \$799 for an eligible single recipient and \$1500 for an eligible family on social assistance over a 24-month period.

#### **Q. What is the cost sharing of CSUMB?**

Under ODSP, CSUMB is 100% provincially funded while under Ontario Works CSUMB is currently cost shared 82.8% provincial – 17.2% municipal and is part of the scheduled upload of Ontario Works financial assistance costs.

**Q. Will this affect monthly income allowances for people on social assistance?**

These benefits are provided on a case-by-case basis to eligible clients. As such, these changes will not impact the amount an individual or family receives in their monthly income allowance.

**Q. Are First Nations homelessness-related programs part of consolidation?**

The Ministry of Community and Social Services will retain homelessness-related funding for First Nations and will be engaging First Nations delivery partners on how best to provide these services

**Home Repairs**

**Q. What changes are being made to home repair benefits in social assistance?**

The 2012 Budget announced that home repair benefits are being removed from social assistance. There are other programs that will continue to assist eligible Ontarians with home repairs including Ontario Renovates and the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for First Nations communities.

Persons with disabilities can also seek funding for home modifications from the Home and Vehicle Modification Program, which is funded by MCSS and administered by the Ontario March of Dimes. Approvals for funding are based on priority criteria. Priorities include modifications required to allow persons with disabilities to continue to live safely in their homes and to avoid job loss.

**Q. What is the effective date of change?**

This change will come into effect on January 1, 2013

**Q. What is included in home repairs?**

Home repairs are provided as a mandatory benefit through ODSP and as a discretionary benefit through Ontario Works. The cost of a necessary home repair may be provided if no other funding is available and:

- The recipient could be forced to vacate the home if these repairs are not done;
- There is a risk to the health or well-being of a member of the benefit unit; and/or
- Extensive damage will result to the home if the repairs are not undertaken immediately.

**Q. Are home repair benefits cost-shared?**

The ODSP Home Repair Benefit is 100% provincially funded while Ontario Works discretionary benefits, including home repairs, are currently cost-shared 82.8% provincial – 17.2% municipal and are part of the scheduled upload of Ontario Works financial assistance costs.

**Q. Will this affect monthly income allowances for people on social assistance?**

These benefits are provided on a case-by-case basis to eligible clients. As such, this change will not impact monthly income allowances for people on social assistance.

**Q. How will recipients pay for necessary repairs that allow them to continue to live in their home?**

Ontario Renovates is a new municipal housing program that is available to assist low-income Ontarians, including social assistance recipients with the cost of necessary home repairs.

Social assistance recipients living in First Nations communities can apply to the federal Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) for assistance with the cost of necessary home repairs.

Persons with disabilities can also seek funding for home modifications from the Home and Vehicle Modification Program, which is funded by MCSS and administered by the Ontario March of Dimes.

**Discretionary Benefits**

**Q. What changes are being made to discretionary benefits in Ontario Works?**

The 2012 Budget announced that the government would revise the funding of discretionary benefits provided through Ontario Works by replacing the existing formula for determining the maximum amount eligible for provincial cost-sharing.

The existing formula of \$8.75 per case for non-health related discretionary benefits would be replaced with a new formula of \$10 per case on combined health and non-health related discretionary benefits.

The range of needs that can be addressed through discretionary benefits would not change with the exception of the removal of home repairs. Delivery agents will continue to set local policies based on their clients' needs and their priorities.

Ontario Works discretionary benefits will continue to be available to ODSP recipients and members of their benefit unit on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of Ontario Works administrators.

**Q. What is the effective date of the change?**

This change will come into effect on July 1, 2012.

**Q. Will this new cost-sharing formula reduce supports for people on social assistance?**

The range of needs that can be addressed through discretionary benefits for both Ontario Works and ODSP recipients would not change, with the exception of the removal of home repairs. Delivery agents will continue to set local policies based on their clients' needs and their priorities.

**Q. What is included in Ontario Works health related discretionary benefits?**

Health related discretionary benefits include:

- dental care for adults on Ontario Works and adult children of ODSP clients;
- eye-glasses for adults on Ontario Works and adult children of ODSP clients;
- a portion of the costs of prosthetic appliances;
- funerals and burials; and
- any other special service, item or payment authorized by the Director of Ontario Works (e.g. child care costs in situations where a recipient requires child care to attend a medical appointment).

**Q. What is included in Ontario Works non-health related discretionary benefits?**

Non-health related discretionary benefits include:

- vocational training and retraining;
- travel and transportation that is not for health-related purposes;
- moving expenses; and
- any other special service, item or payment authorized by the Director of Ontario Works

**Q. How many clients receive these benefits each month?**

All Ontario Works and ODSP clients may be eligible to access Ontario Works discretionary benefits, which are provided by delivery agents on a case by case basis. The number and types of discretionary benefits provided vary by Ontario Works delivery agents based on local priorities and are not tracked at the provincial level.

## **Employment Services Integration**

**Q. What changes are being considered for employment services in social assistance?**

The government will be looking at opportunities to integrate Ontario Works and ODSP employment services with the broader Employment Ontario network

**Q. Does this mean the government will no longer provide employment supports to social assistance recipients and persons with disabilities?**

No decisions have been made yet about integrating employment services. Ministry staff will be working closely with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and our municipal partners to explore this idea.