



Report To:	Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB Board
From:	Donna Moroso, Director of Integrated Social Services and Gilles Plouffe, Ontario Works Program Supervisor
Date:	January 27, 2011
Re:	Comprehensive Social Assistance Review in Ontario

REPORT

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide the DSB Board Members with information on the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario which will occur over the next 18 months.

Background

In the 2008 Poverty Reduction Strategy, Ontario committed to reviewing social assistance with a focus on removing barriers and increasing opportunities for people to work.

In January 2010, Ontario appointed the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council (SARAC) to provide advice on a proposed scope for the review. SARAC's June 2010 report recommended a broad review of Ontario's income security system, including social assistance, income security, employment supports, and related services for working-age adults.

The announcement made on November 30, 2010 builds on SARAC's recommendations, with the review commission expected to create a "concrete action plan" to reform Ontario's social assistance system. The scope of the review will be to examine the current social assistance system and understand its relationship with other federal, provincial and municipal income security programs.

Objectives

According to the government, a new assistance system will have the following objectives:

- help get people back to work
- be part of a larger income security system that includes municipal, provincial and federal programs
- share responsibility for improving the outcomes of low-income Ontarians with municipal and federal governments as well as the people who rely on social assistance
- be simple to understand and access, and provide people in need with basic income support in a fair and equitable way
- work well with other municipal, provincial and federal programs outside of social assistance - including education, training, housing, child care and health benefits - to support employment
- respect the autonomy, responsibility and dignity of individuals and recognize that clients are best placed to decide how to spend their money to meet their needs
- be efficient, financially sustainable and accountable to taxpayers, and
- meet its intended purpose as a system of last resort.

The review will take approximately 18 months to complete, beginning in January 2011 and extending through June 2012. The government plans to provide opportunities for public input, and will release details on these consultations in the near future.

Conclusion

As part of this review, the government will be introducing new ways of delivering social assistance and benefits to simplify and streamline the process. Building on the approach of the successful Ontario Child Benefit (OCB), the review will also consider other areas in which income benefits may be paid to all low-income Ontarians outside of the social assistance system.

The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB, along with the other 47 CMSM/DSSAB's, will be monitoring and participating in this review through its representation on the Northern Ontario Service Delivers Association (NOSDA), Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and their partnership with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO). Staff will provide the Board with regular updates as they are available.