York Region

Corporate Services
Regional Clerk's Office

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CITY OF MARKHAM
CLERKS DEPT

January 26, 2018

Ms. Kimberley Kitteringham
City Clerk
City of Markham
101 Town Centre Boulevard
Markham, ON L3R 9W3

Dear Ms. Kitteringham:

Re: Provincial Consultation on Income Security: A Roadmap for Change

Regional Council, at its meeting held on January 25, 2018, adopted the following recommendations of Committee of the Whole regarding "Provincial Consultation on Income Security: A Roadmap for Change":

1. Council endorse York Region's response to the Provincial consultation on Income Security: A Roadmap for Change as set out in in Attachment 1 to this report, which includes:

   a. Urging the Province to take immediate action on the Roadmap's recommendations

   b. Ensure supports are co-designed with municipal partners as they have significant experience and play a central role in planning and delivering human services related to people living on low incomes, especially those receiving social assistance

   c. Avoid any potential inadvertent impacts or costs to municipal programs by ensuring municipal flexibility to determine discretionary benefits for residents

   d. Ensure fulsome consideration of all the recommendations made by the Provincial Income Security groups as the recommendations are reinforcing and dependent on one another

   e. Ensure alignment of actions across all governments to create a truly client-centric outcome that creates a holistic system

2. This report be circulated by the Regional Clerk to the local municipalities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, and the Human Services Planning Board of York Region.

A copy of Clause 11 of Committee of the Whole Report No. 1 is enclosed for your information.

Please contact Lisa Gonsalves, Director, Strategies and Partnerships Branch, at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 72090 if you have any questions with respect to this matter.

Sincerely,

Christopher Raynor
Regional Clerk

/C. Clark
Attachments

York Region

Clause 11 in Report No. 1 of Committee of the Whole was adopted, without amendment, by the Council of The Regional Municipality of York at its meeting held on January 25, 2018.

11
Provincial Consultation on Income Security: A Roadmap for Change

Committee of the Whole recommends adoption of the following recommendations contained in the report dated January 8, 2018 from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services:

1. Council endorse York Region's response to the Provincial consultation on Income Security: A Roadmap for Change as set out in in Attachment 1 to this report, which includes:

    a. Urging the Province to take immediate action on the Roadmap's recommendations

    b. Ensure supports are co-designed with municipal partners as they have significant experience and play a central role in planning and delivering human services related to people living on low incomes, especially those receiving social assistance

    c. Avoid any potential inadvertent impacts or costs to municipal programs by ensuring municipal flexibility to determine discretionary benefits for residents

    d. Ensure fulsome consideration of all the recommendations made by the Provincial Income Security groups as the recommendations are reinforcing and dependent on one another

    e. Ensure alignment of actions across all governments to create a truly client-centric outcome that creates a holistic system

2. This report be circulated by the Regional Clerk to the local municipalities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, and the Human Services Planning Board of York Region.

Report dated January 8, 2018 from the Commissioner of Community and Health Services now follows:

1. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Council endorse York Region's response to the Provincial consultation on Income Security: A Roadmap for Change as set out in in Attachment 1 to this report, which includes:

    a. Urging the Province to take immediate action on the Roadmap's recommendations

    b. Ensure supports are co-designed with municipal partners as they have significant experience and play a central role in planning and delivering human services related to people living on low incomes, especially those receiving social assistance

    c. Avoid any potential inadvertent impacts or costs to municipal programs by ensuring municipal flexibility to determine discretionary benefits for residents

    d. Ensure fulsome consideration of all the recommendations made by the Provincial Income Security groups as the recommendations are reinforcing and dependent on one another

    e. Ensure alignment of actions across all governments to create a truly client-centric outcome that creates a holistic system

2. This report be circulated by the Regional Clerk to the local municipalities, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, and the Human Services Planning Board of York Region.

2. Purpose

This report requests Council endorsement of the staff response submitted to the Minister of Community of Social Services on December 22, 2017, on its report: Income Security: A Roadmap for Change (The Roadmap). The deadline to submit comments to the Ministry was January 5, 2018. There was insufficient time for Council to consider the response in advance of its submission. Any additional comments from Council's consideration of this report will be forwarded to the Ministry.

3. Background

The Province established three Working Groups to review the income security system and make recommendations for reform

The income security system includes all those supports delivered by federal, provincial or municipal governments aimed at addressing low income and related needs. Examples include the Ontario Works Program, the Ontario Disability Support Program and the Canada Pension Plan.

In 2016, the Ontario government tasked the Income Security Working Group, the First Nations Income Security Reform Working Group and the Urban Indigenous Table on Income Security Reform to recommend improvements to Ontario's income security system so that it will better support the diversity of those who use it. Membership across the three groups included delivery and municipal partners, legal experts, poverty and disability advocates, academics and experts, people with lived experience, the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, and Independent First Nations.

Ontario has now received the Roadmap report from the Income Security Working Groups

The Roadmap sets out 18 recommendations aimed at helping people living on low income to get ahead, and provides specific advice to government to help guide decisions on a multi-year path for reforming the income security system. As stated in the report:

> We have seen the human toll caused by inadequacies in the current system, including the deprivation, despair and lost opportunities for individuals and families living in poverty. Higher health care, social service and justice system costs and lower tax revenues follow as a reminder of the poor outcomes people are experiencing. The bottom line is that poverty is expensive and it costs us all.

The Province has indicated that it agrees with the need to fundamentally reform the income security system, including transformation of social assistance, to ensure all individuals are treated with respect and dignity and are inspired to reach their full potential.

The government is now reviewing the report and will use it as a guide as it considers changes to the income security system in 2018.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services posted the report online for public review and comment until January 5, 2018

The Roadmap was posted online on November 2, 2017 for public feedback. As a direct result of the timing, there was insufficient time to bring this item forward for Council approval prior to submission.

The Region's response, Attachment 1 to this report, urges the Province to take immediate action on the Roadmap's recommendations. The recommendations are wide-ranging and when implemented create a more modern, responsive and effective system of income by addressing income inadequacy, engaging the whole income security system, transforming social assistance and helping those in deepest poverty.

The Region's Submission was developed through cross-departmental consultation

The Community and Health Services Department conducted a cross-departmental consultation including Transportation Services, Legal and Court Services, Corporate Services, Finance, Environmental Services, and the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer. All feedback collected was used to develop the Region's submission.

The response to the Roadmap's recommendations from other municipalities and associations has been favourable

Based on feedback released by other municipalities, various associations and media, response to the Roadmap and its recommendations has been favourable. Some municipal governments and partners that have already released their position or support for the recommendations include: the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Region of Waterloo, the Income Security Advocacy Centre and the Ontario Community Legal Clinic System's Steering Committee on Social Assistance.

Staff continues to monitor and review responses to the Roadmap.

4. Analysis and Implications

The Roadmap outlines key initiatives that could provide significant improvements to existing income security benefits

The current income security system is built on traditional assumptions that most people have full-time, permanent jobs. The Roadmap outlines a modern approach that recognizes that the job market and people's needs have changed. This includes establishing a definition of an adequate level of income, a housing benefit for all residents living on low income and transforming the culture of social assistance to become more centred on helping people achieve their goals.

Many of the recommendations complement policy initiatives that the provincial and federal governments have recently introduced or are currently testing. This may signal a willingness to implement the recommendations included in the Roadmap.

York Region's submission focuses on six short-term priorities

The Region's submission has asked the Province to most immediately focus on the following six short-term priorities:

1. Create a set of core health benefits (i.e. dental and vision care) for all adults receiving Ontario Works as a first step, and once implementation is underway, extend core health benefits to all residents living with low income

2. Take quick action to reduce unnecessary rules that create barriers for people in need and receiving social assistance. This would lead the shift from a rule-based system in social assistance to case collaboration, a direction York Region is already pursuing

3. Provide tools and training for social assistance administrators to support more holistic assessments of client needs early in the case management process

4. Define a minimum income standard. The minimum income standard would be the basic level of income needed to cover essential living costs, and set the level which income support programs would be expected to achieve. Establishing a defined minimum income standard is important to ensuring that income security is defined consistently across Ontario

5. Permit stacking of benefits. Benefits should interact positively together so that residents can better rely on their cumulative impact to achieve income security. Currently, individuals may receive additional benefits outside of social assistance only to have their monthly Ontario Works entitlement reduced, placing them no further ahead and facing difficulties managing additional expenses. This has resulted in the creation of additional benefits to support these unique costs. Reducing or eliminating claw-backs in benefits such as Workplace Safety & Insurance Board and Canada Pension Plan Disability positions residents so they can maximize income sources available to them and save for the future.

6. Permit municipalities to retain the ability to provide discretionary benefits until the full impact of the Roadmap changes are known. This flexibility will help York Region to manage the shift and to meet client-specific needs beyond core benefits

The Roadmap's recommendations will improve the lives of York Region's residents living with low income

If implemented, recommendations included in the Roadmap will improve outcomes for York Region's residents, including:

- Reducing pressures on municipal programs that address poverty among our residents. This could result in better support for residents with complex needs

- Expanding benefits outside of the social assistance system to help residents thrive within the current labour and housing market

- Creating a culture shift moving away from a rule-based system that creates barriers to accessing benefits, starting with social assistance. This includes promoting a new culture of respect, collaboration and autonomy, which is linked to improved client outcomes

- Defining a minimum income amount that ensures progress in achieving income adequacy for residents can be tracked and is standardized across Ontario

5. Financial Considerations

There are no financial impacts directly associated with providing a submission to the Roadmap.

York Region's submission strongly recommends that changes must not result in new or increased costs for municipalities

If recommendations are implemented by the Province, there may be financial impact. For example, social assistance and benefits provided through the broader income security system are primarily funded by the provincial and federal governments, and include various requirements for Regional cost sharing. The amount of benefits, and eligibility requirements, may expand.

The Roadmap's recommendations do not provide details on a funding model or how each level of government should work together to achieve income adequacy. It is unclear who would be responsible for funding the changes outlined in the Roadmap.

6. Local Municipal Impact

The recommended transformation of Ontario's income security system would impact residents living with low to moderate incomes.

7. Conclusion

Recommendations contained within the Income Security Roadmap for Change are advice to the Minister of Community and Social Services. The Region will continue to monitor the Provincial Government's response to these recommendations and progress towards implementing the Roadmap to transform the income security system.

For more information on this report, please contact Lisa Gonsalves, Director, Strategies and Partnerships Branch, at 1-877-464-9675 ext. 72090.

The Senior Management Group has reviewed this report.

January 8, 2018

Attachment (1)

#8062153

Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request

KATHERINE CHISLETT, Commissioner
Community and Health Services Department

December 21, 2017

Via Email: incomesecurity@ontario.ca

Honourable Helena Jaczek
Ministry of Community and Social Services
Communications and Marketing Branch
7th Floor, Hepburn Block
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9

Dear Minister:

Re: York Region Response to the Income Security Reform Working Group's report on Income Security: A Roadmap for Change

Attached is the York Region submission to the Ministry of Community and Social Services consultation on *Income Security: A Roadmap for Change*.

Due to the timing of the consultation process, staff was not able to secure Council endorsement in time for the January 5, 2018 deadline. Council endorsement will be sought at their meeting of January 25, 2018. We respectfully request the opportunity to provide any additional comments and/or changes that may be required by our Council at that time.

York Region strongly supports the recommendations put forward by the Income Security Reform Working Group. If implemented, the Roadmap's recommendations could provide significant improvements to a system that is currently flawed and challenging for our residents to navigate. In particular, I would like to highlight the recommendations that could potentially have the most positive outcomes for our residents. These include:

- An established definition of a minimum income amount for which progress in achieving income adequacy for residents can be tracked and standardized across Ontario. This is significant as it would set a level of income at which no person should fall below.

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- A housing benefit that is made available to all low income residents regardless of whether or not they receive assistance. This is an important step that recognizes the importance of a reliable safety net that can reduce the chance of life setbacks and prevents the need to access Ontario Works.

- Creating a culture shift in the administration of benefits by promoting a culture of respect, collaboration and autonomy. This is a vital step as it could disband rules premised on ill-conceived notions about the motivations of those in crisis or who have long-term experiences in poverty.

The Roadmap is a positive step to ensure municipal governments are well positioned to continue to support the range of human services residents require. The recommendations have potential to reduce pressures on municipal programs that address poverty among residents. In the role of service system manager, municipalities provide support services that directly reflect and meet local needs (such as housing, child care, employment and income supports) and are best suited to address the complex factors or social determinants of health that often underlie an individual's situation.

While the Region is supportive of system reform, change must not include new costs for municipalities, and indeed the Roadmap does not suggest a municipal contribution to helping achieve income adequacy. Municipal property taxes are not well suited to respond to the growing income needs of residents; the provincial income tax is the most appropriate source of revenue for new and enhanced income security programs.

Since the Roadmap outlines a transformative plan that will require concerted effort across governments, it is important that this momentum is not lost in long-term planning. York Region strongly encourages moving forward with the most immediate concerns outlined in the Roadmap to stabilize emergent needs of residents in the short-term. In our view, short-term priorities that require immediate attention include:

- Co-designing supports with municipal partners as they have significant experience and play a central role in planning and delivering human services related to social assistance.

- Enhancing the regulatory framework to support change management and a client centric approach.

- Avoiding inadvertent negative impacts on municipal programs by:

    - Ensuring municipal flexibility to determine discretionary benefits for residents; and

- Allowing stacking of benefits for residents to reach income adequacy so that they have what they need for additional or unplanned expenses.

The recommendations of the Roadmap should all be implemented, as they are reinforcing and dependent on one another.

For a truly successful transformation in the income security system to occur – one that lifts people out poverty and despair by helping them move towards employment and economic and social inclusion within their communities – collaboration of all governments is required to ensure policies work together to achieve a holistic system that works seamlessly to adequately support people. York Region would be pleased to participate in and lend our expertise to the work necessary to implement these recommendations.

Sincerely,

Katherine Chislett
Commissioner, Community and Health Services
Regional Municipality of York

Copy to: Wayne Emmerson, Chair and CEO, Regional Municipality of York
Bruce Macgregor, CAO, Regional Municipality of York
Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier
Hon Chris Ballard, MPP (Newmarket—Aurora)
Hon Michael Chan, MPP (Markham—Unionville)
Hon Steven Del Duca, MPP (Vaughan)
Hon Reza Moridi, MPP (Richmond Hill)
Gila Martow, MPP (Thornhill)
Julia Munro, MPP (York—Simcoe)
The Association of Municipalities of Ontario
The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association

#8062222

Provincial Consultation on the Report of the Income Security Working Groups:

Income Security: A Roadmap for Change

Submission on behalf of
The Regional Municipality of York

January 2018

York Region

Foreword

On behalf of The Regional Municipality of York, we are providing York Region's perspectives on the recommendations made in the *Income Security: A Roadmap for Change* Report of the Income Security Working Group. As a region that provides a wide range of human services to a population of 1.2 million residents, we have first-hand insight into the changing needs and complexities of our residents, and what it would take to give them more stability in their lives, and brighter futures. As the Minister of Community and Social Services reviews the recommendations of the Working Groups, we ask you to consider our feedback.

Executive Summary

The Regional Municipality of York strongly supports the Roadmap as it sets out an extensive platform to transform the income security system in Ontario that goes beyond social assistance. The plan, if implemented could:

- Reduce pressures on municipal programs that prevent, reduce or address poverty among residents. This is a positive step as property taxes and municipal revenues are poorly suited to respond to growing income needs, and this could help municipalities better support residents with complex needs that require more focused municipal case management and holistic supports
- Expand benefits outside of social assistance to help residents better survive within the labour and housing market in order to manage temporary setbacks, life changes and/or crisis
- Create a culture shift and move away from benefits that punish people by requiring certain obligations be met in order to receive benefits. This includes changing the administration of benefits through promotion of a culture of respect, collaboration and autonomy
- Set a definition of a minimum income amount that ensures that progress in achieving income adequacy for residents can be tracked and standardized across Ontario

In approaching the Roadmap, York Region would like the Province to consider six short-term priorities:

- Create a set of core health benefits for all adults receiving Ontario Works as a first step, and once implementation is underway, extend core health benefits to all residents living with low income
- Take quick action to change regulations to reduce punitive and intrusive rules while moving forward on equally important, but more time-consuming, legislative change
- Provide tools and training for administrators to undertake more holistic assessments of client needs early in the case management process
- Define a minimum income standard
- Permit stacking of benefits
- Permit municipalities to retain the ability to provide discretionary benefits until the full impact of the Roadmap changes are known in terms of meeting individual needs

To ensure successful implementation of the Roadmap's recommendations, the following considerations are suggested:

- Ensure supports are co-designed with municipal partners as they have significant experience and play a central role in planning and delivering human services related to social assistance
- Avoid any potential inadvertent impacts or costs to municipal programs by ensuring municipal flexibility to determine discretionary benefits for residents; The Roadmap at a minimum should not add to municipal costs
- Ensure a fulsome consideration of all the recommendations as reinforcing and dependent on one another
- Ensure alignment across all governments to ensure a truly client-centric outcome that creates a holistic system

Background

Poverty or income insecurity is increasing across Ontario due to greater labour market instability including less access to jobs and more precarious employment. While unemployment rates are relatively low, many people have difficulties accessing living wage and stable employment. As a result, it is difficult for many to achieve economic stability and an adequate standard of living.

It is well documented that income is the most important social factor contributing to health and social well-being. People living with poverty have been known to experience greater health problems such as higher rates of mental illness and addiction. Further, literacy and community engagement is also known to decline with lower income earnings. Therefore, the complex factors or social determinants of health that underlie an individual's situation and life circumstances are directly impacted by their economic circumstances.

Ontario's current income security system provides a fragmented range of benefits and programs to individuals and families that are delivered across municipal, provincial, and federal governments. Programs are built on traditional assumptions that most people have full-time permanent jobs and only require temporary support. These issues have been recognized by all levels of government, and important changes have been implemented within social assistance and in broader income security such as recent changes to Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) asset levels, the Ontario Child Benefit, the exemption of child support as income and the Canada Child Benefit. However, critical gaps remain including a social assistance system that is still too punitive and difficult to navigate, particularly for people with complex issues, as well as a lack of support for working age adults who struggle to make ends meet.

York Region has long advocated for reform in the broad income security system, and has provided input

Investing in people through a fair income security system would create a system that both prevents and moves people out of poverty and has important benefits for the labour market and overall economic productivity of communities.

to similar consultations, such as the Federal Poverty Reduction Strategy, Ontario Basic Income Pilot, and the 2012 Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario. The Region's advocacy position is rooted in the belief that social assistance transformation needs to recognize that people inherently want to find and retain employment, but that they often face significant personal, systemic and skill/knowledge challenges that impact their overall stability.

In light of increasing costs of living, a transformative income security system must support both people experiencing crisis and those experiencing circumstances that prevent them from making ends meet. Such a system helps to move and keep people out of poverty, while minimizing the "last resort" type of thinking based in residual supports. Supports must be provided more universally outside of social assistance, in addition to a transformed social assistance system that does a better job at helping people with complex issues gain stability and make longer term change in their lives. The income security system also needs to support the working poor and those who transition to work to sustain themselves in the labour market.

York Region is Growing and Changing

York Region is known to be one of the most affluent regions in Ontario. The reality however is, in addition to an increasing population base, our low income population is growing and the complexity of our residents' needs is also increasing. We need to look ahead to ensure we are proactively meeting the needs of our residents. York Region's current population is 1.2 million (2016), which is projected to increase to 1.8 million by 2041.

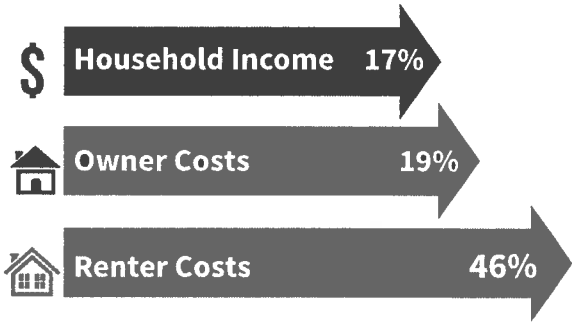
The 2016 Census indicates that income growth in our Region is not keeping pace with the cost of living. Residents living on low income have increased 26 per cent since 2005. Further, the working poor have increased from 37.2 per cent of the working age population in 2006 to 41.4 per cent of the working age population in 2012.

Additionally, housing costs are rising — the 2016 average cost of a new, detached, single family home in York Region was $1,058,989. The need for affordable housing continues to grow as the rental vacancy rate in the Region has been holding steady at 1.5 per cent, well below a healthy vacancy rate of 3 per cent.

These complex changes are impacting community services and requires us to adapt to evolving expectations in service delivery. This includes being able to maximize provincial funding and always looking for ways to

Since 2006, the median monthly housing cost for rented dwellings increased by **46 per cent** compared to 17 per cent growth in household income

Increase in Housing Costs Compared to Income Since 2006



do more with less, while maintaining and often times improving service quality.

It is important that the Province continues to work with its municipal partners now more than ever in order to ensure that systems support residents and provide them with opportunities to succeed.

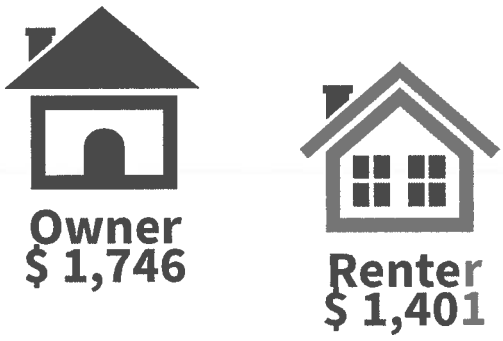
Municipal Governments are Partners

Providing residents with high-quality human services is a municipal function. Provincial investment in this area is just as important as investments in physical infrastructure.

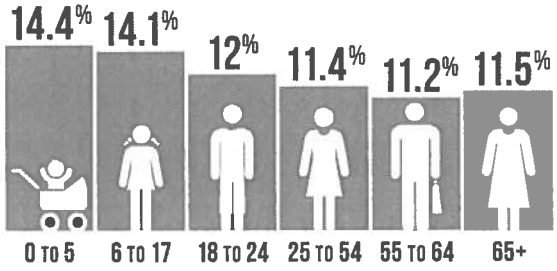
In order to adjust and adapt to the growing and increased complexity of the people we serve, municipalities deliver a variety of interconnected services that address the complex factors (social determinants) that often underline an individual's situation and life circumstances. To meet these challenges, the Region provides discretionary programs (beyond those that are provincially mandated) to address critical needs and provide opportunity to low and moderate income residents, such as:

- Financial assistance to people who are homeless, and in need of emergency housing through the Homelessness Prevention Program

Median Monthly Housing Costs in York Region



Proportion of Population in Low Income Households



Statistics Canada has revised the methodology used to calculate annual after-tax Low Income Measure (LIM-AT) for the 2016 Census. Please refer to the back page for more details.*

The income data reported represents people aged 15 and over.

- Integrated supports for residents with diverse and complex mental health needs through the Mental Health Matters Initiative
- Annual community investment funding to local agency programs that are focused on serving low-to-moderate income residents that are often very hard to reach

Further, as the OW Administrator, the Region has worked within the OW system to provide better service to our residents despite the overly complex and punitive rules that can impact positive progress.

As the direct deliverers of services, municipalities help people to avoid crisis, and find social and economic stability. The range of expertise municipalities have to effectively and efficiently leverage, partner with and provide services such as child care, housing, and income supports has clear benefits to implementing a

52 per cent
of renter households in York Region are spending 30 per cent or more on housing - the highest in the GTHA

53 per cent
of York Region residents worked full time in 2016 compared to 57 per cent in 2006

Since 2006, the number of residents working at home and with no fixed workplace increased by
32 per cent and
36 per cent respectively

successful integrated income system that helps people meet basic needs and transition to employment.

The Roadmap and other provincial initiatives to develop more client-centered approaches is welcomed and supports Regional initiatives to implement wrap-around supports for residents who require assistance in improving their lives, achieving housing stability and building capacity to enter and sustain themselves in the job market.

Response to Provincial Consultation

After review of the *Income Security: A Roadmap for Change* Report, York Region strongly supports the recommendations put forward due to the many potential positive impacts for our residents. If implemented, the Roadmap recommendations could:

- Reduce pressures on municipal programs that prevent, reduce or address poverty among residents. This is a positive step as property taxes and municipal revenues are poorly suited to respond to growing income needs. However, residual supports may still be needed for some residents with complex needs or barriers that will require ongoing municipal government response. The Roadmap at a minimum should not add to municipal costs.
- Expand benefits outside of social assistance to help residents better survive within the labour and housing market in order to manage temporary setbacks, life changes and/or crises.
- Create a culture shift not only in the way the public views the income support system, but in the way the administration of benefits is managed by promoting a culture of respect, collaboration and autonomy.
- Establish a definition of the minimum income amount for which progress in achieving income security over time can be tracked, and a level of income at which no person should fall below is standardized across Ontario.

We also strongly support moving forward with the Roadmap in a way that addresses the most immediate concerns now in order to stabilize emergent needs in the short-term, while putting in place a plan that addresses long-term system goals. It is important that the provincial response to the Roadmap includes a realistic plan to achieve this, as progress will require additional resources over time.

Although the Roadmap is an interconnected plan, prioritizing when and how to make investments will be crucial to its success. If the Province chooses to move forward with some or all of the recommendations, provincial decisions on prioritizing investments in income security will directly and indirectly impact municipal decisions in supporting the economic well-being and health of residents and communities. As such, we urge the Province to ensure that municipal partners are thoroughly consulted and engaged in all steps of the process, including development of a minimum income standard.

Key Short Term Priorities

The Region has identified the following 6 short-term priorities for consideration:

1. **Create a set of core health benefits for all adults receiving OW as a first step, and once implementation is underway, extend core health benefits to all residents living with low income**
   - Core benefits should complement other existing provincial programs (Healthy Smiles, Ontario Drug Plan, Trillium Drug Program, OHIP+) with a consistent design approach that simplifies access and administration
2. **Take quick action to change regulations to reduce punitive and intrusive rules while moving forward on equally important, but more time-consuming, legislative change**
   - This would lead the shift from a rule-based system in social assistance to case collaboration
   - Quick action is needed to lay the groundwork for moving from social assistance as a last resort, to a longer term safety net
   - Ensure the regulations provide flexibility to recognize differences across municipalities and not take a one size fits all approach
3. **Provide tools and training for administrators to undertake more holistic assessments of client needs early in the case management process**
4. **Define a minimum income standard**
   - A definition is crucial to ensuring that income security is defined consistently across Ontario, and so that progress can be tracked
   - The definition should set the basic level of income needed to cover essential living costs, such as housing, nutritious food, transportation, in the absence of earnings and private income, at which no individual should fall below
5. **Permit stacking of benefits**
   - To reach adequacy, benefits will need to be stacked
   - As a basic design principle, income programs intended for specific purposes need to interact positively so that residents receive at the minimum, a net benefit, and can better rely on the cumulative impact of these programs to achieve income security
6. **Permit municipalities to retain the ability to provide OW discretionary benefits until the full impact of the Roadmap changes are known in terms of meeting individual needs beyond core benefits**

In addition to the priorities outlined above, the attached table outlines further details about the reasons why York Region supports the Roadmap recommendations, as well as some areas of consideration if the recommendations are to be implemented.

Other Considerations and Conclusion

Overall, the recommendations address the many areas that municipalities have been advocating for in order to address real change in the broader social services system. The recommendations align with the direction we have suggested for the delivery of social assistance that will move towards better outcomes for clients in York Region.

However, beyond the recommendations of the Roadmap is the need for all governments to work together to achieve a holistic system that works seamlessly to provide income adequacy for people. This includes applying a lens to reform that continues to support all age groups experiencing low income (including seniors). A unified approach means one where government policies work together rather than in isolation to tackle income security and identifies where progress has been made and how we can build on these to move forward. This broad policy framework and service design is required to address systemic issues that often create additional barriers, such as discrimination, unstable jobs and availability of key support services (mental health and addictions, access to housing with supports).

Many of the recommendations in the Roadmap complement policy initiatives and legislation the Province is currently testing and/or developing. These include the recent Basic Income Pilot, the Social Assistance Service Modernization Strategy, the Action Plan for Seniors, the Public Health Standards, the Fair Housing Plan, the development of Ontario's First Food Security Strategy and legislation such as *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act,* the *Child Care and Early Years Act* and the *Ambulance Act*. Additionally, recent Federal Government initiatives including the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and the National Housing Strategy should be considered together with provincial reforms in the implementation of the Roadmap.

The Province and municipalities will need to ensure alignment to avoid inadvertent negative impacts on other municipal programs. Further considerations include:

1. Ensure that changes to any social assistance programs do not negatively impact other income-tested programs
2. Clarify how the Basic Income Pilot will inform the Roadmap going forward
3. Expanding benefits outside of social assistance (health and housing) will help residents better manage in today's labour and housing markets. This is important to shifting public perception away from the idea that social assistance is providing "charity" to the people "in need" to supporting broader social and economic inclusion instead

The Roadmap highlights a fairly ambitious but reasonable strategy in how to move forward. It will require testing, pilots and modeling to identify fiscal risks and unforeseen interactions with other programs and unintended consequences for residents. Municipalities are well suited to inform and support this analytical work. The Roadmap presents a new way to establish income security. By working with municipalities and other partners, the Province will be able to move quickly, and succeed in the implementation of this plan.

Attachment 1:

Objectives and Recommendations

York Region positively encourages the Ministry of Community and Social Services to move forward with the recommendations outlined in the Roadmap while taking into account the considerations and implications outlined below in the corresponding response to each recommendation and sub-recommendation. If recommendations move forward, municipal partners should be fully involved and engaged along the way.

Note: any sections left unfilled where no additional explanation or significant implication is provided means that the Region is supportive and has no specific comments.

OBJECTIVE: ACHIEVING INCOME ADEQUACY

Recommendation 1: Minimum Income Standard

Adopt a Minimum Income Standard in Ontario to be achieved over the next 10 years through a combination of supports across the income security system.

Recommendation	Response to Province
1.1 Adopt a Minimum Income Standard in Ontario to be achieved over the next 10 years through a combination of supports across the income security system.	York Region recognizes that over time, and if implemented, the Roadmap recommendations could reduce pressures on municipal programs that prevent, reduce or address poverty among their residents. This is a positive step. Residual supports may still be needed for some residents with complex needs or barriers to social and economic inclusion that will require an ongoing municipal response. In addition, municipalities are key funders of Rent Geared-to-Income (RGI) and contribute to affordable housing capital costs. Given the "whole government" approach to income security, how municipal investments are "costed" in moving toward income security will require municipal involvement in developing the minimum income standard.
1.2 The Minimum Income Standard should initially be established at the Low-Income Measure (LIM) currently used by Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy (LIM-50 linked to a base year of 2012), plus an additional 30% for persons with a disability, in recognition of the additional cost of living with a disability.	It is critical that a minimum level of income security is defined in a transparent and consistent way so progress can be tracked. A minimum income standard that is sensitive to regional-specific costs and is based on improving social and economic inclusion is a positive step, particularly for areas with high and rising housing costs and a growing number of residents who are unable to access opportunities in the economy or their community due to very low income. In addition, a Market Basket Measure-like methodology is easier to explain and rationalize to the public. *(Continued)*

Recommendation	Response to Province
1.3 Begin work immediately to define a made-in-Ontario Market Basket Measure that would include a modern basket of goods, with prices reflecting true costs, and adjusted for all regions in the province, including the remote north. The measure will be used in evaluating progress towards the Minimum Income Standard, and potentially revising or replacing the Poverty Reduction Strategy LIM as the measure used to set the standard. The made-in-Ontario Market Basket Measure could also be used to guide and evaluate investment decisions over the long term.	*(Continued)* Municipal involvement in developing an Ontario Market Basket Measure is important given understanding of local housing markets, costs of a nutritious food basket and barriers to social and economic inclusion. A Market Basket Measure should be aligned and consistent with other provincial initiatives such as the Province's food security strategy.
1.4 Implement the recommendations in the Roadmap to move toward adequacy in the income security system by 2027–28.	The Region agrees with the need for a transparent benchmark for tracking progress. A strong communication strategy is needed to explain the policy rationale for a minimum income standard and how reform of social assistance and other benefits outside of social assistance will achieve this. This strategy is needed to educate the public and improve negative perceptions of income security. This is also an opportunity to communicate the role municipalities will play. Further, this will need to include clarity on how the Basic Income pilot will inform the Roadmap going forward.

OBJECTIVE: ENGAGING THE WHOLE INCOME SECURITY SYSTEM

Recommendation 2: Ontario Housing Benefit

Adopt a Minimum Income Standard in Ontario to be achieved over the next 10 years through a combination of supports across the income security system.

Recommendation	Response to Province
2.1 Confirm the design and implementation details for a universal, income-tested portable housing benefit for people who rent their homes.	York Region supports the proposal to move forward on an Ontario Housing Benefit with a co-design approach that includes municipalities and the federal government, particularly the proposed federal Canada Housing Benefit. Any Ontario housing benefit should be as sensitive as possible to actual rental costs. Further considerations include: • Clarity on how the benefit will be funded is needed. The municipal tax base is not appropriate for funding income programs. • Clarity is needed on whether the proposed benefit may be stacked with other benefits so residents receive a net value, and not face benefit reductions (claw-backs). Claw-backs may inadvertently cause underfunding, and are administratively onerous. • The design will need to positively interact with other Roadmap recommendations to create an adult standard flat rate within OW (provide a net benefit or be stacked on-top of the standard OW benefit.) • While the proposed benefit would likely help reduce the risk of housing loss for the working poor or residents living on a fixed income who are struggling to balance housing costs with other essential needs, residents who face other challenges to retain housing (mental health) will still require emergency housing, outreach or homelessness prevention support if faced with short-term crisis. • A Housing First approach provides wraparound support to individuals and long term housing stability. It may reduce financial need for program-based rent benefits, but will still need non-financial supports to be in place. • Administration of the benefit must be designed so as to avoid challenges in accessing a portable housing benefit for residents that are marginally housed or unsheltered. Additional funding will also be required to support administrators. • A housing benefit should not be viewed as the solution that will address all housing affordability issues. Investments in affordable housing supply (including housing with supports) will remain critical for residents who are unable to access safe and suitable housing for their needs. In communities like York Region with a vacancy rate of 1.5 per cent, and market rents that have increased by 138 per cent between 2006 and 2016, federal and provincial actions to stimulate new supply of private and non-profit affordable housing are critical to ensuring housing benefits work. • A universal portable benefit requires new funding rather than re-allocating existing subsidized housing funding from fixed Rent Geared-to-Income (RGI) units to a portable benefit. The current Portable Housing Framework added to the Housing Services Act (HSA) is optional and not provincially funded; therefore Service Managers choosing to implement it must fund the program, and this limits its portability to the specific Service Manager area. *(Continued)*

Recommendation	Response to Province
	(Continued) • In communities like York Region with very high rents, the number of benefits that the Region can afford to fund is limited. Further, as mentioned earlier, the property tax base is insufficient to fund income support programs like portable housing benefits. • Establishing a maximum rent threshold for the design of a new universal portable housing benefit and with expanding gap coverage. • Program design should prioritize mitigating the risk of rent inflation. Using a "gap coverage" formula is one way of combating this, and there may be other policy tools in other jurisdictions that have been successful. • Consider the impact to eligibility for access to other income-tested programs (child care subsidy, Canada Child Benefit, Healthy Smiles.) if the housing benefit is considered income. • Definitions of income level that are used as criteria for programming and funding may need to be reviewed in order to set clear and fair eligibility criteria across programs.
2.2 Implement the portable housing benefit in 2019–20 at a modest "gap coverage" of 25%, with the gap defined as the difference between the actual cost of housing and a minimum household contribution given household income.	Although the housing benefit will be implemented at a modest level at first, it is important to consider how residents who are marginally housed will access the benefit. This includes not only filing income taxes if delivered as an income-tested benefit, but how informal rental costs will be applied in cases where residents are either unsheltered, staying in emergency housing or sub-letting, living in unregulated rooming houses or couch surfing. The province will also need to determine how "rental unit' is defined. The Region's low vacancy rate may be a barrier to implementation, due to a lack of available affordable rental housing. The Region continues to advocate for increased federal and provincial funding for affordable rental housing construction, and for other policy tools to increase the rental housing supply. The Region, in partnership with its nine local municipalities, is investigating the use of incentives to encourage rental housing construction.
2.3 Increase gap coverage to 35% in 2020–21 and continue to increase gap coverage, reaching 75% by or before 2027–28.	Same as above.
2.4 First Nations need to be meaningfully included in the housing benefit and may need modifications or an alternate benefit to ensure it works in the reserve context.	The Region supports this recommendation.

Recommendation 3: Income Support for Children

Continue to move income support for children outside of social assistance so all low-income families can benefit fully, regardless of income source. Ensure supports are sensitive to the needs of children and youth who are at greater risk.

Recommendation	Response to Province
3.1 Provide bridging child supplements within social assistance to ensure families are not worse off during the transition, as the social assistance structure is transformed to include flat rates.	York Region supports the overall policy direction to shift child benefits as an income-tested support to all families living with low income. • Municipalities often go beyond these benefits to address locally determined gaps or needs. For example, York Region provides municipally funded discretionary benefit top-ups to supplement OW benefits to families. York Region assumes any changes to OW would still exempt these municipal benefits as income to families receiving OW or child care fee assistance.
3.2 Re-brand the Temporary Care Assistance (TCA) program to focus on child well-being, increase the amount of income support provided to better align with foster care levels, and provide clear flexibility for Ontario Works Administrators to determine where it is best accessed	More details are required to assess this fully. In order to better align with the continued direction to move children's benefits outside of Social Assistance and be able to better support family reunification while supporting children often coping with upheaval and emotional trauma, responsibility for delivering TCA is better placed with the Children's Aid Society (CAS), where the expertise is. CAS is the referring agency for TCA benefits. In most cases, children are placed in Temporary Care through intervention/apprehension and case management of CAS. The alignment of rates with Foster Care levels is best achieved if the program was administered under CAS. In addition, many TCA recipients are not OW recipients. TCA under OW adds to the level and complexity of service navigation for family or friends who voluntarily accept a very important responsibility for a child in need.
3.3 Shift the remaining amounts paid in respect of children's essential needs in social assistance to the Ontario Child Benefit as a supplement targeted to the lowest-income families.	The Region supports this measure as long as it provides a net benefit to families i.e. it is stacked on other benefits. Benefits moved out of social assistance, are typically provided through the tax system, meaning recipients are required to complete an annual tax return. There is a gap in the ability of the community sector/ volunteers to provide income tax preparation services – support for this would help.

Recommendation	Response to Province
3.4 Require Children's Aid Societies to place the federal Children's Special Allowance payments into a savings program for youth in care 15 years and older so the funds can be disbursed to the youth when transitioning from care.	Greater supports to youth from CAS is needed and welcomed. Youth transitioning from care often require OW. Any additional support through CAS is welcomed and may reduce the need for OW. Clarification is needed on whether the Children's Special Allowance is considered an asset for youth applying for OW. Overall, youth are a high-risk population that are underserved by the current OW framework. An enhanced service path and framework to assist youth transitioning from care is needed. Stackable benefits and savings programs would provide increased stability to ensure youth stay in school and pursue post-secondary education. In some situations, youth in care have parents with more than modest income, but are estranged from their parent(s). Education funds (RESP's) and/or child support income needs to be secured for these youth by the child welfare system. These are often overlooked at time of crisis and later youth do not have the capacity to establish these income sources without legal assistance.
3.5 Provide support to all low-income people, including those living in First Nations communities, to ensure that benefits paid through the tax system are accessed and equitably received.	The Region continues to support this recommendation. Clarification is needed on the impact for youth not living with parent(s) and not in care. Youth aged 16 and 17 living outside of the parental home and not in care are put through a process which first looks at family reunification prior to OW grant. They must prove special circumstances exist requiring the child to live outside the parental home. Like all Roadmap recommendations that create income-tested and income tax delivered benefits, in order for people to access these benefits, they will likely require support to file their income taxes.

Recommendation 4: Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB)

Work with the federal government to enhance the effectiveness of the Working Income Tax Benefit so that it plays a greater role in contributing to income adequacy for low-income workers in Ontario.

Recommendation	Response to Province
4.1 The federal government enhance the WITB so that it better reflects the realities faced by low-income workers in Ontario. This should include examining: • The level of earnings at which an individual begins receiving the WITB and how the WITB is adjusted when earnings increase, including the threshold at which the WITB begins to be reduced.	York Region supports the federal announcement and Roadmap recommendation to enhance WITB as a way to improve income stability of working low-income individuals and families who are already in the workforce and to encourage others to enter the workforce. Given the federal government allows provinces to make province-specific changes to the design of WITB to better harmonize with their own programs, the Region encourages the Province to explore how any federal WITB enhancements can align with the proposed Market Basket Measure and increases to minimum wage so WITB better reflects labour market conditions and variable costs in Ontario.

(Continued)

Recommendation	Response to Province
(Continued) • The overall amount of support provided through the WITB. • The net income at which individuals are no longer eligible to receive the WITB. • Outreach, support and any alternative delivery required to ensure that the WITB is accessible to First Nations individuals.	

Recommendation 5: Core Health Benefits

Make essential health benefits available to all low-income people, beginning with ensuring those in deepest poverty have access to the services they need.

Recommendation	Response to Province
5.1 Expand access to mandatory core health benefits to all adults receiving Ontario Works and adult children in families receiving ODSP, and add coverage for dentures (including initial and follow-up fittings) for all social assistance recipients.	Include OW Administrators as well as engaging public health groups in the design of core health benefits, on how current policy and funding of OW discretionary benefits will be impacted. Currently, OW Administrators provide key health benefits on a case-by-case basis through OW discretionary benefits, in some cases topping-up funding with municipal investments, to address individual client needs. A better set of mandatory core health benefits is critical to help improve people's health and employability, and would: • be consistent between both the ODSP and OW programs • be available regardless of where they live in Ontario • be incorporated under 100 per cent provincial benefit funding • permit some local flexibility in issuing other OW discretionary health benefits so OW Administrators retain the capacity to meet client-specific needs Allow costs for the inclusion of allied medical services such as chiropractor, physiotherapy and acupuncture, and for psychotherapy recognizing the lengthy waitlist to receive therapy from OHIP-covered resources.

Recommendation	Response to Province
5.2 Expand existing and introduce new core health benefits for all low-income adults over the next 10 years starting with the expansion of prescription drug coverage to adults 25 to 65, followed by: • Expanding Healthy Smiles Ontario to adults age 18 to 65 and adding dentures as part of the benefit • Designing and implementing a new vision and hearing benefit for low income individuals and families • Expanding access to medical transportation benefits	This measure is a central pillar of income security reform for low income workers who rely on unstable jobs and struggle with sustaining good health. In some cases, the Province already has a platform to expand benefits (Healthy Smiles, Ontario Drug Plan, Trillium Drug Program, OHIP+). However, given the scope of the recommendation, more policy and delivery options may be worth exploring, particularly how they intersect with employer-funded benefits (the possibility of a monetary benefit to be paid to low income employed individuals who can access medical benefits at a cost, through their employer) **There are also specific considerations for local public health units based on the model of care, eligibility criteria, and services to be provided regarding expanded dental health benefits. These include:** • The model of care would likely rely on most of the care being done in private dental offices on a fee-for-service (FFS) basis with claims administration done by a private company. Public Health would be involved in program promotion and navigation services to assist clients to access program. Public Health may be further involved if the expanded program has a screening process to assess eligibility for an emergency stream as is done with the Children's Healthy Smiles Ontario (HSO). • If the expanded program included Public Health providing screening and/or treatment services, Public Health would require a significant number of new staff (dental hygienists and dental assistants, and possibly clinical dentists and denturists) or funding where there it is possible to contract out these functions. • The private practice FFS model of care relies heavily on private dentists accepting the terms of the program. Given that the fees for the expanded adult program will likely be as low as the fees for the Children's HSO program, there is a risk that private offices will stop accepting HSO clients or limit the number they accept. Thus, Public Health could become the primary provider of treatment services. If this occurred, it would not be possible for the current number of clinics to accommodate the volume of care, especially if the expanded HSO included OW and ODSP adults. Further, to maintain services that adequately reflect and meet local need, facilitation of public health services is best positioned within the continuum of human services that municipalities provide.
5.3 Review the Assistive Devices Program (ADP) to ensure the program is maximizing its reach to low-income people, both in terms of the list of devices that are covered and the maximum coverage.	The Region strongly supports this measure. Currently some ADP costs are topped-up through OW discretionary benefits and current OW policy is time-consuming for both case workers and clients to manage. Reviewing the program is timely. Consider engaging OW Administrators to ensure program is reflective of community needs and actual costs.

Recommendation 6: Access to Justice

Procedural fairness should be embedded in all aspects of the income security system through adequate policies, procedures, practices and timely appeal mechanisms.

Recommendation	Response to Province
6.1 Request a research body such as the Law Commission of Ontario or an academic institution review the existing appeal process for tax-delivered benefits and develop recommendations for enhanced or new mechanisms that support fair, transparent and efficient access to those benefits and appeal processes.	York Region supports this recommendation. The Social Benefits Tribunal is a good model; however, it relies heavily on legal clinics to provide support to multi-barriered or high conflict residents, putting a strain on that system. Further, judicial or quasi-judicial processes can be difficult to navigate even for healthy, non-barriered individuals. Fair access to justice requires easily and readily accessible advocacy and system navigation for those who cannot afford legal representation. Consideration should be given to preventative and early resolution models to move from court or tribunal centric services to a client-centered approach. Municipalities should be consulted as part of the review because of their long history and experience appearing before the Social Benefits Tribunal to settle appeal disputes. An increase in income-tested benefits is likely to cause more requests to case workers for support or information on how to appeal through the Canada Revenue Agency. It is important that the province considers how this role can be integrated as part of collaborative case management.

OBJECTIVE: TRANSFORMING SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Recommendation 7: Legislative Framework

Fundamentally change the legislative framework for social assistance programs to set the foundation for a culture of trust, collaboration and problem-solving.

Recommendation	Response to Province
7.1 Develop and introduce new legislation to govern and rebrand the current Ontario Works program. As a starting point for legislative change, draft and publicly consult on a new purpose statement in the first year of reform that explicitly recognizes and supports: • Individual choice and well-being • Diverse needs and a goal of social and economic inclusion for all	York Region supports this recommendation as it recognizes that OW needs to address the realities of many who have complex needs - where employment is likely a longer term goal. Supporting life, community and housing stability and better health are the critical first steps to employment or accessing more appropriate income support programs. While OW Administrators have worked within the current Act to help support these goals and the Province has worked to reduce some of the rules which can hold clients back, legislative change is needed to create a more supportive framework to guide program delivery. The Act remains the major stumbling block by re-enforcing a compliance mind-set and the administrative load this has required. This is a significant change in direction of OW toward a more "rights" based approach that will move OW away from being largely compliance driven program, and re-shape the program to be more effective in helping people who must take a longer route to employment and community stability. *(Continued)*

Recommendation	Response to Province
	(Continued) This measure implies that there will be a shift away from "conditionality" – a principle that holds that access to certain benefits and services should be dependent on an individual meeting specified obligations or patterns of behavior. Clarifying the expectations of conditionality within a more supportive approach in OW and how these will be applied is a critical part of any legislative change. This will require unpacking the concepts of economic and social inclusion and identifying how these apply in defining specific expectations, outcomes or accountability under the OW program. A shift from more to less condition-based benefits challenges deeply held public perceptions about the need to meet specific conditions in exchange for benefits. The Basic Income pilot may provide insight and evidence on how less conditional approaches to providing income assistance to working age adults is working and perceived. Consult with municipalities. They understand the various systems of support, gaps and interactions with other stakeholders that are critical in helping residents receiving OW in moving forward. The revamped OW program will need even greater coordination, local planning and advocacy to address issues such as access to critical services and supports (mental health and addictions services, housing.). Defining new provincial-wide expectations for OW needs to be grounded in local knowledge in how federal, provincial and municipal programs sometimes work together -- and sometimes do not work together -- to address resident needs. Opening the OW Act is an opportunity to address the lack of this local human services system perspective, with the exception of OW employment services, that has challenged OW Administrators in supporting better outcomes for residents. Ensure the municipal role as OW Administrator is contiguous with municipal boundaries to ensure the broader municipal responsibility for other human services is consistent, and can be better coordinated. The fundamental shift to client centric services should not be viewed as a cost neutral or cost reduction strategy. OW Administrators will need resources to establish enhanced services internally and externally through local partnerships and collaborations to provide the best solutions for our population. Cost will be even greater during the transition period as the existing program is delivered and implementation of the new program begins.

Recommendation	Response to Province
7.2 Identify and amend regulations under both the Ontario Works Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, before new Ontario Works legislation is introduced, in order to jump-start and reinforce a positive culture of trust, collaboration and problem-solving.	The Region agrees that these are fundamental changes that need to be made especially those regulations that are more easily changed and implemented. Currently, OW program delivery is heavily weighted to verification and ongoing eligibility review. The reduction of rules will provide caseworkers and clients more time and less stress to focus on improving circumstances rather than focusing on ensuring or demonstrating compliance. This will also increase opportunity for caseworkers to collaborate in providing client-centered wraparound services with a focus on outcomes while fostering a culture of trust. Under a more supportive model, caseworker discretion can be applied to service delivery and outcome planning rather than administrative and punitive compliance rules which can often result in ineligibility and a negative working relationship between the caseworker and client. Understanding how both regulatory and legislative change will impact on current compliance heavy functions is critical to municipal budget and service planning.
7.3 Provide First Nations with the opportunity to develop and implement their own community-based models of Income Assistance under provincial legislation.	The Region supports this recommendation.

Recommendation 8: Culture of Trust, Collaboration and Problem-Solving

Introduce an approach to serving people receiving Ontario Works and ODSP that promotes a culture of trust, collaboration and problem-solving as a priority, and supports good quality of life outcomes for people in all communities, including Indigenous peoples.

Recommendation	Response to Province
8.1 Position front-line workers as case collaborators whose primary role is to act as supportive problem-solvers and human services navigators in a way that allows people to share information without fear of reprisals. This includes working with individuals in both individual and group settings.	York Region supports this recommendation. While many case workers adopt this it might be inconsistently applied. The Province will need to incorporate appropriate funding to municipalities in support of this change. Shifting to a new culture is significant undertaking that will need to address or clarify key steps in program delivery and client journey (erole of verification, outcome plans.). Recommendation 7 and 8 are dependent on each other and their success and legitimacy among staff could be reliant on there being a fluid implementation process between both. These recommendations are among the most important and should be prioritized accordingly. A co-design with OW Administrators is recommended here, so that all efforts are aligned and best practices can be piloted and shared.

Recommendation	Response to Province
8.2 Introduce a comprehensive assessment tool to identify needs for, and barriers to, social and economic inclusion that uses an equity- and trauma-informed approach to connect people to appropriate supports.	The Region supports the recommendation to provide OW Administrators with tools and training to undertake more holistic assessments of client needs early in the case management process. Depending on how it is applied, earlier and more productive conversations with clients to assess barriers will help develop more realistic outcome plans and identify the steps needed to move forward on immediate needs (housing, treatments.) in addition to intermediate and longer term change (employability, access ODSP or other disability supports). Any assessment tool should be a collaborative process with residents so they feel engaged and not part of an intrusive process. Clarity on how the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development initiated common assessment tool interacts with this recommendation is needed. OW Administrator experience is no singular tool will adequately identify all the barriers people face to long term sustainable jobs. As a result, multiple tools and deeper and sometimes more clinical assessments (Psych-Vocational) will still be required. Funding of an early assessment tool must not crowd out support for deeper assessments. The Province, through MCSS and MAESD, is requested to continue using the Provincial-Municipal Social Assistance and Employment Committee to engage municipalities in the co-design of a common assessment tool - understanding the importance of other types of assessment throughout the OW case management process. The concept of trauma informed approaches has not been a key pillar to OW case management. Any assessment tool for barriers to social and economic inclusion will require enhanced training for OW caseworkers in diversity, inclusion and social determinants of health. Other suggested considerations include the following: • Use tools or cultural awareness training to address barriers impacting newcomer integration, as well in diversity, inclusion and social determinants of health • Ensure the assessment tool accounts for the needs of those with mental health issues (diagnosed/undiagnosed) so they are able to access appropriate supports for long-term social and economic success
8.3 Use pilots to test the comprehensive assessment tool and the collaborator role with an initial focus on people seeking to access ODSP through Ontario Works, long-term social assistance recipients, youth and persons with disabilities.	Overall the Region agrees with moving carefully through pilots given the extent of change being proposed so unintended impacts on residents and staff, on costs and effectiveness can be understood and approaches re-adjusted. An effective pilot location would include focusing on specific groups that usually face the greatest barriers or risks to employability is a reasonable approach to assess the benefits/challenges of the collaborator role and comprehensive assessment.

Recommendation	Response to Province
8.4 Eliminate financial penalties related to employment efforts and rigid reporting requirements to support a new person-centred approach, promote trust and respect between front-line workers and people accessing help, and place a firm emphasis on problem-solving and addressing urgent needs first (e.g., risk of homelessness). This includes revising policies that create barriers to safety and well-being (e.g., fleeing an unsafe home).	workers motivate client progress on outcomes and will require training, cultural change and change management support from the Province to ensure consistency. The Province will need to determine the extent to which condition-based benefits will be expected and how to support residents who are unable or unwilling to take action to address life stability and employability goals. This is one reason why co-designing and implementing pilots with municipalities is critical. The extent of change being proposed in the Roadmap is significant. It will impact on every step of the client journey and will require clarification on the purpose and content of the verification process, outcome plans, case management meetings (and their frequency), literacy screening, content of employment information sessions. Clarification is required on what defines a home as unsafe.
8.5 Ensure front-line workers have the necessary skills and knowledge to act as case collaborators through: • Mandatory professional development and learning, including skills in social work (i.e., anti-racism, contemporary professional development and anti-oppressive practice), and Indigenous cultural safety and awareness training • Provincially set and governed quality standards and controls tied to staff performance plans	The Region supports the need for training, but will require additional resources from the Province to support different learning styles. There is a need for consistent quality standards across Ontario. OW Administrators already have experience implementing innovative supportive case management models within OW employment services, other specialized OW caseloads, social work supports to OW and other programs and in homelessness prevention/housing stability programs that often support residents accessing OW. This experience will be important to draw upon in developing new provincial service standards and training models. Overall, the scope of recommended change is big given current OW practices. Clarification is requested on whether the proposed new quality standards, controls and performance plans will replace current standards, and the degree of local flexibility in how these are implemented. As part of the co-design process with OW Administrators, the Province is requested to: • Clarify how provincial standards will be incorporated into the MCSS risk and accountability frameworks • Clarify professional development requirements. This fundamental change in role will require substantial Administrator resources to plan, analyze and integrate learning programs • Understand contemporary learning modalities to address the spectrum of learning styles in our workforce; Careful consideration and consultation must be taken to determine which modality best suited to develop "social work" skills or "trauma informed counselling" *(Continued)*

Recommendation		Response to Province
		(Continued) Clients can expect a more positive interaction with case workers. Given the shift in culture proposed, the Province and OW Administrators will need to engage and communicate extensively with clients to shift perceptions on the case worker role and overall expectations in accessing OW. Wherever possible, OW Administrators would like an opportunity to understand the specific goals or details of professional development streams (cultural awareness, diversity, mental health) to align with Corporate standards and initiatives.
8.6	Regularly situate Ontario Works and ODSP case collaborators in Indigenous service delivery offices to improve cultural awareness and understanding and support better inter-agency relationships.	This requires a degree of training and support to ensure there is improved cultural awareness and understanding.
8.7	Clearly recognize Indigenous peoples' right to choose service in their preferred location.	The Region supports this recommendation.
8.8	Ensure staffing at all levels reflects the diversity of Ontario, and model truly inclusive offices that are welcoming spaces and reflect the multitude of cultures and communities served across the province, including the diversity within and across Indigenous communities.	The Region supports this recommendation.
8.9	Continuously review and adjust the service approach, professional development, and tools and resources based on feedback from partners and people accessing programs.	The Region supports this measure. As highlighted above, OW Administrators should continue to be key partners in co-designing, implementing and evaluating supportive case management given their front-line experience in developing these models within current OW legislation and other program areas.

Recommendation	Response to Province
8.10 Establish a First Nations–developed and implemented program based on self-identification, self-worth and true reconciliation leading to life stabilization.	The Region supports this recommendation.
8.11 Conduct analyses on current and proposed policies and services to ensure they do not increase vulnerability or undermine safety of those receiving support. This should include a culture- and gender-based analysis to ensure the safety of Indigenous women.	The Region supports this recommendation. The Province is requested to leverage municipal expertise as they often fill gaps in support, plan how human services can better work together to reduce vulnerability and assess the impact of social policy and programs from a front-line and "whole government" perspective on the ground. Clarification is needed as this may only apply to Provincial programs. Otherwise this may have an impact on the Region's policy development process and flexibility to set local rules as defined under the Housing Services Act (Service Manager local rules under the Housing Services Act).

Recommendation 9: Supporting People with Disabilities

Maintain and strengthen ODSP as a distinct program for people with disabilities. Ensure that both ODSP and Ontario Works are well equipped to support people with disabilities with meeting individual goals for social and economic inclusion.

Recommendation	Response to Province
9.1 Recognize the continued need for a distinct income support program for people with disabilities.	York Region supports this measure as many residents with disabilities accessing OW are better served in ODSP. Clarification is needed on whether dependent adults in ODSP benefit units will still be required to access OW for support to employment. As indicated in Recommendation 5.1, ODSP clients are accessing OW discretionary benefits due to the limitations of some health benefits through ODSP. The need for alignment ensures ODSP clients are not facing administrative hurdles to obtain the support they need by having to access supports through two programs.
9.2 Retain the current ODSP definition of disability.	The Region supports this recommendation.

Recommendation	Response to Province
9.3 Continue work with the Disability Adjudication Working Group to streamline and improve the ODSP application and adjudication process.	The Region supports this measure. It is important that the Disability Adjudication Unit (DAU) processes are improved to reduce the need for the Social Benefits Tribunal appeals, which often overturn the DAU decisions. This will free up more time for OW case workers to focus on improving life stability with ODSP pending applicants through appropriate referrals to community supports. For our clients, reduced appeals will mean more efficiently processed applications and timely distribution of benefits.
9.4 Provide provincial-level assistance and accommodation for people who need help with the ODSP application process, building on lessons learned from community groups.	The Region supports this measure. Province-wide consistent assistance will ensure residents have appropriate and timely support. Current support in York Region is limited to one tax levy funded Applicant Support Worker at the community level, and it is likely that few other communities provide this type of service. Despite the fact that the tax base is a funding resource in York Region, community legal aid services have raised concern over its capacity to support ODSP appeals that could be better served through an administrative or case work support rather than legal support.
9.5 Include specific review with First Nations and urban Indigenous service delivery partners to ensure that the assistance and accommodation reflect the unique experience of Indigenous peoples.	The Region supports this recommendation.
9.6 Ensure that both ODSP and Ontario Works accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities as part of the person-centred, collaborative approach to support individual goals and aspirations.	The Region supports this recommendation. Not all residents accessing OW with disabilities will be able to access ODSP. Residents accessing OW should expect more support in accommodating disability in service delivery and how to address barriers in moving forward in outcome plan. It is important to recognize that persons with disabilities, particularly mental health and addictions, make up a significant part residents accessing OW and benefit from supportive relationships with OW case workers. There is also a need to expand co-locations across the province.

Recommendation 10: An Assured Income Approach for People with Disabilities

Co-design an "assured income" approach for people with disabilities.

Recommendation	Response to Province
10.1 Co-design an assured income mechanism for delivering financial support to people who meet the ODSP definition of disability. Consultation with First Nations people is essential.	York Region supports moving to an assured income and the features recommended. This will require considering how an assured income will impact OW as there are several intersecting areas between the two programs The Region supports moving to an assured income and the features recommended. This will require considering how an assured income will impact on OW as there are several intersecting areas between the two programs (many ODSP applicants access OW prior to applying for ODSP). Given an assured income is a fundamentally different approach to determining financial eligibility; the Province would need to re-think how OW and ODSP interact (access to OW discretionary benefits; or ODSP dependent adults accessing OW for employment support). As a result, OW interaction must be considered in the design and municipalities should be part of any co-design.
10.2 Include the following features in the assured income mechanism: • Income-tested only (i.e., no asset test) • Stacking of income benefits to reach adequacy • Tax-based definition of income (i.e., does not include financial help (gifts) from family or friends) • Continued responsibility of the provincial government to determine disability, with the right of appeal to the Ontario Social Benefits Tribunal • Flexibility to adjust to in-year income changes • Safe to move into employment and back to the program	
10.3 Provide an initial assured income at least as high as the ODSP Standard Flat Rate – Disability at the time of transition, and provide continued increases until the Minimum Income Standard is achieved in combination with other income security components.	The Region supports this recommendation.
10.4 Ensure that people receiving the assured income have full access to ODSP caseworker services and support.	The Region supports this recommendation.

Recommendation	Response to Province
10.5 Provide First Nations with the ability to administer and deliver ODSP in their own communities in the same manner as Ontario Works.	The Region supports this recommendation.

OBJECTIVE: A TRANSFORMED SOCIAL ASSISTANCE STRUCTURE

Recommendation 11: Rate Structure

Redesign the social assistance rate structure so that all adults have access to a consistent level of support regardless of living situation (i.e., rental, ownership, board and lodge, no fixed address, rent-geared-to-income housing, government-funded facility).

Recommendation	Response to Province
11.1 Transform the social assistance rate structure so that: • Single adults receive a Standard Flat Rate that does not distinguish between basic needs and shelter • Couples receive a Standard Couple Flat Rate equal to 1.5 of the Standard Flat Rate • In recognition of the additional cost of living with a disability, single adults with a disability receive a higher Standard Flat Rate – Disability and couples receive a Standard Couple Rate - Disability of 1.5 of the Standard Flat Rate – Disability. • Adult children aged 18 to 24 (without a disability) who live with their parent(s) on social assistance receive a Dependent Rate (75% of the Standard Flat Rate for the first dependent and 35% for each subsequent dependent). *(Continued)*	York Region supports this recommendation. This recommendation, if implemented, would permit OW case worker time to be used to help residents address issues, instead of on monitoring family and household arrangements. This is a major change and the Province is requested to confirm that: • The new standard flat rate for adults will adjust for family size, to be equivalent to the adult basic need rate plus shelter allowance for family size living in household • Clients residing in emergency housing or other collective house situations will have a net benefit from the flat rate as they currently do not qualify for shelter benefits since housing is provided • The couple flat rate of 1.5 is the appropriate equivalency scale to use – same for dependent children • There will continue to be a mechanism to issue a Personal Needs Allowance outside of the flat rate

Recommendation	Response to Province
(Continued) • Adult children over age 24 (without a disability) who live with their parent(s) receive the full Standard Flat Rate. People with disabilities will continue to qualify in their own right for ODSP at the age of 18	
11.2 Align the definition of spouse under social assistance with the Family Law Act (i.e., deemed a spouse after three years).	Family and spousal support obligations for those receiving social assistance should be consistent with family law regulations. The CRA definition of spouse is different both from current OW rules and family law. Inconsistencies create policy and program challenges. In a client-centered program, neither the caseworker nor client should need to understand three different definitions or applications of "spouse". Wherever possible, all legislation (including the Income Tax Act and program specific legislation) should align definitions of spouse. If more benefits/income will be administered through the income tax system, then complications will arise when CRA continues to use a one year definition for spousal.
11.3 In moving to a Standard Flat Rate structure, eliminate the rent scales currently used for those receiving social assistance. Require municipal housing services managers to invest the increased revenues resulting from the elimination of rent geared-to-income rent scales (due to the transformed rate structure) into local housing and homelessness priorities.	The Region supports this measure on the basis that it will provide a net benefit to people receiving OW living in RGI housing. This would create greater "fairness" between private market and RGI tenants receiving OW and potentially improve mobility to find new housing closer to work and/or supports. Eliminating rent scales will reduce subsidy costs for RGI, but it will increase subsidy costs for other Regional housing programs (Regional Rent Assistance Program). How tax levy funded savings are reinvested should not be mandated by the Province (for example, the Region uses funds saved to invest in local housing and homelessness priorities, such as Regionally-funded rent subsidy programs). Municipalities require flexibility to determine their own discretionary spending for residents so that tax levy funded savings are reinvested to meet locally determined need and is not mandated by the Province.

Recommendation 12: Supporting Employment Goals

Improve social assistance rules and redesign benefits to make it easier for people to pursue their employment goals and realize the benefits of working.

Recommendation	Response to Province
12.1 Redesign, using a co-design process, existing employment-related benefits (except the ODSP Work-Related Benefit) into one benefit, with consideration given to whether the new benefit should be mandatory or discretionary, the level of prescription in the activities the benefit can support, and the level of support that is provided to meet a broad range of needs. Test the new benefit before province-wide roll out.	York Region supports this recommendation. This is a welcomed opportunity to co-design given OW employment services expertise and knowledge of resident needs. Pursuing "employment" for many residents requires support for pre-employment, employability, training (financial literacy) and direct employment costs that often vary based on individual need and aspirations. This is important given varied caseloads (newcomers, older unemployed workers, people exiting correctional facilities and youth.) The current mix of mandatory and discretionary benefits has worked fairly well in providing flexibility to meet client need. However, there is concern whether the trade-off for more flexibility would be capped or reduced funding. Maximizing flexibility and adequate funding are key design considerations. Clarification is requested on the future role of OW employment services and the extent employment benefits will be managed through OW Administrators. OW Administrators have been working for quite a while under a level of uncertainty about how OW fits within an integrated employment and training system that could impact on planning for a revamped OW program. OW Administrators have developed employment service expertise and networks within our communities, including with Employment Ontario providers and regional MAESD staff that are critical in developing services that can meet the needs and build on the strengths of residents who face barriers to sustainable employment. As part of a broader municipal organization, OW Administrators are also able to leverage workforce development, early years services, housing and municipal procurement and community partnerships to develop integrated pathways for people who face challenges in moving into good jobs in the local economy. The Province is requested to clarify the future state of the integrated employment and training system in Ontario and how OW expertise will be deployed in the system.
12.2 Reduce the wait period for exempting employment earnings to one month (from three months) in Ontario Works.	This goal is supported by the Region particularly for its importance for people accessing OW who are facing immediate life issues but are in the position re-connect to jobs quickly. They should not be penalized financially in trying to regain stability as soon as possible.

Recommendation	Response to Province
12.3 Designate First Nations Ontario Works delivery agents to deliver and administer the Employment Ontario employment assistance program to better assist their community members in becoming employable through the array of programming and benefits that are not available to them for a variety of reasons, including but not limited to vast distances from municipalities or urban centres where Employment Ontario programs are placed, lack of services focused on developing employability skills available through the Ontario Works program, and the recent removal of assisting programs (e.g., First Nations Job Fund).	The Region supports this recommendation.
12.4 Support case collaboration in both individual and group settings.	The Region supports this recommendation.

Recommendation 13: Income and Assets

Modernize income and asset rules so people can maximize the income sources available to them and save for the future.

Recommendation	Response to Province
13.1 Exempt as assets funds held in Tax-Free Savings Accounts and all forms of Registered Retirement Savings Plans so people do not have to deplete resources meant for their senior years.	York Region supports the concept that people should not be forced to deplete resources meant for their senior years or in times of crisis, however, an asset level should be established that balances the goals of providing necessary supports and future planning. Tax Free Savings Accounts offer people with lower income an effective savings vehicle to build assets that can be used to support re-training, major purchases, finance retirement or provide an emergency "pot" of money. Compelling people to exhaust these savings before accessing OW is counter-intuitive in helping people build resiliency. However, we also recognize long-standing perceptions among the public of OW as a "last resort" safety net. The Roadmap recognizes the need to shift these perceptions as a central pillar of reform since for many clients OW is either a "first resort" program or a longer-term interaction to address barriers. Both of these groups require assets to succeed. *(Continued)*

Recommendation	Response to Province
	(Continued) The challenge is providing evidence that higher asset levels lead to positive outcomes and does not necessarily result in very large increases in caseloads under current circumstances or any potential economic slowdown (a potential concern often raised). As a result, the Province should model, where feasible, potential impacts on caseload size of recent asset rule changes prior to moving forward on further enhancements. Other suggested considerations include the following: • OW, ODSP, and RGI/subsidized housing wait lists may have different asset limits/types of excluded assets. It is recommended that rules relating to assets complement each other, while retaining local flexibility and discretion for municipalities to set program asset limits for locally-funded/administered programs such as subsidized housing. • There are questions about how to approach certain exemptions. For example, in municipal housing services, an exemption of TFSAs from asset limits may pose a future risk in instances where older clients have greater TFSA contribution room, as they could transfer funds from an included asset to an excluded TFSA.
13.2 Initially exempt 25% of Canada Pension Plan - Disability, Employment Insurance and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board payments from social assistance (i.e., social assistance would be reduced by 75 cents for every dollar of income from these sources rather than dollar for dollar).	The Region supports this recommendation.
13.3 Increase the income exemption for Canada Pension Plan - Disability, Employment Insurance and Workplace Safety and Insurance Board payments to the same level as the existing earnings exemption by 2022–23.	The Region supports this recommendation.

Recommendation 14: Allowances and Benefits

Ensure ongoing access to targeted allowances and benefits until such time as adequacy is achieved. Determine which extraordinary costs remain beyond the means of individuals even when adequacy is achieved and maintain those benefits.

Recommendation	Response to Province
14.1 Retain the following special purpose allowances/benefits and review as progress towards adequacy is made and people's outcomes are better understood: • Special Diet Allowance • Mandatory Special Necessities/Medical Transportation • Pregnancy and Breast-Feeding Nutritional Allowance • ODSP Work-Related Benefit	York Region supports this recommendation as these benefits are important income supplements as they can often add hundreds of extra dollars into the hands of a client. The inadequacy of social assistance rates, compounded by income rules that don't support the "stacking" of income from multiple sources, means that people have difficulty finding extra income to support additional costs.
14.2 Revise medical transportation rules to include and support improved access to traditional healers.	The Region supports this recommendation.
14.3 Review and introduce expanded eligibility criteria for the Remote Communities Allowance to better address the needs of northern and remote communities.	The Region supports this recommendation.
14.4 Redesign Ontario Works discretionary benefits as other recommendations are implemented (e.g., making core health benefits and help with funeral and burial costs mandatory) and consider making them available to the broader low-income population.	It is important municipalities are a partner in the redesign of OW discretionary benefits and how they could be extended to low income residents. Some municipalities already provide OW discretionary items to low income residents through municipally funded programs as a last resort safety net or emergency fund and top-up benefits to residents receiving OW with municipal funding above provincial cost sharing. The redesign will need to identify if intent is to continue current approach of delivering through OW Administrators and if so would local flexibility be retained to meet varying individual and community needs (imunicipal top-up benefits).

Recommendation 15: The Need for Urgent Action

Help those in deepest poverty by immediately increasing the income support available through social assistance as a readily available means for early and absolutely critical progress towards adequacy.

Recommendation	Response to Province
15.1 Implement changes that make meaningful progress in improving the incomes of those furthest from the Minimum Income Standard through social assistance as the most readily available and easily adjusted means by (in Fall 2018): • Setting the Standard Flat Rate at $794/month (a 10% increase over Fall 2017 Ontario Works maximum basic needs and shelter rates) • Setting the Standard Flat Rate – Disability at $1,209/month (a 5% increase over Fall 2017 ODSP maximum basic needs and shelter rates)	York Region agrees with the analysis of the Roadmap and many other previous reports that the current income security system for working age adults is not responding well to the changing labour market, job instability and the barriers a growing number of residents face in stabilizing their lives and moving towards some level of income adequacy through work, benefit programs or some combination of both. This has left OW with most of the heavy lifting – something as a temporary program of last resort it is unable or designed to do. As a result, the Region supports the initial priority to address OW rates as a first step while making initial advances in creating housing benefits to all low income residents. These are immediate gaps that even modest progress to address will make real differences in people's lives. The Region supports the long term strategy of building the capacity of Ontario's income security system to help residents sustain themselves in work or a better disability income program so a revamped OW can focus on providing support to people who have aspirations to improve their lives and re-engage in work, but who also need support to stabilize and resolve barriers. To support this role for OW, a broader policy framework is required to address systemic issues that often create additional barriers, such as discrimination, unstable jobs and availability of key support services (mental health and addictions, access to housing with supports). The Roadmap clearly articulates how policy needs to work together rather than in isolation to tackle income security and identifying where progress has been made and how we can build on these to move forward. As the Roadmap lays out, progress will require additional resources over time, and a realistic provincial plan is needed to achieve this. Although the Roadmap is intended as an interconnected plan and not a menu of options, the Province may have to prioritize further when and how to make investments. In developing these priorities, we encourage the Province to engage municipalities as partners. Income security touches on many municipal responsibilities that span social and community services to economic strategies and the infrastructure that supports public health, safety and job creation. Provincial decisions on where to prioritize investments in income security can directly and indirectly impact on municipal decisions in supporting the economic wellbeing and health of residents and communities. *(Continued)*
15.2 Implement increases to the Standard Flat Rate and Standard Flat Rate Disability in Fall 2019: • Increase the Standard Flat Rate to $850/month (7% increase over Year 1) • Increase the Standard Flat Rate – Disability to $1,270/month (5% increase over Year 1)	
15.3 Implement further increases to the Standard Flat Rate and Standard Flat Rate – Disability in Fall 2020: • Increase the Standard Flat Rate to $893/month (5% increase over Year 2) • Increase the Standard Flat Rate – Disability to $1,334/month (5% increase over Year 2)	

Recommendation	Response to Province
15.4 Continue to raise the level of income support available through a (rebranded) Ontario Works program until the Minimum Income Standard is achieved in combination with other income security components by 2027–28.	*(Continued)* As a result, the Roadmap highlights a fairly ambitious but reasonable strategy in how to move forward which will require testing, pilots and modeling to identify fiscal risks, unforeseen interactions with other programs and unintended consequences for residents. This analytical work must be part of developing the provincial response to the Roadmap and any implementation plan.

OBJECTIVE: IMPLEMENTING AND MEASURING CHANGE

Recommendation	Response to Province
19 Income security reform must be accompanied by a robust change management and implementation plan.	York Region supports this recommendation. The change management and implementation plans will benefit from including municipalities as service managers and service delivery partners in co-design, pilots, evaluation and refinements. This is particularly important for municipalities who are planning or implementing changes to improve client service and experience within OW and how these connect with other human services. Recognizing the good work accomplished through PMSAEC and other provincial-municipal tables related to social assistance reform, the Province is encouraged to work through municipalities as the Roadmap moves forward. This includes clear and transparent communication, support for skills development and technical training, business process changes and development of new or revised tools, and appropriate feedback loops across programs and partners. Shift from a long time, rules based system to a client centric collaborative one will be difficult for all involved. The change management component is a critical piece that must be well thought out prior to implementation. The plan must recognize differences across municipalities and not take a one size fits all approach.
20.1 Implementation of this Roadmap should be accompanied by a transparent report on associated outcomes and indicators, to be updated annually and made publicly available by the Province.	The Region supports developing outcomes and indicators with municipalities as part of a transformational approach to OW change and broader income security. Many municipalities have developed outcomes and indicator framework already that connect quality of life and well-being outcomes with program indicators. These approaches should be leveraged, especially as a revamped OW moves to life stability, equity-based and supportive case management model. It will be challenging to develop new outcomes for OW that better reflect life stability and employability milestones, as well as how to measure effectiveness in new case worker roles (support to navigation, transparency in dealing with residents, equity) These are significant if not transformational changes in accountability for OW Administrators.

Recommendation	Response to Province
20.2 Establish an annual, publicly available report that will outline progress on the Roadmap recommendations, including progress against outcomes.	The Region supports this recommendation.
20.3 Establish a third-party body to review and comment on the annual progress report and provide comments to the Cabinet.	The Region supports this recommendation.
20.4 Require that both the annual report and the third-party comments be tabled in the Legislature.	The Region supports this recommendation.