

Social Services Program Semi Annual Update Year End 2024-2025

Presented To:	Community and Emergency Services Committee
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Type:	Correspondence for Information Only
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Report Summary

This report provides information regarding an update on Social Services programs and services.

Relationship to the Strategic Plan, Health Impact Assessment and Climate Action Plans

This report refers to Council's Strategic Plan regarding the "Create a Healthy and More Vibrant Community" and aligns with the Population Health Priority of Resiliency by investing in families, enabling, promoting mental health, and encouraging holistic health as it provides supports to low-income families. This report has no relationship to the Community Energy and Emissions Plan.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Background

Social Services plays a crucial role in assisting low-income residents by providing access to essential supports designed to improve the quality of life for low-income individuals and families. Key services include social assistance, housing and homelessness, education and training support.

Employment Programs and Supports

In alignment with Employment Service Transformation (EST) across the province, the Ministry of Community, Children and Social Services (MCCSS) procured a Service System Manager (SSM) through a Request for Proposal process in Spring 2024 to deliver employment related supports for the North-East Region of Ontario.

The transition is currently being implemented with Ontario Works focusing on life stabilization by providing personalized support to those in receipt of social assistance, with the goal of assisting recipients in achieving employment and independence. The program aims to identify and address specific barriers preventing individuals from gaining employment or achieve independence such as accessing housing, healthcare,

mental health & addiction support and acquiring life skills. Ontario Works, in conjunction with Employment Ontario provides integrated case management to provide a comprehensive support system. The program aims to lead better outcomes, including employment rates, a reduce time on assistance and re-applications. Social Services continues to facilitate collaboration and coordination with College Boreal – the selected SSM for the Northeast to support this transition and the local Employment Ontario agencies to provide continuity of service to clients. Social Services continues to contribute to various working groups and committees to develop and support various community initiatives detailed below:

Continuing Education Programs

Janitorial Program

Labour market and anecdotal data from the community indicated that there was a demand for trained janitorial staff. To respond to this need, Social Services, in partnership with St. Albert's Learning Centre, developed and implemented a no cost Janitorial training program. Social Services staff have supported Ontario Works recipients to participate in the program. The last 8 week training program was facilitated in October 2024, consisted of 6 OW participants.

An overview of client outcomes provided:

- 1 gainfully employed
- 1 continuing education
- 4 active on caseload

Personal Support Worker (PSW) Program

Social Services has supported the delivery of a no cost PSW program through St. Alberts Learning Centre by providing client referrals and financial support to reduce barriers to receive training in this field. The January 2025 cohort consists of seven OW clients actively participating in the six-month condensed program. Social Services expects this partnership to continue until summer 2025.

Community and Employment Placements

Community and Employment placement opportunities were formerly facilitated through an agreement with Employment Ontario agencies; locally services were provided by YMCA Employment Services and March of Dimes. These placement opportunities provided clients with experience to transition into the labour force with enhanced skills and self-confidence. As with other employment programming, as a result of the Employment Service Transformation, termination notice on both contracts was given due to the change in provincial funding in 2025. Clients now access Job Matching, Placement & Incentives (JMPI) directly through all local Employment Ontario agencies.

Community Builders

Community Builders is a leading not-for-profit construction-based social enterprise in Greater Sudbury providing training, employment, and affordable housing for vulnerable and at-risk populations. As experienced general contractors, the organization works on various residential projects, including second suites, modular housing, and renovations. The pre-employment training program offers experiential learning opportunities, aiming to support individuals facing employment barriers by equipping them with foundational skills that can be applied to a career in the trades.

Social Services provides funding for the personal protective equipment (PPE) necessary to facilitate each of the 10 cohorts to date. Since inception in July 2022, 72 individuals have participated in the program.

Program outcomes from inception to date include:

- 87% of trainees enrolled in the program have completed the program

- 86% of trainees have secured employment
- 27% were Ontario Works recipients
- 18% were Ontario Disability Support Program recipients

With Employment Support Transformation now integrated into operations, the financial commitment to this community initiative will cease at year end.

Centralized Intake

OW applications are now processed through the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) centralized intake team.

Ontario Works continues to process applications for emergency assistance, temporary care assistance, and applicants under 18 years of age. Staff also continues to be responsible for ongoing eligibility determination, benefits administration, and case management support to clients. On approved applications, local OW staff will also continue to be required to verify information provided through the application process following the initial eligibility decision made by the province.

The province is implementing additional supports and mechanisms to assist vulnerable individuals who may have difficulty completing the Ontario Works (OW) applications. These measures include providing interpreters or scheduling in-person appointments through the associated ODSP office.

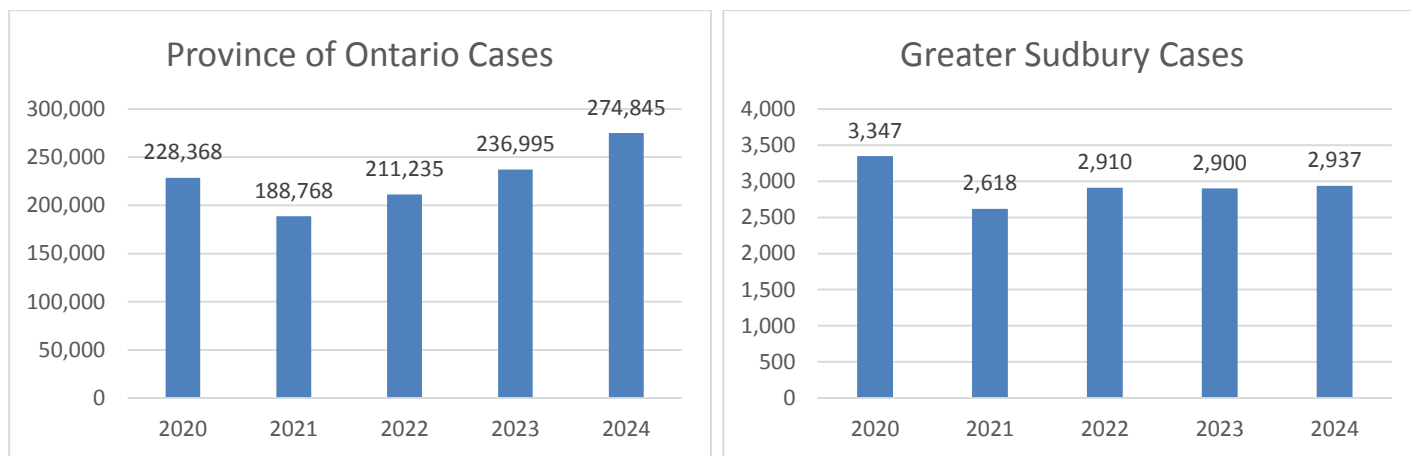
The intention of Central Intake was to reduce administrative burden on local offices, and Service Managers are continuing to work with the Province to realize this benefit over the long term. The Greater Sudbury Ontario Works office continues to provide support to the Provincial government to ensure the application process is effective and efficient in order to achieve operational goals.

Ontario Works Metrics and Outcomes

The Ontario Works program has experienced a rise in caseloads since 2021, reflecting ongoing financial challenges in the community. While caseloads have not reached levels seen before the pandemic, the annual caseload average of 2,937 cases indicates significant demand. Since 2023, the annual caseload has increased 1.28% from 2,900 cases to 2,937 cases. In comparison to provincial rates, the increase in annual caseload averages in Greater Sudbury from 2023 to 2024 is significantly less than the provincial increase of 15.97%. Note that 187 of local cases are ODSP Participating in Ontario Works Employment Assistance.

The division was unsuccessful in achieving performance targets which may be attributed to policy changes due to significant structural changes with the adoption of Employment Support Transformation as offices ceased to offer employment programs to recipients causing reduced access to employment related resources. Local economic factors such as labour market fluctuations, reduced availability of part-time or entry-level positions may have contributed to fewer recipients securing or maintaining employment. Commonly, Ontario Works clients lack the skills or credentials required for available positions, especially as the economy shifts to more technical and digital roles. The caseload is also comprised of a higher proportion of clients with complex needs including mental or physical health challenges, lack of childcare and transportation, low education and skill level in addition to newcomers or individuals with limited English proficiency contributing to lower employment levels.

Further data related to the Ontario Works program is appended to this report in Appendix A; staff continue to monitor these metrics, while comparing local data to other municipal and provincial metrics to inform and align related social service programs and initiatives.



Next Steps

Social Services staff will continue to work collaboratively with community partners to support Employment Service Transformation efforts throughout the implementation of this new service delivery model. Staff will provide a presentation to the Community and Emergency Services Committee in Q4 2025 to provide a full update on the Employment Services Transformation.

Resources Cited

Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Service. (May 12, 2023). Social Assistance Operations Performance Reports from Ontario Works Program Integrity – Operations Performance Reports:

<https://www.sa.mcscs.gov.on.ca/program-areas/program-integrity/sams-transition-performance-reports/>

Social Services Program Update Q2, 2024 Report – Community and Emergency Services Committee – March 25, 2024

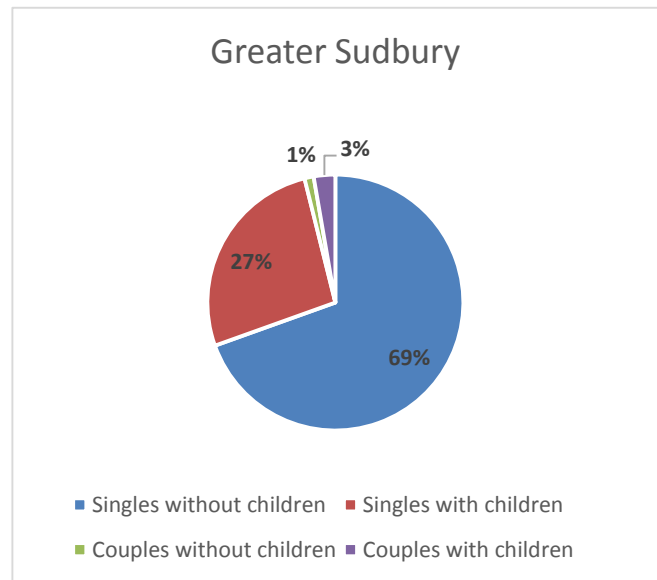
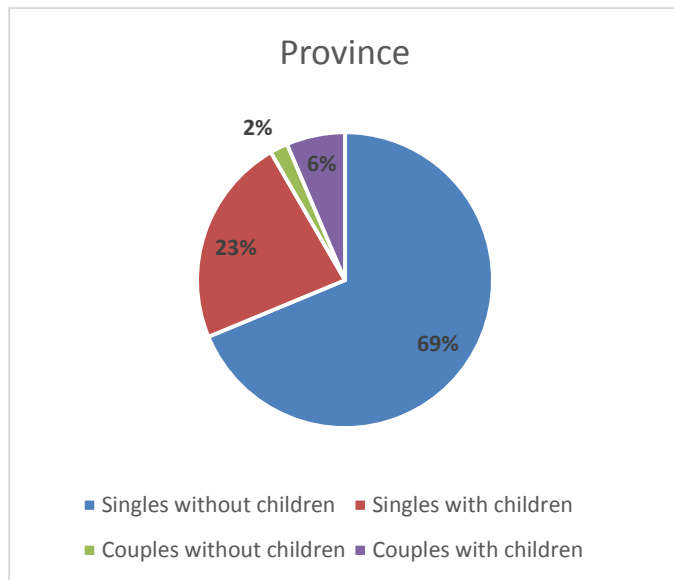
<https://pub-greatersudbury.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=9f73433b-59c9-4c62-bf9f-ae6d82ae9f97&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English&Item=20&Tab=attachments>

Appendix A

Caseload Overview

Family Structure on Assistance

- Singles (with or without children) represent the vast majority of the data (96%).
- Couples make up a much smaller portion (only 4%).
- Singles without children is by far the largest group, accounting for over 70% of all cases.



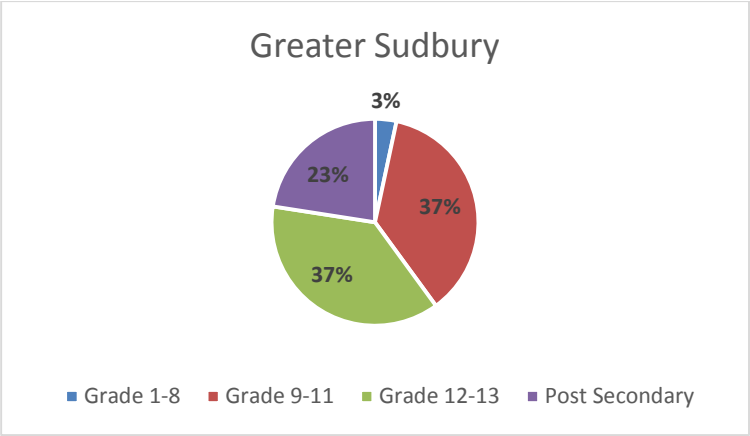
Overall, the data suggest a high prevalence of single-person households, both with and without children, compared to coupled households. This information is valuable for planning community services and support structures, particularly for single parents and individuals living alone.

Months on Assistance

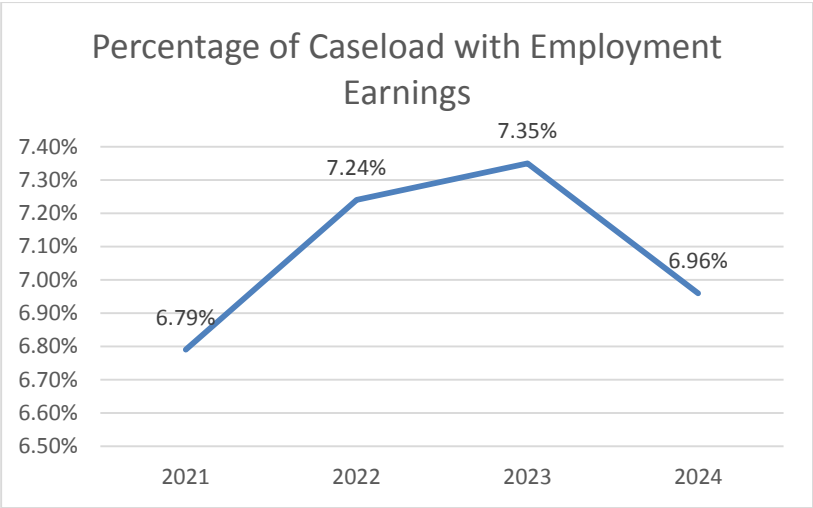
The average number of months on assistance is 38 in Greater Sudbury or 3.16 years, which is comparable to the provincial average of 35 months or 2.91 years.

Educational Attainment

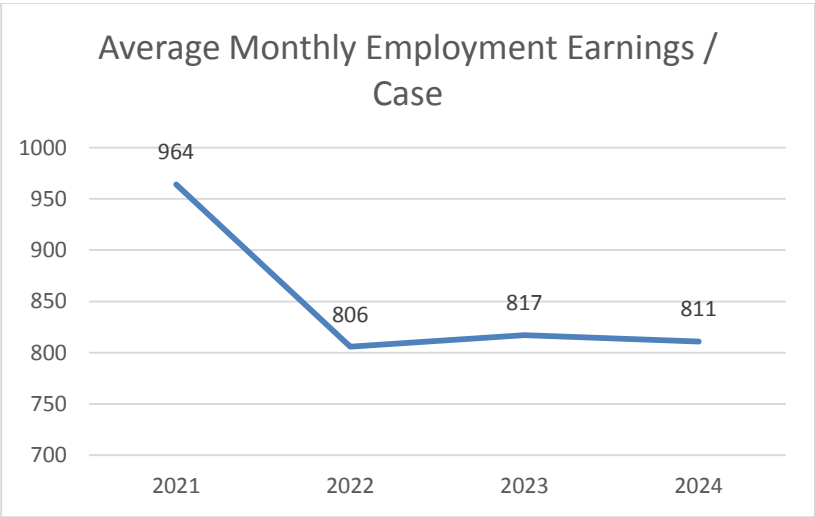
The case composition is relatively unchanged year over year historically. The majority of clients have not completed a high school diploma or equivalency. This presents an opportunity for the program to focus attention on educational programs that contribute to higher earning potential.



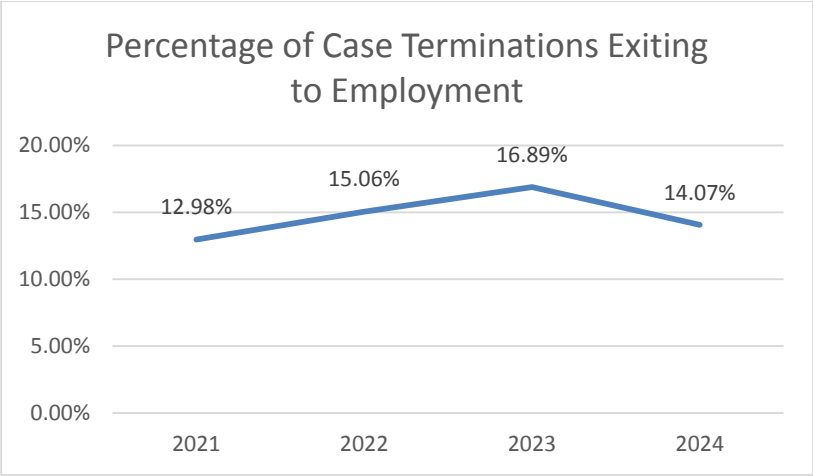
Ontario Works Sudbury – Provincially Mandated Performance Metrics and Outcomes



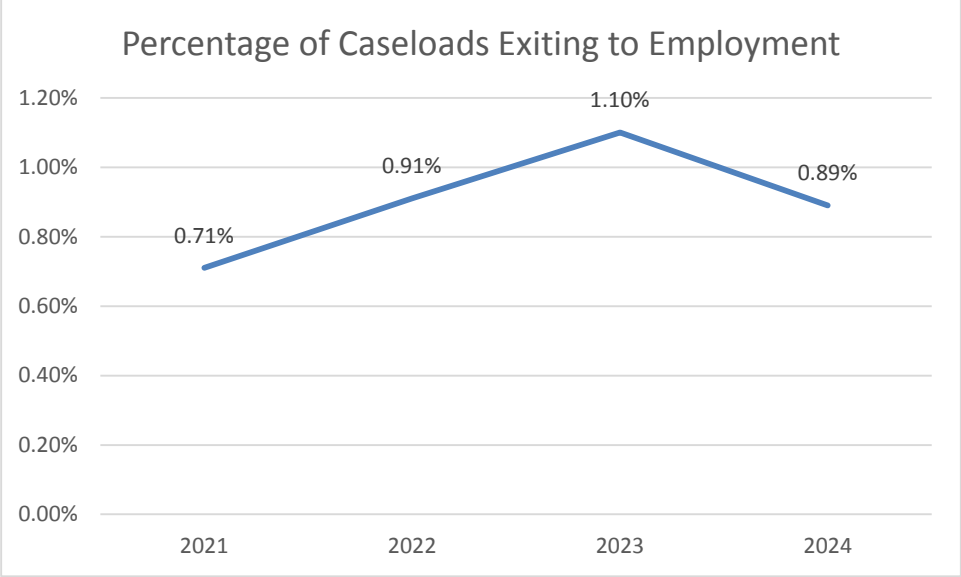
The percentage of the Ontario Works caseload with employment earnings has decreased slightly by 0.39% from 2023-2024.



The average monthly employment earnings per Ontario Works case have decreased by 0.73% from \$817 in 2023 to \$811 in 2024.



The percentage of case terminations exiting to employment has decreased by 2.82% from 2023 to 2024.



The percentage of caseloads exiting to employment has decreased by 0.21% from 2023 to 2024.

OW Sudbury Funeral Costs (Indigent Burials)

Month	Funeral Cost Billed 2023	Total Costs Recovered 2023	Funeral Cost Billed 2024	Total Costs Recovered 2024
January	\$49,062.64	\$16,624.08	\$69,675.31	\$29,842.78
February	\$35,041.05	\$9,687.24	\$37,091.76	\$10,066.96
March	\$54,971.19	\$26,638.85	\$27,309.73	\$7,612.75
April	\$51,269.62	\$28,814.18	\$51,021.65	\$30,770.19
May	\$47,264.69	\$19,294.62	\$63,751.44	\$24,751.44
June	\$57,763.05	\$22,897.42	\$32,497.19	\$24,384.96
July	\$33,849.05	\$14,137.22	\$46,208.04	\$18,353.89
August	\$54,151.00	\$26,472.02	\$36,183.17	\$21,228.65
September	\$56,952.80	\$30,309.85	\$15,239.65	\$8,120.31
October	\$45,306.03	\$24,823.93	\$42,251.86	\$18,660.70
November	\$62,227.58	\$33,548.86	\$30,079.42	\$16,607.13
December	\$23,864.59	\$16,608.70	\$49,156.94	\$26,099.11
Total	\$571,723.30	\$269,857.97	\$500,466.16	\$227,498

Non Recovered Costs in 2023 = \$301,865.33 or 53% - 200 funerals – Average cost/funeral: \$1,509.32

Non Recovered Costs in 2024 = \$272,968.16 or 55% - 185 funerals – Average cost/funeral: \$1,475.50