

## Request for Decision

### Social Services - Discretionary Benefits

Presented To: Community Services Committee

Presented: Monday, Feb 10, 2020

Report Date: Wednesday, Jan 29, 2020

Type: Managers' Reports

### Resolution

THAT the City of Greater Sudbury approves revisions to the Social Services Discretionary Benefits Policy as outlined in the report entitled "Social Services - Discretionary Benefits", from the General Manager of Community Development, presented at the Community Services Meeting on February 10, 2020.

### Relationship to the Strategic Plan / Health Impact Assessment

This report supports Council's Strategic Plan in the area of Creating a Healthier Community as it aligns with the Population Health Priorities of Indigenous Youth, Mental Health, Housing and Healthy Streets as it provides support to low income families.

### Report Summary

This report outlines changes to the Discretionary Benefits Policy as it relates to dental care, dentures, and funeral services that are provided to social assistance recipients in order to meet the approved budget reduction from the 2020 municipal budget process.

### Financial Implications

As noted in the report, the City has the highest reimbursement rates for funeral coverage, reducing these rates will bring the City in line with other municipalities. The report also notes that a third party adjudicator recommends increasing the 4 year dental replacement frequency to 6 years.

#### Signed By

##### **Report Prepared By**

Teresa Cirillo  
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*Digitally Signed Jan 29, 20*

##### **Health Impact Review**

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##### **Manager Review**

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##### **Division Review**

Tyler Campbell  
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##### **Financial Implications**

Apryl Lukezic  
Co-ordinator of Budgets  
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##### **Recommended by the Department**

Steve Jacques  
General Manager of Community Development  
*Digitally Signed Jan 29, 20*

##### **Recommended by the C.A.O.**

Ed Archer  
Chief Administrative Officer  
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As per the approved 2020 Budget, \$175,000 was removed from the discretionary benefits within Ontario

Works Division. Any deviation in this initiative may result in an operating budget overexpenditure.

## **Background**

As part of the 2020 budget process, a budget reduction was approved by Council to reduce the Municipal allocation for the discretionary budget in Social Services by \$175,000. This change was recommended due to the high service level that is provided through the discretionary budget when compared with other municipalities in several categories. Discretionary items, which are outside of the regular mandatory benefits, include items such as; household appliances, beds, dentures, and moving expenses.

A report was brought forward to the Community Services Committee on January 15, 2018 with recommendations to implement changes to the Discretionary Policy that resulted in a municipal budget increase of \$350,000. Social Services staff have since been monitoring the service levels and individual needs, as well as working with a third-party dental adjudicator, to assist with determining the immediate needs of Ontario Works (OW) clients based on the social determinants of health.

Currently, the discretionary benefit provided is 100% provincially funded up to a maximum-capped amount. The capped amount of \$1,212,000 (2019) fluctuates based on the Provincial formula with the main cost driver being OW and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) caseloads. Any spending over the capped amount is the responsibility of the Municipality. It is important to note that the discretionary rate chart applies to both OW and provincially funded ODSP recipients.

## **Service Standard**

In order to reduce discretionary spending to meet the approved municipal allocation of \$175,000, Social Services staff have reviewed and identified the following discretionary items as areas for reduction:

- Funeral rates
- Frequency of denture replacements

## **Funerals and Burials**

Currently, the Funeral Policy rate for Ontario Works is a maximum amount of \$6,290.17. The estimated amount spent on funerals in 2019 is approximately \$185,000 (awaiting final reconciliations for year-end). This is the total for recipients of Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), and low-income individuals within the City of Greater Sudbury.

A review of other municipalities' policies indicates that Greater Sudbury has the highest reimbursement rates for funeral coverage with averages ranging from \$2,034 up to \$5,804.67. Other Municipalities' policies have been linked more closely to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) death benefit of \$2,500 and the Ontario Works Directives Guidelines of \$2,250 as benchmarks for funeral rates.

Based on the estimated 2019 expenditures, the Social Services Division is recommending that the maximum benefit for a funeral be capped at \$2,500 plus the burial costs, which would result in approximate savings of \$75,000 to \$125,000 depending on future cremation rates.

The maximum fee of \$2,500 funeral includes as follows:

- "transportation of body, professional services, funeral services, casket, memorial cards, facilities, death and registration, newspaper obituary and cremation".

## **Dentures**

The Discretionary benefit also covers denture appliances for clients. This is another area where changes are being recommended based on the input of the Social Services Division's third party dental adjudicator.

The adjudicator has provided suggestions to amend the Denture Policy in regards to replacement frequency and realignments. It has been recommended that the 4-year replacement frequency be increased to every 6 years. Denture realignment would continue to be covered during the 6-year period, as needed, based on staff discretion while following the guidelines outlined by the adjudicator. The Director of Social Services would continue to have discretion in exceptional circumstances where denture replacement is needed. It is difficult to predict the actual savings that would be produced under this change given that the frequency change would have a larger impact in future years. In total, Social Services covered approximately \$265,000 in denture appliances in 2019.

## **Previous Frequency Changes**

Previous changes to the rate chart effective March 2018 should produce savings in future years as clients experience a longer frequency rate for household items. Clients that have already accessed services prior to the change will therefore not be eligible until the new frequency time has been met thus incurring future year savings. Although short-term pressure has been experienced due to an influx in immigration cases of large families, this has stabilized in recent months. These previous changes should provide the remainder of savings in future years.

## **Dental Fee Guide**

Social Services provides emergency dental coverage for OW adult recipients (18+) and ODSP Dependent Adults that require dental care. Currently, Ontario Works reimburses costs based on a 2009 Dental Fee Guide for services at a dentist office, which is much lower than the 2020 Dental Fee Guide. Clients have reported having difficulties in finding dental care with these low rates, as some providers would opt not to provide services based on the outdated reimbursement rate. Third party adjudicator has confirmed that it will be increasingly difficult to procure dental services if the Dental Fee Guide remains unchanged. It is recommended that the dental fee services be

increased to 2020 rates over the next 3 years and remain at a 2 year lag to the current year ODA rate. This will have a minor impact on the overall discretionary budget and a positive impact on the health and well-being of clients.

## **Next Steps**

Upon approval by City Council, Social Services will revise the Funeral Policy and the Discretionary Rate chart and ODA fee guide to reflect the changes effective March 1, 2020.

Social Services staff will continue to monitor the Discretionary Benefits budget on a monthly basis to ensure that the expenditures remain in line with the Provincial formula and the 2020 budget approved by Council.

## **References**

Report to Community Services Committee on January 15, 2018

<https://agendasonline.greatersudbury.ca/index.cfm?pg=agenda&action=navigator&id=1258&itemid=14239&lang=en>

Appendix A – Discretionary Rate Chart – March 1, 2018

**Discretionary Rate Chart - Revised March 1, 2018**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Amount (up to)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Blood Pressure Machines/Kits/Monitors	\$250	One time purchase only
Car Seat	\$175	Once / dependent child
Booster Seat	\$75	Once / dependent child
Layette and Baby Supplies	\$150	7 months pregnant to birth
	\$150	New born up to 12 months
Pre-natal Vitamins	\$30 / month	Duration of pregnancy
Folic Acid	\$20 / month	Duration of pregnancy
Pest Control-Fumigation (home owners)	\$500	In a 12 month period
Pest Control-Cleaning	\$150	In a 12 month period
Tub/Shower/Bathroom Grab Bars	\$100	In a 12 month period
Misc Household Items (Singles/Couples) To support clients who are establishing a new principle residence and do not meet the CHPI guidelines.	\$100	Every 3 years
Misc Household Items (Families with children) To support clients who are establishing a new principle residence and do not meet the CHPI guidelines.	\$200	Every 3 years
Misc Household Items (Singles/Couples) To support clients with health related needs.	\$100	Every 3 years
Misc Household Items (Families with children) To support clients with health related needs.	\$200	Every 3 years
<b>Prosthetic Appliances</b>		
Alerting Systems (hearing impaired)	As per estimate	As required
Aerochamber	\$60	Every 5 years
Batteries (hearing aids & mobility devices)	\$250	In a 12 month period
Braces for Mobility and/or Support Ankle Brace, Knee Brace, Elbow Brace, Wrist Brace, Leg Brace, Patella Stabilizer, Back Lumbar Sacral Support, Corest Back Brace, Internal Elevation to Custom Brace, Air Brace	\$500	Every 5 years
Breast pumps	\$200	Per child, onetime
Canes	\$100	Every 5 years
Casts (Fiberglass, Air Cast or Air Splint)	As per estimate	As required
Crutches	\$75	Every 5 years
Compressors (Sleep apnea & asthmatics)	\$500	Every 5 years

Item	Amount (up to)	Frequency
Hearing Aids & Personal FM Systems	\$1,000 per ear	Every 5 years
Mastectomy Supplies	\$300	As required
Orthopedic (Orthotics)	\$500	Every 3 years
Mobility Device Repairs	\$500	Every 2 years
Splints - specialized splints not covered by OHIP	As per estimate	As required
Support/Compression Stockings	\$250	In a 12 month period
Lice Treatments	As per estimate	As required
<b>Moving &amp; Storage</b>		
Moving (Singles/Couples)	\$200	Every 2 years
Moving (Families with Children)	\$400	Every 2 years
Storage	\$200	Every 12 months
<b>Appliances</b>		
Refrigerator	\$450	Every 10 years
Stove	\$400	Every 10 years
Washer	\$400	Every 10 years
Dryer	\$400	Every 10 years
Appliance Repairs For Refrigerator, Stove, Washer, Dryer	\$200	Once in a 12 month period/appliance
Repair Estimate (for above items)	\$30	Once in a 12 month period/appliance
<b>Beds</b>		
Twin Complete Bed	\$350	Every 10 years
Twin Mattress Only	\$250	Every 10 years
Twin Boxspring	\$100	Every 10 years
Double Complete Bed	\$400	Every 10 years
Double Mattress Only	\$300	Every 10 years
Double Boxspring	\$100	Every 10 years
Bunkbeds	\$700	Every 10 years
Sofa bed/futon (in lieu of bed)	\$300	Every 10 years
Bed Bug Mattress Cover	\$150	Every 10 years
<b>Cribs</b>		
Complete Crib Set (New & CSA Safety Approved)	\$350	Once per child
Crib Only (New & CSA Safety Approved)	\$250	Once per child
Mattress Only	\$100	Once per child