

REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF OTTAWA-CARLETON
MUNICIPALITÉ RÉGIONALE D'OTTAWA-CARLETON

REPORT
RAPPORT

Our File/N/Réf.
Your File/V/Réf.

DATE 19 February 1997

TO/DEST. Co-ordinator,
Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Commissioner,
Social Services Department

SUBJECT/OBJET **ONTARIO WORKS BUSINESS PLAN**

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **That the Community Services Committee recommend Council:**
 - a) **Approve the Business Plan as proposed;**
 - b) **Authorize the Department to enter into negotiations for a contract with the Provincial government to begin to implement Ontario Works no later than September, 1997 and;**
2. **That the Department report back on the implications of recent Provincial announcements on the 1998 Ontario Works program as soon as information is available.**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Regional Council approval for Ottawa-Carleton's proposed Business Plan for Ontario Works.

BACKGROUND

On May 2, 1996, Community Services Committee received an information report entitled Ontario Works, apprising the Committee of the upcoming Provincial initiative. In September 1996, a summary of Provincial Program Guidelines for Ontario Works was circulated to all Councillors. On Oct. 28, 1996 the Committee received a second information report on the development of the Ottawa-Carleton Business Plan for Ontario Works outlining some of the expected impacts on social services delivery and funding.

Internal Restructuring

The Department has adhered closely to the Managing Towards Outcomes (MTO) model in developing the process changes required to deliver the Ontario Works program. Managing Towards Outcomes is the Department's new model of service delivery approved by Community Services Committee in October 1996 emphasizing employability and employment supports. The MTO model for assessment and screening, case management, provision of services and monitoring of attendance and reasonable effort has been integrated with the program components of Ontario Works.

Approval Process

The Department's proposed plan for approvals is as follows: the Department expects to bring its Business Plan for approval to Community Services Committee in March, 1997 and to Regional Council in April, 1997. Following Council approval, negotiations on the plan will take place with the Province. The Department expects to receive Provincial approval of the Business Plan by August, 1997, and to begin implementation no later than September, 1997.

Impact of Recent Provincial Announcements

The Business Plan has been developed based on existing provincial funding arrangements and program delivery responsibilities. As a result of sweeping changes to the provincial-municipal service delivery framework recently announced by the Province, specifically the changes to provincial-municipal responsibilities for welfare and child care, municipal roles will be substantially altered in the future. Consequently, the Department's current Business Plan for Ontario Works represents an interim step, and will be the basis for the Department's actions in 1997. More details concerning the announced changes in funding and system management responsibilities are necessary to refine and forecast plans for 1998 and beyond.

DISCUSSION

In keeping with provincial requirements, the Plan contains information about the overall program design, delivery of the Ontario Works program components, service targets, budgets, technological and other supports, and monitoring and accountability mechanisms

Community Services Committee established the following set of underlying principles to guide Ottawa-Carleton's approach to developing a Business Plan: *That [the Plan]*

1. *Not interfere with education and job-seeking;*
2. *Provide training that is actually useful;*
3. *Come at no additional cost to property taxpayers;*
4. *Compensate community agencies for the administrative and management costs for being involved in this program;*
5. *Not be a substitute for paid employment or lead to the displacement of paid workers;*
6. *Include enough discretion to allow municipalities to tailor the program to meet local needs.*

The Department has made efforts to comply with these directions in the following ways:

1. Not interfere with education and job seeking

The individual needs of each participant in the Ontario Works program will be assessed by Departmental staff in preparation for the development of a service plan. Both basic education/skills training and job seeking supports will be possible options under this program. There are no program requirements that would interfere with a client's pursuit of these options if they were selected as part of a service plan.

2. Provide training that is actually useful

As part of the assessment and service planning process the Department will make every effort to ensure that education and skills training opportunities are as closely linked to labour market demands as possible.

It should be noted, however, that educational upgrading and training opportunities for people on social assistance have decreased greatly in the last few years. Virtually all Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC) funding previously designated for social assistance recipients has been withdrawn. In addition, the Provincial Ministry of Education and Training (MET) has had to reduce programs due to fiscal restraints. For example, the MET cuts may result in the closure of the Ottawa Board of Education's Adult High School. This facility is used extensively by people on social assistance.

3. Come at no additional cost to taxpayers

The budget proposal for this program in 1997 results in no net increase in cost to the RMOC.

Guidelines for budget development in 1998 and beyond have not as yet been received. However, it is expected that an across-the-board municipal contribution of 50% of program costs will be required.

4. Compensate community agencies

The funding provided by the Province for both internal and external administration of the Community Participation component is limited. For each placement made there is a payment of \$50. In addition, a payment of \$100 is made for each placement month completed. A placement month is defined as 70 hours of participation. Depending on hours worked, it may require several people on placement to generate a payment for one placement month (e.g. 2 people at 35 hours per month, or 7 people at 10 hours per month).

During the Department's consultations on community participation the issue of how best to share these funds with community organizations was raised. It was agreed that the Department would organize focus groups for further discussion of this issue. Names of those interested in participating were obtained.

5. Not be a substitute for paid employment or lead to the displacement of paid workers

The Provincial guidelines for program development include standards and conditions designed to avoid placements in the community becoming a substitute for paid employment or displacing paid workers. These include requirements that community placements:

1. do not violate the participant's conditions of membership in a professional association or trade union;
2. do not interfere with the participant's paid employment or a paid employment opportunity;
3. must not violate any collective agreement provision governing the assignment of work, including contracting out of work (e.g. participants in unpaid placements must not do bargaining unit work); and
4. must not displace any paid employment in the participating organization (including any associated or related organizations) including:
 - 4.1. duties currently held by an employee;
 - 4.2. duties performed by an employee who has been laid off and has recall rights under a collective agreement;
 - 4.3. duties of an employee who is on a leave of absence;
 - 4.4. a collection of duties previously held by employees, within a minimum of two years.

Some discussions in regard to these requirements occurred during the Department's first round of community consultation. The development of practical ways to ensure compliance with these guidelines will be developed further in consultation with community agencies and representatives of local union organizations.

6. Include enough discretion to allow municipalities to tailor the program to meet local needs.

To prepare the Business Plan the Department relied on the Program Guidelines, as well as clarifications by Ministry staff and policy statements by the Minister or other senior government officials. The Provincial guidelines are highly prescriptive and permit little, if any, discretion in a wide range of areas, including key aspects of funding and program design and delivery. However, there continues to be ongoing communication between Departmental and Provincial Area Office staff to ensure consistent understanding of the guidelines, and to identify, and where possible, negotiate, obstacles and risks. The Department will continue to document issues and concerns.

The Department believes the Plan that has been developed meets local needs and fits well with the Department's internal restructuring (MTO) initiative. The Business Plan represents a position from which to negotiate the details of implementation with the Province. The amount of local discretion will be tested during these negotiations.

ONTARIO WORKS PROGRAM

Ontario Works consists of three components. Clients may participate in one or more component. The client's basic requirement for mandatory participation in Ontario Works will be assessed at intake. The client will be assigned to a Service Pathway. The activities a client participates in will then be identified through the service plan developed by the Case Coordinator and the client following a fuller assessment. Clients without a requirement for mandatory participation will be provided with opportunities to voluntarily participate.

The **Employment Support** component will consist of the employability assessment and development of a service plan for all clients with a requirement to participate. Options under this component include job search supports, basic education and job-related skills training.

The **Employment Placement** component provides payments to local placement agencies to place clients in regular jobs, and provides payments to self-employment development agencies to train clients in the skills required to become self-employed.

The **Community Participation** component will involve clients in unpaid community service activities under the direction of public or non-profit organizations. It includes a self-initiated placement proposed by a participant and approved by the Department. Placements will not normally exceed 6 months. Placements will not exceed 70 hours a month or average more than 17 hours a week.

Delivery Decision

Employability assessment, development of individualized service plans, assisted self-help at the Employment Resource Centres, workshops, job search groups, placement contracting and matching will be provided *internally* by the Department.

Clients will also be referred to *external* agencies who will provide the following aspects of employment-related services and opportunities: basic education, job-related skills training, employment placements, self-employment supports and community participation.

Implementation Phase-In

Beginning in September, group orientation sessions will inform clients of the requirements of Ontario Works and the options available. Selected staff teams will begin the implementation process by developing individualized service plans with their clients and making referrals to the various options available under Ontario Works. Also in September, staff will begin approaching community agencies to negotiate possible community participation placements. The first referrals to Employment Placement agencies will also occur in September.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

During the month of February, the Department held six separate consultation/information exchange sessions (5 English, 1 French) on the Community Participation component of Ontario Works. The sessions were attended by 133 participants, representing 97 community organizations. Subject to issues discussed elsewhere in the report, key recommendations emerging from this process were:

1. Continue to provide community groups and welfare recipients with clear information on Ontario Works and the plans for its implementation in Ottawa-Carleton.
2. Develop implementation systems that require a minimal amount of paper work and monitoring.
3. Establish four working groups to further community involvement in the following key issues: guidelines and eligibility definitions and criteria; resource allocation; monitoring responsibilities; child care strategies.

Also in February, the Department held 4 separate consultation/information exchange sessions on the Employment Placement (including Supports to Self-Employment) component of Ontario Works. The sessions were attended by 34 for-profit and non-profit agencies. Again, subject to issues discussed elsewhere in the report, key messages emerging from this process were:

1. Agencies were generally positive and supported the model of purchasing placement services to assist social assistance recipients search for paid employment.
2. Most agencies will be willing partners with the Department in the provision of employment placement services if the modifications they have highlighted through the sessions are incorporated in the program guidelines.

Summary reports of the consultation/information exchange sessions appear in Annex C. A list of participating agencies also appears in the Business Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Province has announced the availability of 100% Provincial transition funds to offset the one-time costs involved in implementing this new initiative. The Department will be requesting funds to cover costs that could include the development of the business plan, restructuring and realignment of Departmental processes, communication, staff training, and/or modifications to physical plant.

As stated elsewhere in the report, the budget proposal for this program in 1997 results in no net increase in cost to the RMOC (see budget Annex A). However, it is expected that an across-the-board municipal contribution of 50% (up from 20%) of program costs will be required in 1998 and beyond.

ISSUES

The Department has identified a number of obstacles and risks, and will continue to document issues and, where possible, negotiate with the Province.

Employment Supports

The Department is well positioned to offer assessment, service plan development and job search supports to clients. The Province has offered funding of \$200 per client to provide these services. In order to ensure clients are adequately prepared and supported, the Department anticipates a high proportion of clients will be served within the Employment Support Component. To ensure an adequate range of services within this component, the Department has asked that the Province provide \$230 per client per year.

The Department has concerns with respect to basic education and job-related skills training due to a) lack of available training (e.g. potential closure of adult high school; loss of Human Resources Development Canada resources for social assistance recipients), and b) the lack of clarity regarding the role to be played by the Ministry of Education and Training (MET). It is a matter of some urgency that the federal government and the Ontario provincial government complete their negotiations for the devolution of labour force adjustment responsibilities (e.g. training). This will allow for a clear mandate and funding for MET to ensure training opportunities for Ontario Works participants.

Notwithstanding the expected role of MET, it is likely the Department will need to enhance the number of training opportunities available for Ontario Works participants. The Department is interested in developing some training alternatives through creative partnerships with the private and public sector, using client support funding such as Employment Related Expenses, Special Assistance or Supplementary Aid.

Employment Placement

For-profit agencies expressed interest in providing the Employment Placement component if the guideline prohibiting clients from being directly employed by the employment agency itself (to be placed with employers on a temporary basis) were to be rescinded by the Province. They were also concerned that funding levels may not be sufficient for many clients who require more intensive support to find and maintain paid employment. Non-profit agencies identified obstacles such as the funding levels which may not be adequate to serve their clients, and delayed payment of fees which might lead to agency budget shortfalls.

Non-profit agencies expressed interest in providing the Self-Employment component but identified obstacles which, taken together, represented an overwhelming deterrent to their involvement, such as too-short time-frames for success and delayed payment funding formulas which would create too much agency risk.

Community Participation

Agencies identified a number of obstacles to participating, including concerns about the arbitrary time limit for placements, administrative costs to agencies, and the implications of a mandatory program e.g. monitoring and reporting client's effort; board positions against work-for-welfare.

Because of the concerns expressed by the community in the consultation sessions, the Department has taken the approach of beginning this component of the program slowly with a view to building confidence in the program over time. A conservative approach to setting service targets for this component is also indicated based on the experience of other municipalities which have not been able to realize their targets and are shifting to a developmental approach.

Service Targets

Ontario Works incorporates a new fee for performance funding model. Funding is based on targets that estimate the number of participants receiving service per month in each program component. If targets achieved are lower than forecast, provincial payments for the program will be "clawed-back". Secondly, since this is a new program, there is no existing baseline data for setting appropriate targets. As a result, the Department has taken a conservative approach in order to set realistic, achievable targets. However, this will result in limited funds being available to build the required infrastructure for delivering the program. Therefore the service targets reflect a gradual implementation of the program over three years. As various issues and obstacles are resolved, targets may be increased in future years. (See Annex B).

Technology

The Department is interested in using the Ontario Works software technology developed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services and is further exploring its potential for serving the Department's clients. However, the software currently does not meet all of the Department's business requirements. The Department has written to the Ministry Area Office, identifying the functions it views as necessary in the Ontario Works software package to ensure a successful implementation from a business and technical perspective, and is awaiting a response from the Ministry.

Performance Measurement

In addition to the reporting requirements outlined in the Ontario Works Program Guidelines, the Department is in the process of developing a performance measurement system that will be used to measure the local success of the Ontario Works program. For example, data on service delivery targets and social assistance savings may be supplemented by indications of participant satisfaction, staff satisfaction and community agency and organization satisfaction.

Approved by
Dick Stewart
CP/

**1997 Ontario Works Budget Estimate
Provincial & RMO Contribution**

	in 000's		
	Provincial	RMO	Total
<u>1997 - FULL YEAR</u>			
Current Employment Programs Jan - Aug, 1997	3,426	503	3,929
Ontario Works (4 months) Sept. - Dec. 1997	<u>2,693</u>	<u>458</u>	<u>3,098</u>
Total 1997 Revised Budget Requirements - Ontario Works	6,119	961	7,080
1997 Approved Budget - Employment Program and a portion of GWA Administration	<u>5,389</u>	<u>1,054</u>	<u>6,443</u>
Variance - OVER/(UNDER)	730	(93)	637
<u>ONTARIO WORKS (4 Months)</u>			
Sept - Dec 1997			
<u>Employment Supports:</u>			
Employment Support - Admin ERE	1,265	316	1,581
Child Care	533	0	533
Total Employment Support	<u>466</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>543</u>
	<u>2,264</u>	<u>393</u>	<u>2,657</u>
<u>Employment Placement</u>			
Employment Placement (mandatory)	40	10	50
Empl Placement (non-mandatory)	<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
Total Employment Placement	<u>44</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>54</u>
<u>Community Participation</u>			
Comm.Participation Administration	25	0	25
Comm. Participation Expenses	23	0	23
Disability Access	5	0	5
Child Care	<u>332</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>0</u>
Total community Participation	<u>385</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>387</u>
Total Ontario Works For 4 months	<u>2,693</u>	<u>458</u>	<u>3,098</u>

ANNEX B

Projected Targets

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS*	1997	1998	1999
Average monthly # of participants with active service plans with requirements	4,950	14,850	14,850
Average monthly # of participants with active service plans without requirements	550	1,650	1,650
Total	5,500	16,500	16,500

EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT	1997	1998	1999
# of participants placed with requirements	75	225	225
# of participants placed without requirements	8	25	25
Total	83	250	250

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**	1997	1998	1999
# of placements for participants with requirements	75	225	225
# placements for participants without requirements	8	25	25
Total	83	250	250

* Assumes provincial contribution of \$230 for each participant.

** Placement is defined as 70 hrs per month for six months. Therefore it is anticipated that there will be a number of participants involved to equal one placement.

**ONTARIO WORKS
EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENT COMPONENT
INFORMATION EXCHANGE SESSIONS**

FINAL SUMMARY

Public Involvement Process

In February, 1997, four information exchange sessions were held with different stakeholder groups in Ottawa-Carleton on the employment placement component of the Ontario Works Program. Meetings were held with private placement agencies, community resource centres, non-profit agencies providing placement or employment support services and self-employment development agencies. All written background information was provided in a bilingual format and agencies were given the opportunity to attend a session conducted in french.

There were two broad goals of the public involvement process. The department wanted to provide the community and potential service providers with information on the employment placement component. The second goal was to receive input from agencies that had expertise in delivering placement services.

A summary capturing the detailed information from each of the four sessions was prepared and used by the department in the development of their business plan. The following summary captures the major themes from the four sessions.

Meeting Statistics

- 46 participants
- 35 organizations represented
- 18 participants volunteered for future work groups

Level of Interest in Providing Services

Agencies generally supported the service model for the employment placement component. All participants expressed a willingness to serve social assistance recipients. Each potential group of service providers had concerns with specific guidelines in the program. Some agencies, especially the community resource centres, felt the new enforcement role was in conflict with their client advocacy role. The handling of the agencies' suggested modifications will determine their level of participation.

Community Comments

The following summary identifies the broad themes and common issues from the four sessions. It also includes key issues that specific sessions identified as being major barriers to participation.

The Changing Nature of Employment

There was agreement at all the sessions that the employment market has changed, impacting the availability and types of employment opportunities as well as job security. The majority of the employment placement market is in temporary placements. Private agencies do most of their placements in the temporary market, while non-profit agencies focus on permanent employment opportunities.

Employer of Record

The Ontario Works program guidelines require that the employer of record be the business receiving services. In most temporary placements the employer of record is the placement agency. This employment relationship is not permitted under the current guidelines. Private agencies expressed an interest in providing these temporary placements and suggested the guidelines be amended.

Program Timelines

Changes to program timelines for services both through placement agency referral and self-employment development agencies were recommended.

Placement Agency Referral

- 4 month wait before referral too long
- 10 month maximum registration period too short
- 18 month waiting period for re-referral too long

Self-Employment Development Agency Referral

- business plan filing within 8 weeks of registration is too short
- first sale by 16 weeks is too short

The self-employment development agencies identified these timelines as a major barrier to their participation. Program delivery is not possible within the timeframes and needs to be adjusted before they will deliver service.

Program Funding

Results-based funding creates major barriers for non-profit placement agencies. Their agency budgets are almost entirely dependent on government funding. Results-based funding shifts payment towards the end of service delivery creating cash-flow difficulties and provides less secure funding.

Self-employment development agencies consider results-based funding incompatible with the provision of self-employment services. Results-based funding requires agencies to assume all the risks around client success. There is a high attrition rate in self-employment programs. This funding model also shifts too much of the funding towards the end of service delivery.

Payment Formula

Non-profit placement agencies provide services to clients with greater barriers to employment. They commonly provide integrated support and placement services. The payment formula was not considered adequate to serve these clients. Self-employment development agencies also believed the payment formula would not allow for adequate service provision.

Agency Assessment and Job Ready Definition

Initial screening by regional staff is not a substitute for more detailed assessments by agencies upon client referral. The development of a definition for “job ready” is viewed as challenging but important. Different agencies have different criteria and some agencies provide integrated services for clients that do not meet the definition.

Access to Employment Supports and Training

All agencies expressed their concern that adequate funding to meet the needs of clients would not be available through Ontario Works. Supports for participation such as child care and transportation are critical to clients accepting work. Many clients will require employment support services or short-term training to be truly job ready and marketable. Long waiting lists currently exist to access these services. The availability of these services will be a major determinant of the success of the program.

Step Program

A lack of information and knowledge on how the STEP Program works was identified as a barrier to both agencies and clients. Agencies felt they could serve clients better and clients would be more willing to explore a range of employment options if they had more information on how benefit levels would be affected through employment.

Client Profiles and Demographics

Agencies are interested in reviewing more detailed demographics on clients. This will assist agencies in understanding what types of support services and training needs clients will require. It will also provide information on what skills clients possess and what sectors of the economy have the most potential for placements.

Recommendations

1. Assess what type of communication tool explaining the STEP Program will best meet the needs of clients and agencies and then provide it.
2. Examine, in consultation with the province, the issues around temporary employment and results-based funding models.
3. Monitor the progress of the provincial committee that is examining the self-employment guidelines for changes that would facilitate the provision of local services
4. Establish the community workgroups. This will continue to support an exchange of information with the community and assist in the development of operational details of the program.

Workgroup topics suggested in the information exchange sessions:

- referral process
- job ready definition
- integration of services
- payment schedule

Ontario Works and Community Placements

INFORMATION EXCHANGE SESSIONS Not-for-profit and Public Sector Organizations

Final Summary

Consultation Process

During the month of February, 1997, six separate consultations on the community placement component of Ontario Works were held with not-for profit and public sector organizations in Ottawa-Carleton. Three of the consultations were directed at specific groups: francophone services, community resource centres and unions. All the consultation workshops were approximately two hours in length and had similar goals.

Goals of the consultation workshops:

- clarify information on the community placement component of Ontario Works;
- identify barriers to community involvement;
- develop ideas for action that would assist community organizations in providing community placements.

Information from each of the workshops was summarized in detail and submitted for use in the development of the departmental business plan for implementation of Ontario Works. The material in this summary will provide a overview of the key issues and themes that came from the six consultations.

Statistics from the six consultations

- 133 participants from community organizations, 8 departmental staff.
- 97 organizations represented.
- 69 individual responses received on worksheets.

Level of organizational interest in creating community placements:

- very interested	17
- somewhat interested	21
- not at all interested	5
- don't know	15

- 37 individuals signed for possible participation on designated work groups.

Lists of the participants at each session and of those interested in working with the department on designated issues were also recorded and are being submitted with this report.

Learnings from the consultation process

Some of the learnings from the process about what worked well and what didn't work well include the following:

- * Asking people to register for the workshop of their choice worked well to get people out. For each workshop almost everyone who said they would come did attend.
- * More attention needs to be given in the future to the needs of francophone serving agencies. Arranging a venue convenient to them and ensuring that all materials are accurately translated should be priorities.
- * Providing all participants ahead of time with a carefully designed, succinct information package on Ontario Works and the community placement component and then focusing on a limited number of key issues in the workshop worked well to avoid information overload.
- * Using a facilitated process that allowed for the presentation of information, questions and answers, group input into barriers, small group work to generate ideas and written worksheets for additional input of questions and concerns worked well to give everyone a variety of ways to give input.
- * Organizing a consultation specifically for the child care providers' sector should be considered whenever funding for a child care component is built into a new initiative. Child care providers have particular concerns and contributions to make that are different from other groups and they require their own forum.

Key Issues

The following issues were identified in almost every session as being of major concern to the participants. These issues are seen as barriers to the implementation of the community placement component of Ontario Works and areas of work that need further development in collaboration with community groups.

*** Political-ethical considerations**

Some board members and staff are ethically opposed to the assumptions underlying Ontario Works and are unwilling to provide community placements in their organizations for this reason. It appears from the discussions that while many individual participants expressed this concern, many organizations have not yet had the time to properly discuss and reach a final decision at the Board level as to their organization's involvement in providing community placements.

* **Economic climate**

A question asked repeatedly in the consultations was "How can community placements support a participant's shortest route to employment when jobs are being cut everywhere - particularly in the health and social service sector?" All the organizations represented at the consultations have experienced severe cuts in staffing and resources over the last couple of years. Because of their reduced resources they see real problems in both implementing the community placement component and having it lead to positive outcomes for participants.

* **Guidelines/Eligibility criteria**

There were many concerns about the definitions and guidelines used to determine eligibility. The ones mentioned most often were:

- definition of disability. How narrowly would it be defined? Would it include persons with addictions?
- exclusion of community placements in private sector organizations. This is seen as counter-productive since the private sector is where any potential for job creation is likely to be.
- six month limit on placements. This was repeatedly said to be too short when training is required, disruptive to many organizations and is "too much trouble for too little return."

* **Monitoring requirements**

People were very concerned about what would be required of them in monitoring placements. They did not want to be in the position of having "to report clients" who could then be faced with a loss of benefits. Specific information on how monitoring would be done has not yet been developed by the department so it was difficult in the workshops to speak to their concerns. There was a lot of participant interest in being involved with the department in working out the monitoring process.

* **Resources**

Overall, most organizations were looking to the department for resources to develop and implement the community placements. Suggestions included having departmental staff complete all initial screening and reference checking of participants (including criminal checks); develop a data bank and provide profiles to agencies; provide basic training to all participants; develop contract guidelines and protocols for confidentiality; monitor the placements; provide for an independent evaluation of program outcomes for clients and the community.

The lack of resources for Francophone services was identified as a major concern. The "choices" in Ontario Works for Francophone clients are sometimes more limited than those offered to Anglophone participants.

* **Union issues**

he requirement for union sign-off was identified as both a barrier - since some unions would be seen to have blocked acceptance of community placements - and a benefit - since it protects against job displacement.

Recommendations

1. Continue to provide community groups and welfare recipients with clear information on Ontario Works and the plans for its implementation in Ottawa-Carleton

There is a lot of misinformation still existing in the community about Ontario Works and the community placement component. The Department could build more support for the program by providing training packages on the program that include a designed process to facilitate discussion and that could be used by organizations to inform their Boards and staff effectively.

2. Develop implementation "stems that require a minimal amount of paperwork and monitoring.

Standard formats for contracting, union sign-off and monitoring and protocols for confidentiality and supervision should be developed before the program is implemented.

3. Establish four working groups to further the community involvement in key issues.

Whenever possible the Ontario Works working groups should be integrated with similar working groups within the Department that already have started the work as part of the overall restructuring process.

Suggested workgroup topics:

- Guidelines and eligibility definitions and criteria
- Resource allocation
- Monitoring responsibilities
- Child care strategies

The workgroups should have clear goals, be time limited, build on the issues, questions and ideas identified through the consultations and involve the participants from the consultation who indicated an interest in being part of a workgroup.