



Halton District School Board

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Report Number: 08044

Date: March 13, 2008

TO: The Chair and Members of the
Halton District School Board

FROM: G. Tuck Kutarna, Chair
Trustee, Halton Hills Wards 3&4

RE:

RECOMMENDATION

Be it resolved that the Halton District School Board hereby call on the Province of Ontario to continue to issue both the back-to-school and the winter clothing allowances to social assistance recipients;

And further that these allowances be paid 100% by the Province of Ontario;

And further that the Chair, on behalf of the Board, advise the following decision-makers of this resolution: the Honourable Deb Mathews, Minister of Child and Youth Services; the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services; MPPs Ted Chudleigh, Ted Arnott, Kevin Flynn and Joyce Savoline, with copies to the Halton Regional and Municipal Councils.

Rationale:

A single parent living on Social Assistance ('Ontario Works') in Ontario, with two children under 12, currently receives \$1,391.16 per month, calculated as follows:

\$ 583.00 for "Shelter Allowance"
\$ 559.00 for the "Basic Needs Allowance"
\$ 209.16 for Canada Child Tax Benefit
\$ 40.00 for the Goods and Services Credit
\$ 1,391.16 total monthly income

In recognition of the difficulty of providing for a family on this limited amount, Ontario Works has historically provided for two additional annual payments:

- 1) The "**Back to School Allowance**": in August, every family on Ontario Works received an additional one time annual payment of \$71.00 for each child aged 4 to 12, and \$131.00 for each child who is 13 or older;
- 2) The "**Winter Clothing Allowance**": in November, every family on Ontario Works received a one-time annual payment of \$108.00 per child for winter clothes.

Commencing July 2008:

The ‘**Back to School Allowance**’ and the ‘‘**Winter Clothing Allowance**’’ will hereafter be paid in pro-rated monthly installments as part of the new ‘Ontario Child Benefit’, rather than in a lump sum paid annually at the time of year when the funds are most needed.

Families struggling to meet the most basic needs will have great difficulty ‘‘putting a little aside each month’’ so that they are prepared when their children need backpacks and winter boots. The change in how these benefits are paid effectively means that these funds will often not be available for their intended purpose

In addition, whereas eligibility for these two allowances has in the past been determined locally by the Region of Halton, based on a recipient’s current circumstances, in future the benefit will be issued federally through the Canada Revenue Agency, and only to parents who have filed the previous year’s tax return and have registered their child for the Canada Child Tax Benefit. It is not clear at this point what measures will be put in place to assist people whose situation changes at times of the year other than tax season.

What is foreseeable is that any parent who doesn’t have the means or the ability to file a tax return, or who is not aware that it is also a requirement that their child be registered for the Canada Child Tax Benefit, will not receive the additional amounts intended for their children’s basic needs, including winter clothing and back to school supplies.

Trustees for the Halton District School Board can help by:

- Being aware of the extent to which our lowest income families struggle to provide for their families;
- Ensuring that our policies and practices reflect an appreciation of the financial constraints of our low income families;
- Advocating for changes which help our low income families, including communications with other policy makers.

Respectfully submitted,



*Gillian Tuck Kutarna, Chair
Trustee, Halton Hills Wards 3&4*