

Income Protection Strategies

(City Council on November 23, 24 and 25, 1999, adopted this Clause, without amendment.)

The Community Services Committee recommends the adoption of the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Homeless and Socially Isolated Persons embodied in the following communication (October 20, 1999) from Councillor Jack Layton, Co-Chair:

At its meeting on October 20, 1999, the Advisory Committee on Homeless and Socially Isolated Persons adopted the following motions, and requested that the Community Services Committee also endorse these recommendations:

- (1) That the City of Toronto review the impacts of benefit cuts and eligibility restrictions to Employment Insurance, the Canada Pension Disability program, the Ontario Workers Safety and Insurance program and the Ontario Disability Support Program, and urge the federal and provincial governments to restore these essential social safety programs.
- (2) That the City of Toronto explore sources of funding, such as Ontario Legal Aid, to establish a pilot project to fund a team of community legal workers to assist people in emergency shelters, drop-in centres and community clinics to get the federal and/or provincial benefits they may be entitled to.

The last few years have seen significant changes to eligibility criteria and benefit levels for Employment Insurance, the Canada Pension Disability program, the Ontario Workers Safety and Insurance Program, and the Ontario Disability Support Program. As a result, thousands of people have been denied benefits when they have lost their jobs and/or when they have become disabled. These cuts and restrictive policies represent over \$600 million in lost benefits to people in Toronto and to the overall economy of this City (please see attached report).

This issue also has a significant impact on the City of Toronto's budget. The City is paying social assistance costs for people who by rights should be receiving benefits under federal and provincial benefit programs. There are also people in the municipally funded shelter system who are there because they cannot afford market rents. Many of these people would be able to do so if they were receiving higher benefits under programs such as Employment Insurance.