



COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members of City Council
DATE:	February 13, 2025
SUBJECT:	Special Supports Air Conditioner Subsidy Expansion to Low-Income Households
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Stuart Beumer Director, Ontario Works Healthy and Safe Communities
SIGNATURE:	

Mayor Horwath and Councillors

The purpose of this communication is to inform you of an upcoming change to the Special Supports Program delivered through Ontario Works division, effective May 1, 2025. The Special Supports program provides a suite of health-related benefits to Social Assistance recipients and low-income individuals, such as, dentures, medical supplies, vision care and air conditioners. Effective May 1, 2025, this program will expand the air-conditioner benefit subsidy available to all low-income individuals, even if they are not receiving Social Assistance, making it more widely available to residents in need.

On June 12, 2024, Council approved the Expansion of Subsidy for Air-Conditioning to Low-Income Households (BOH24010(a)) (City Wide). The report directed staff to complete an analysis of the Social Assistance air conditioner subsidy expansion to all low-income households. An analysis has been completed and is being shared with the Heat Response Working Group and the Office of Climate Change Initiatives to help inform work in this area and a report concerning the City's Heat Response Strategy scheduled for the Public Health Sub-Committee on April 28, 2025.

In 2024, the number of approved air conditioner subsidies for Social Assistance clients saw a notable increase with 133 eligible households receiving support representing a 129% increase from 2023. However, applications and approvals from low-income households were much lower, with only seven households qualifying for the air conditioner benefit. Given the volumes, Ontario Works can absorb costs to expand eligibility for this benefit within the existing program budget. |This health-related benefit for all low-income households will continue based on the 2024 uptake and an analysis of the current Special Supports Program budget, as detailed below.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

Air Conditioner Benefit

- Available each calendar year between May 1st until September 30th. . The budget can support up to 50 eligible households and will be administered on a first come, first served basis.
- Individuals must complete an application, meet Statistics Canada's Low-Income Measure threshold, and provide medical documentation of a severe medical condition. The documentation must confirm that, without an air conditioner, the symptoms of the condition are likely to worsen, become episodic, or result in hospitalization.
- Eligible City of Hamilton applicants will receive a one-time, \$350.00 financial subsidy per household to purchase an air conditioner to assist with cooling an area within their residence.
- More information about the benefit, eligibility and how to apply is available on the City's website at [Special Supports Program | City of Hamilton](#) and/or by calling the Special Supports Program at 905-546-2590.

The authority to implement these changes was approved by Council in November 2012 as part of Report CS12020(b) recommendation (e): That the General Manager of Community Services, or designate, be authorized to implement spending caps, benefit frequency limits or other controls necessary to ensure costs are contained within the approved budget amounts.

Should you require further information on the air conditioning benefit subsidy expansion, please reach out to the Erica Brimley, Manager – Human Services via email at erica.brimley@hamilton.ca or via phone at 905-973-0545.