



**Who's Doing What?:
Changes to energy assistance
programs and why it matters**

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Non Ratepayer-Funded Programs / Benefits

- Pre-2013:
 - Provincial Emergency Energy Fund (EEF)
 - Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit (CSUMB)
 - Home Repairs Benefit (HRB)
 - Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Now:
 - Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)
 - Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing



Provincial Emergency Energy Fund

- Administered municipally
 - Eligibility varied by municipality
- Eligible expenses:
 - Energy bill arrears
 - Security deposits
 - Reconnection costs
- Served 37,757 low-income households
 - 2004/05 - 2011/12
- Average grant \$468 = \$18.55M total exp.
- About \$2.1M annually



Community Start-up & Maintenance Benefit

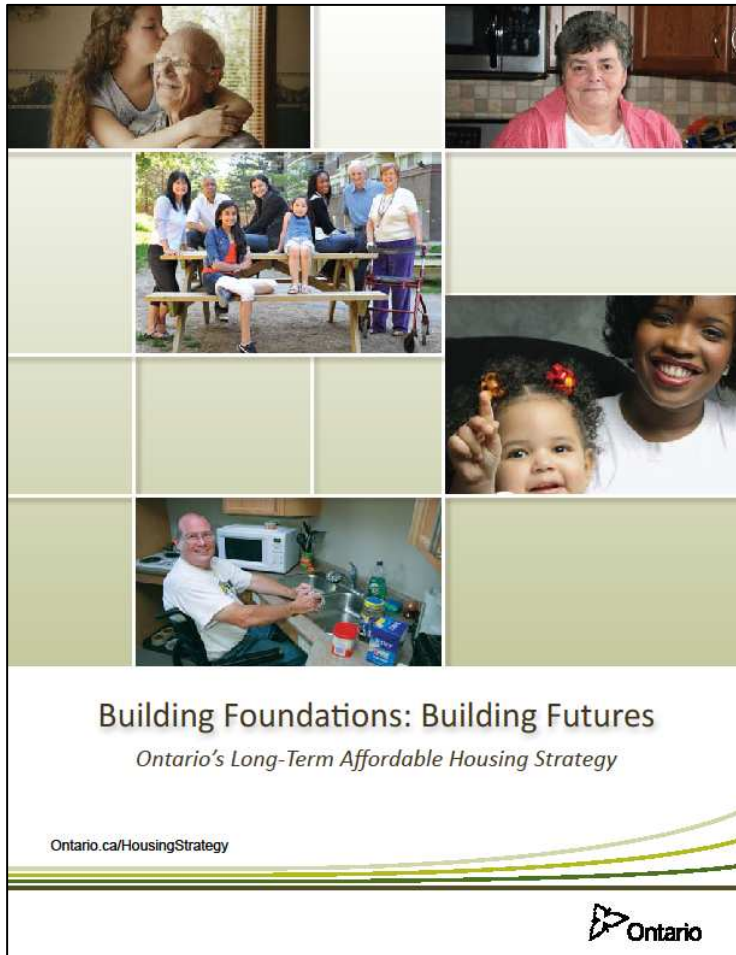
- Administered by caseworkers in OW/ODSP
- Eligible expenses:
 - First and last month's rent deposits
 - Buying or replacing furniture
 - Deposits on utilities
 - Paying overdue rent or utility bills
- Mandatory – appeal rights
- Singles up to \$799; families up to \$1500 / 2yrs
 - 11,000 OW / 4,800 ODSP households monthly
- About \$110M in 2010-11
 - But needs-based so expenditures changed



Home Repairs Benefit

- Administered by caseworkers in OW/ODSP
- Eligible expenses:
 - Emergency plumbing repairs
 - Patching a leaky roof
 - Repairing damage from fire or floods
 - Repair or replace unsafe electrical wiring
 - Repair or replace furnace or wood stove
- No upper limit on expense amounts
 - Only payable if no other source of funding
- Accessed by 600 people on ODSP monthly
 - No figures for OW
- About \$3M in 2010-11

Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy



- November 2010
- Consolidate 20+ provincial housing & homelessness programs, each independent with own rules
- Give municipalities “flexibility” in use of funds
 - Tailor to local needs via local Housing & Homelessness Plans
- Of ~\$430M in annual provincial operating funding, ~half to be consolidated by 2013



...Ontario's LTAHS cont'd

- ***Strong Communities through Affordable Housing Act, 2011***
 - Housing Services Act – Jan 1, 2012
 - Each municipal service manager (MSM or DSSAB) to approve its initial ten-year local Housing and Homelessness Plan by January 2014
 - Plan must address matters of provincial interest and be consistent with the Minister's policy statement
 - First phase of consolidation starts Jan 2013



...Ontario's LTAHS cont'd

○ **First phase of consolidation:**

- Emergency Energy Fund
- Rent Bank
- Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program
- Emergency Hostels
- Domiciliary Hostels



2012 Ontario Budget

- Two programs to be removed from social assistance (Ontario Works and ODSP)
 - **Home Repairs Benefit** to end July 2012
 - **Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit** to end December 2012
- Transfer ~half of CSUMB funding to MMAH for inclusion in consolidated program
 - Starting Jan 2013: \$15M (2012-13), \$63M (2013-14), \$64M (2014-15)
 - No transfer of HRB funding



Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) – the consolidated program

- To begin Jan 2013
- Must have investment plans and align with 7 Principles from LTAHS
- Can fund services in any / all of:
 1. Emergency Shelter Solutions
 2. Housing with Related Supports
 3. Other Services and Supports
 4. Homelessness Prevention
- CSUMB \$ allocated by 2006 Census data on households in Deep Core Housing Need
 - Some munis get much less than 1/2 CSUMB

Pushback, Activism, Advocacy

○ Summer / Fall 2012



The Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit and the Home Repairs Benefit: What You Need to Know

The provincial government announced in its 2012 budget that the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit and the Home Repairs Benefit for people on Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) are being cut.

The Home Repairs Benefit ended as of June 30, 2012. Community Start-Up will end as of December 31, 2012. These changes are intended to save government \$162.5 million over three years.

What is the CSUMB?

The Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit is a mandatory benefit that people on either OW or ODSP can receive.

CSUMB is intended to pay for expenses that will help people on OW or ODSP:

- Establish a new place to live;
- Prevent their eviction;
- Prevent them from having their heat, electricity or other utilities shut off;
- Maintain their existing residence.

CSUMB can be used to pay for large lump-sum expenses like:

- First and last month's rent deposits;
- Buying or replacing furniture;
- Deposits on utilities;
- Paying overdue rent or utility bills.

Single people on OW or ODSP have been able to receive up to \$799 and families up to \$1500, once every two years.

What is the Home Repairs Benefit?

The Home Repairs Benefit (HRB) is a discretionary benefit for people on OW and ODSP who own and live in their own home.

- “Restore CSUMB / HRB” campaigns
 - Front-line & advocacy org’s on housing, health care, anti-poverty, food security, faith, etc.
- Serious concern from municipalities
 - Esp. as Discretionary Benefits funds also capped
- Dec 27: \$42M “transition funding” announcement
 - Brings transfer to ~83% of CSUMB allocation
 - Funding runs out March 31, 2014



Municipal Responses and Fallout

- Some create CSUMB-like programs but others (esp. smaller munis) do not
 - Initial eligibility rules quite restrictive
 - Administration varies depending on location
 - Reduces access for people receiving ODSP
 - Little public education on existence / availability of funds
 - Funds are underspent - eligibility rules change to allow more access
 - Reduces political pressure on both municipal / provincial gov'ts



Impact on Low-Income Ontarians

- Fund availability now depends on:
 - Where in the province a person resides
 - Discretionary patchwork
 - Local housing / homelessness priorities
 - No requirement to provide direct funding
 - Local politics
 - Increases pressure on local advocacy
- All low income people vying for smaller funding envelope
 - Loss of specialized funds for OW/ODSP
 - CHPI intended to serve all low-income people
 - More demands on LEAP initiatives likely
- Loss of Appeal Rights



Continuing Fallout and Activity

- Municipal budgets late 2013 - early 2014
 - Funding decisions made in light of loss of provincial transition funding
 - E.g., Toronto's program cut by \$4.3 million
 - Won't know full impact until after this year
- Advocacy continues
 - Poverty Reduction Strategy consultations
 - Summer / Fall 2013 - new strategy soon
 - Dec 2013 joint letter - 27 community org's
 - Make \$42M in transitional funds permanent
 - Pre-Budget Consultations
 - Many included this issue in submissions



What You Can Do

- Province - send email supporting joint letter here:
 - <http://incomesecurity.org/Make42millionpermanent.htm>
- Talk to your local municipality (both politicians and bureaucrats)
 - What's available to low-income people?
 - Is it meeting the need?
- Raise during election campaign