



## 15. Social Assistance Services

### WHAT IS THE SERVICE?

Through Social Assistance Services, municipalities provide employment assistance and financial support for people who are in financial need.

Social assistance provides support for:

- ▶ Basic needs and shelter
- ▶ Employment and training-related expenses
- ▶ Health-related needs (e.g., dental, prescription medication, vision care)

The Province of Ontario regulates the delivery of social assistance. The Province assists with funding for both client benefits and the cost of administering the program. Province-wide technology is used to issue and monitor payments and manage client information.

### WHAT ARE THE MAJOR SERVICE DELIVERY ISSUES?

Issues facing the delivery of Social Assistance Services are:

- ▶ Complex legislation - makes it difficult to accurately project and anticipate the demand for various services. Legislative changes that occur mid-year can change eligibility criteria; this affects caseload profiles (e.g., age, turnover, single/family mix)
- ▶ Economic conditions - impact caseload levels, the type and cost of programs offered and the provision of timely assistance and support at times of peak demand e.g., economic downturns, seasonal fluctuations, and mass lay-offs
- ▶ Population demographics - physical geography, cultural make-up, immigration trends and patterns affect the type and cost of program delivery
- ▶ Community supports - availability of other resources in the local community impacts the type of service delivery model and partnerships offered

**WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?**

**How many people are receiving social assistance?**

FIG. 15.1 Monthly Social Assistance Caseload per 100,000 Households

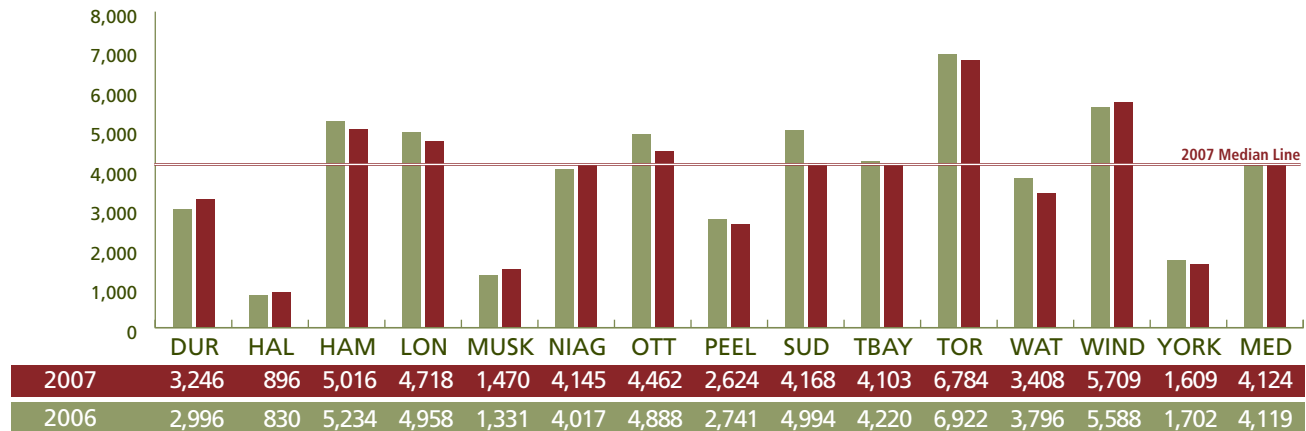


Figure 15.1 shows the number of cases receiving social assistance in each municipality per 100,000 households. The graph shows that the highest concentration of caseloads remains in large urban areas. There is no apparent trend in the year-over-year level of caseload per 100,000 households. Overall the median result rose by less than 1% over 2006.

The number of cases is one indicator of the level of service required in a municipality. It also provides an indication of the economic and social well-being of a community. Caseloads directly influence the overall cost of service delivery and are influenced by a municipality’s unique demographic, social and economic conditions.

**What is the average length of time spent on social assistance?**

FIG. 15.2 Average Time on Social Assistance (Months)

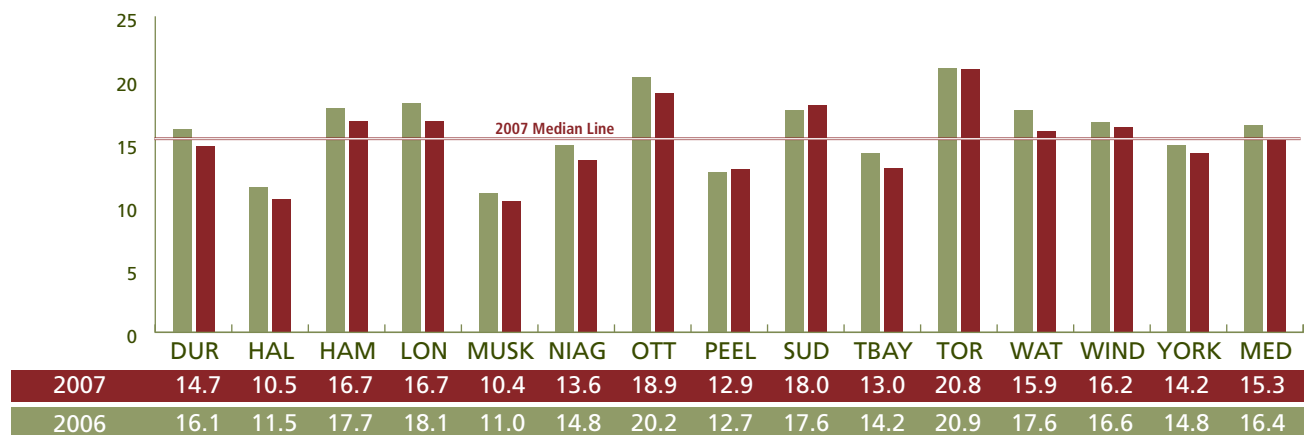


Figure 15.2 shows the average amount of time in months that clients receive social assistance. People on social assistance are actively preparing for, seeking and gaining employment and other sources of income. On average 60% of cases among OMBI member municipalities require assistance for less than 12 months and on average 12.8% of cases also have employment income.

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A year-over-year comparison shows that among OMBI member municipalities the median time on assistance decreased by one month in each of the past two years.

### How much does it cost to provide social assistance services?

FIG. 15.3 Monthly Social Assistance Administration and Benefit Cost per Case

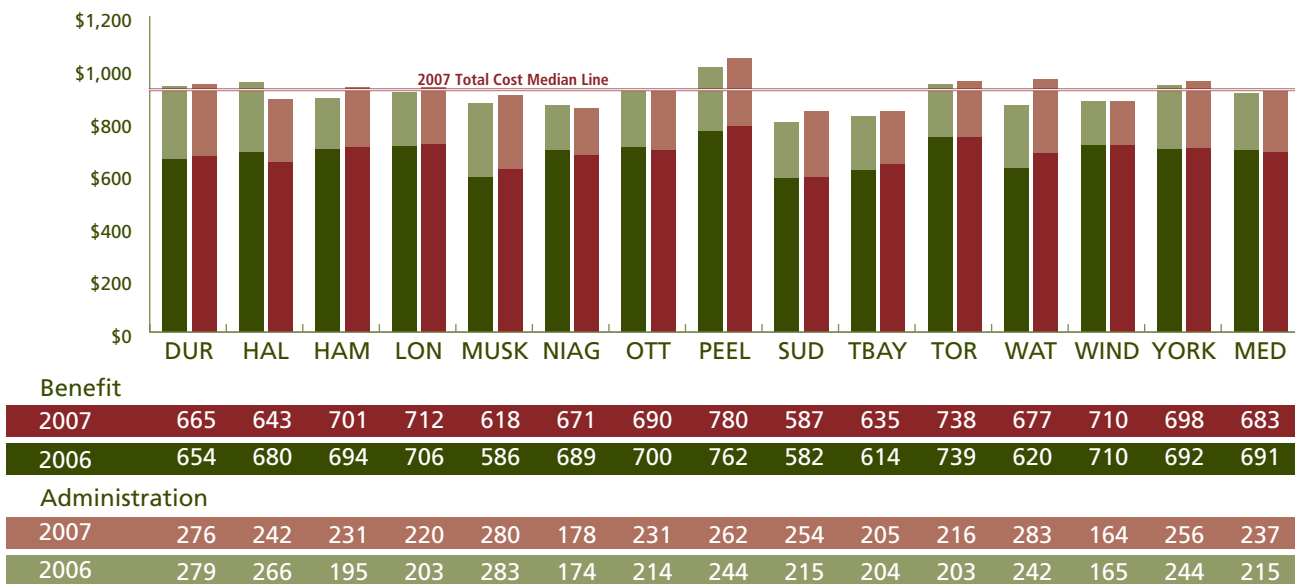


Figure 15.3 shows the total average monthly cost per social assistance case.

The total cost per case is made up of two major components:

- ▶ **Benefits cost** – represents the average cost of benefits paid to social assistance clients. The benefit cost per case can vary based on the caseload mix (single or family) and the types of benefits required. The Province mandates eligibility criteria and benefit amounts with the resulting costs shared by the municipality (generally 80% Province and 20% municipal for benefits only). Benefits provided by the municipality beyond this mandate are funded 100% by the municipality
- ▶ **Administration cost** – represents the average cost to deliver and administer the programs and services. Administration cost per case can be influenced by the caseload size and demographics, services provided and local labour costs

The median benefit cost per case has remained relatively static; overall costs to administer the programs offered have increased in 10 of 14 municipalities from 2006 to 2007.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU CONSIDER WHEN REVIEWING THESE RESULTS?

Each municipality's results are influenced to varying degrees by a number of factors, including:

- ▶ Participant need - readiness for work, literacy level, language skills, and lack of Canadian work experience can impact the ability to find work
- ▶ Health barriers to employment, may vary across client profiles
- ▶ Client access to programs can vary due to geographical, technological, cultural or other limitations
- ▶ Differing local labour market conditions
- ▶ Socio-demographics of the case load (family size and caseload mix)

For more information about the results, contact the Municipality's representative listed in Appendix F, page 94.