
PROPOSAL FOR FUNDING: SOCIAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

Overview

The County of Renfrew is seeking funding support to launch a **Social Enterprise Partnership Initiative**, a collaborative effort between the municipality, a local non-profit organization, and Employment Ontario to help Ontario Works recipients gain the skills, experience, and confidence needed to re-enter the workforce. This initiative represents a proactive investment in our community's **social infrastructure**, designed to reduce long-term dependency on income support while strengthening local economic and social outcomes.

Rationale

We continue to see many Ontario Works participants facing barriers to employment, including lack of recent work experience, limited access to training, and social isolation. These challenges not only hinder their ability to achieve financial independence but also contribute to broader community costs related to health, housing instability, and homelessness. By investing in skill-building and supportive employment opportunities, we can help break this cycle and create meaningful, lasting pathways to employment.

Proposed Initiative

We propose a **partnership model** between the municipality, a selected non-profit organization, and Employment Ontario to establish a **social enterprise**, such as the expansion of an existing non-profit's operations into a **community thrift store**.

This enterprise would serve as a supportive employment and training hub where Ontario Works recipients could gain:

- **Paid part-time work experience** in retail operations, customer service, and inventory management;
- **Hands-on skills development** aligned with local labour market needs;
- **Soft skills training** focused on communication, teamwork, and reliability;
- **Social connection and confidence-building** to improve overall well-being and readiness for sustained employment.

This initiative reflects a **whole-of-government approach**, aligning social services, workforce development, and economic recovery efforts to achieve shared outcomes that benefit individuals, families, and communities across Ontario.

Funding and Outcomes

We are seeking **provincial funding support** to assist with the start-up, training, and coordination costs associated with this initiative. This investment will:

- Build stronger, more resilient communities by fostering employment readiness and social inclusion;
- Reduce downstream costs related to health care, housing supports, and long-term income assistance;
- Strengthen the local economy by increasing workforce participation and household stability.

Conclusion

This partnership offers an innovative, community-based approach to workforce development – one that empowers individuals on Ontario Works to build skills, gain experience, and achieve independence while contributing to the vitality of our local economy. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to make this initiative a reality and create meaningful change for residents across our community.