

## Dufferin's director of community services takes provincial position

Written By JASEN OBERMEYER

Keith Palmer, Dufferin County's director of community services, is moving on to Ontario's Ministry of Community and Social Services Branch, leaving an invaluable mark that has seen increased awareness and solutions to poverty in the county.

He held the post for the last nine years, and come May, will be the Director of Social Assistance, for the ministry's central operation division.

"How hard do I go at this council to change their views on human services in Dufferin County? Do I take a very slow and smooth path, do I come in and change it right away?" he recalled to council during his first meeting back in 2009.

After nine years, Mr. Palmer said he realized he took the slow and smooth path, "and I think it worked well."

He will now be responsible for 14 million people, instead of just 61,000.

Dufferin County Warden Paul Mills congratulated and wished Mr. Palmer well in his new role, and said that he taught everyone "the importance of investing in our most vulnerable citizens."

During his time, Mr. Palmer was responsible for the creation of the Food for Thought grant that provides support to local agencies who focus on programs that support food security, and hosting the county's first poverty reduction forum that focused on increasing the awareness of poverty in Dufferin County, to name a few.

Speaking to the Free Press, Mr. Palmer said some of the things he is most proud of during his time in Dufferin are the creation of a local poverty reduction task force, the creation and collaboration with DC MOVES, the transformation of the Edelbrock Centre into the creation of a community hub for the delivery of human services.

He told county council and staff that the future of Dufferin is "bar none" and is "bursting at the seams with innovation," and effective management, and that the sky's the limit.

Mr. Palmer added he is indebted for the investment the county made in him and the opportunities given. "I hope to take everything I've learned here at Dufferin County to the Province of Ontario."