



THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

Social Assistance Modernization Update Request

POSITION PAPER

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Association of Municipalities of Ontario Conference

Prepared by:

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

Prepared for:

Hon. Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

Brief

The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB) requests that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) provide TBDSSAB with further details on the plan and timeline for full implementation of Social Assistance modernization.

Summary

In preparation for the operationalization of Social Assistance Modernization in Ontario Works, TBDSSAB appreciates that there has been consultation with Service Managers in multiple phases of the project. However, the current lack of clarity surrounding the direction and timeline of the Social Assistance modernization project impedes effective resource planning, provision, and program development for stabilization services.

Background

When the Social Assistance Modernization project was announced in 2020, the rationale sought to reduce bureaucratic and paper-heavy processes for caseworkers and clients, while increasing focus on helping people improve their lives through independence and employment.¹ Since the initialization, TBDSSAB has participated in several provincial-led modernization initiatives that have been undertaken to achieve the project's aims:

- Centralized Intake (as of 2022)
 - In October 2020, MCCSS introduced a Centralized Intake (CI) process for applicants looking to apply for Ontario Works. MCCSS piloted the new intake model with seven sites at that time. Non-pilot Service

¹ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/recovery-renewal-ontarios-vision-social-assistance-transformation>

Managers then adopted CI throughout 2021 and TBDSSAB went live with CI on June 21, 2021. All Ontario Works sites are now engaged with CI.

- Centralization of Financial Administration (as of 2022)
 - For Ontario Works, centralization of financial administration has only extended to 3rd party vendor records administration. Further pilots on this area of the project were delayed as of 2022, with no further information on when or if it will launch, neither is there a clear definition for the term “financial administration.”
- Ontario Works E-Signature Pilot (as of 2022)
 - This has been launched to all 47 Ontario Works sites as of July 2022, with the addition of the ‘Rights and Responsibilities form’ to be added in Spring 2024.

As of 2024, Social Assistance modernization efforts have focused on the Employment Services Transformation. TBDSSAB was informed by MCCSS, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development, that it will become part of Phase 3 of the Employment Services Transformation in 2024, with a full launch of the new model expected in April 2025. When this change is complete, the focus of TBDSSAB’s work with clients will no longer include employment planning but will focus on stabilization services.

However, the current lack of clarity surrounding the direction of the Social Assistance modernization project impedes effective resource provision and program development for stabilization services.

Additionally, based on previously outlined impacts on Service Managers in anticipation of the upcoming Employment Services Transformation, TBDSSAB will lose 22% of its program delivery funding. Given this significant impact, we request that the Ministry provide us with more details regarding the modernization plan and a timeline, enabling us to anticipate and plan for these changes appropriately.

Therefore, TBDSSAB requests that the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) provide TBDSSAB with details on the plan and timeline for full implementation of Social Assistance modernization.