



Report To: Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board

From: Donna Stewart, Director of Integrated Social Services

Date: February 25, 2021

Re: Social Assistance Vision – Issue Report

Purpose

To provide the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board an update on the new Provincial-Municipal Vision for Social Assistance that the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services announced recently.

Announcement

On February 11, 2021, Minister Smith [announced](#) Ontario's new vision for social assistance.

Ontario is at a critical juncture, as the Province continues to struggle through the impacts of COVID-19. Hundreds of thousands of Ontarians are still unable to return to the labour market and many may have to turn to social assistance and other community supports and services, depending on the federal government decisions regarding the future of enhanced federal income benefits.

As such, Ontario's social assistance system must be ready to support increased numbers of people back towards employment, independence, and stability.

The **new vision for social assistance** aims to create an efficient, effective, and streamlined social services system that focuses on people by connecting them with a range of local services and supports that respond to their unique needs and address barriers. The Province's goal is that once life stabilization is achieved, more people will also succeed in employment, contributing to better outcomes in all areas of their lives.

This plan is ambitious and requires significant consideration of how the Province and the Municipalities can realign roles and responsibilities to best support clients. It will also involve legislative and regulatory changes to enable greater flexibility in decision making and service delivery, as well as a new approach to funding. That is why we need to act now and accelerate work towards this critical transformation to support Ontario's economic recovery.

For this plan to be successful, municipalities and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) will be true partners in its design and implementation. While this plan identifies a path forward, it is the start of collaboration, not the end. The Province and municipal service system managers and DSSABs will work together to engage broadly and drive forward this plan to create a better system for Ontarians.

A [road map](#) of the working vision for social assistance was created to support discussion with our municipal councils and other partners to engage with them on these changes, answer questions and identify any early concerns. The province has developed a [Question & Answers](#) document for stakeholders and partners. The Provincial-Municipal Social Assistance and Employment Committee (PMSAEC) – which our CAO is a member of - will work to refine details of the co-design process to support a better understanding of how we will collectively work together to over the coming months.

In this road map, you will see that the Province is looking as a multi-phased in approach over the course of the next 4 years.

For the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB staff, we envision that this work will be seamless as we have already established an Integrative approach to the work that we do daily. Staff are well versed in all programs and this ensures that the client only tells their story once while receiving wrap around services. For example, the Case Manager is knowledgeable in Ontario Works, Children Services, Community Housing, Homelessness and is aware of local resources should a referral to an external agency be needed. When you look at the road map, on the second page, it speaks to the human services delivery model where Case Managers would assess the need and guide the client towards the right path. We are already doing that work now.

Conclusion

The Province's new Vision for Social Assistance will be a work in progress, and we will ensure that we participate in the design and implementation plan. We look forward to working together to engage broadly and drive forward this plan to create a better system for Ontarians.