



October 17, 2018

Honourable Lisa MacLeod
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
80 Grosvenor Street, 6th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9

Dear Minister MacLeod:

Social Assistance Reform

Thank you for reaching out to the Manitoulin-Sudbury District Services Board (DSB) and asking for our advice or ideas on Social Assistance Reform.

The previous CAO of the Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board and the CAO for the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB co-authored a paper in 2013 entitled an [Overview of Service System Management and Employment Services](#). Since 2013 the Northern Ontario Service Delivers Association (NOSDA) has been advancing the concept of Service System Management for Employment Services with four [resolutions](#) passed at the NOSDA Annual General Meetings in 2013, 2016, 2017 and 2018.

In 2016 the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB and the Kenora DSB approached the then Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development with a proposal to pilot Service System Management in our catchment areas to demonstrate its effectiveness. Unfortunately that proposal was not considered or advanced by the Ministry staff.

We understand that the best way to help people on social assistance is a job, but we need local planning and coordination to ensure that the right training, skills development, education and on the job coaching is available to ensure people are successful in extracting themselves from the social assistance system.

We do need people to be held personally accountable, however some people on social assistance do require health services such as family doctors, counseling, mental health and addiction services. Without the proper local planning and coordination of these services, many people remain on social assistance for years awaiting appropriate services even after they have been screened and determined eligible to receive services.

Unfortunately the current social assistance system was built to trap people into poverty not lift them out of poverty. The ancillary benefits such as drug coverage, dental, medical travel and many other benefits serve to assist client's very specific needs but at the same time they created the illusive "welfare wall" which many people find impossible to overcome. The social assistance system needs to be simplified.

We need to reform the social assistance system, so it provides people with a hand up not a hand out, but we also have a responsibility to ensure basic needs such healthy food, safe housing, quality child care and appropriate health and employment services are available to them, when they need them, to break the cycle of dependency on social assistance.

One example of a program that worked well under the Ministry of Children and Youth Services but lost its way once transferred to the Ministry of Training Colleges & Universities was the Summer Jobs for Youth Program. This program offered youth between the age of 15-18 on social assistance or at risk youth a full time summer job for 8 weeks at the full minimum wage. When the Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB ran this program under the Summer Jobs for Youth banner we placed over 100 youth annually across our 45,000sq/kms in 18 rural and remote municipalities.

Just imagine this program provided at risk youth between the age of 15 to 18, their first summer job and for the first time put money in their pockets. This program would have gone a long way to break the generational dependency on social assistance.

Instead the Ministry of Training Colleges & Universities reformatted the program into the Youth Job Connection - Summer program in 2016 and the number of at risk youth placed in the summer component dropped by 83% from 111 at risk youth to 19 across our entire jurisdiction which represents a municipal population of 28,107.

Minister we want to work with your government and a group of 10 Northern DSSABs/CMSMs also submitted a proposal for Service System Management that we fully endorse.

The Manitoulin-Sudbury DSB is a fully integrated Service System Manager and we have digitized all client files in all programs for many years now. Our DSB staff are already working with your staff on the Service Delivery Modernization Working Group, Common Assessment Tool Working Group and we are assisting with your work on reducing the administrative burden for transfer payment agencies.

Minister we look forward to working with you and your staff to accomplish your governments goals.

Sincerely,



Fern Dominelli
Chief Administrative Officer

cc. Janet Menard, Deputy Minister MCCSS
Richard Steele, ADM Social Assistance Operations Division
Aki Tefera, ADM Social Policy Development Division