



2016 Provincial Prebudget Submission

Submitted to:
Minister of Finance
c/o Budget Secretariat
Frost Building North, 3rd Floor
95 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z1
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Introduction

The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) represents Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) across Ontario. We support leadership in integrated human services through strong local service system management in all municipalities. OMSSA members plan, manage, fund, and deliver services including early learning and child care, employment and income supports, and affordable housing and homelessness prevention programs in Ontario. OMSSA members represent local governments and serve the needs of Ontario's most vulnerable.

In recent years, OMSSA and its members have been focused on evolving human services and social policy in Ontario in a way that legislation, regulations, programs, services and partnerships can come together in the most effective, efficient and responsive way to meet the needs of people in communities where we live. A key mechanism to doing so is in the integration of services, funding policy and local service system management and planning.

While there are many ways for OMSSA and its members to continue to work in partnership with the provincial government, following are a number of key recommendations and priorities that we believe will support the evolution of effective and modern human services.

Social Assistance and Employment Services Modernization

1. OMSSA recommends that the Province move forward on developing local, integrated human services plans.

That this includes streamlining and integrating provincial and local planning processes, for the purposes of developing a systems approach that links and aligns resources and improves outcomes.

OMSSA and its members' expertise as service system managers can really come into play on a plan for broader systemic changes. This includes providing advice on policy changes as well as working together on a new way forward at the local level.

As partners, the Province and municipalities should develop a strategic approach at the provincial and local levels that includes understanding, aligning and streamlining the many resources currently in the system to address and alleviate poverty.

This includes developing integrated provincial and local planning processes that simplifies current planning processes and creates linkages across systems, while reducing barriers to services and change.

In short, we believe it is time to look at current efforts and objectives with an eye towards how each program aligns and, where appropriate, can integrate comprehensively towards the broader goals of poverty reduction, labour market engagement and improved economic health

of individuals, families and the province. This should, as suggested, come in the form of a comprehensive human services plan that links and integrates with other relevant provincial and municipal priorities and planning processes.

Other Considerations:

Progress has been made in stabilizing the Social Assistant Management System (SAMS). However we maintain the position that:

2. Any new or additional SAMS costs relating to increased resources or training needed to maintain Provincial standards for service delivery be fully funded by the Province.
3. OMSSA once again encourages the government in its deliberations on social assistance and employment reform and the Poverty Reduction Strategy, to strongly consider the benefits of CMSMs and DSSABs, where it makes sense, as the service system manager for employment services.

Early Years Programs and Child Care

Important changes have been made to the provision and delivery of early years services and programs in Ontario. Changes that the provincial government should be applauded for.

As the Ministry of Education continues to modernize child care and early years we recommend:

4. That OMSSA and its member CMSMs and DSSABs remain instrumental in developing and refining the service system management and delivery of Best Start Child and Family Centres, optimizing their impact on Ontario families.

Other Considerations:

5. We also request that OMSSA and its members are engaged in consultations and planning as strategies and initiatives are considered, developed, implemented, and refined. For example, amendments to the wage enhancement grant program and guidelines related to capital funding.

Community hubs

CMSMs and DSSABs are well positioned to facilitate the government's community hub initiative, improving the coordination of services for residents and supporting the development of local solutions that address local needs.

OMSSA and CMSMs and DSSABs are committed to work with the Province on its efforts to plan, organize and implement community hubs across Ontario.

6. It is recommended that CMSMs and DSSABs and local agencies are given as much flexibility as possible to develop community hubs in their communities that are responsive to the unique needs of residents.

Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention

As the Province has recognized, the lack of affordable housing is linked to other systems of broader social and economic issues, such as job precarity and challenges in community well-being and sustainability.

We ask that the government continue to work in partnership with OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs, through the Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS) renewal and efforts on poverty reduction, to develop a sustainable vision for affordable housing in Ontario that focuses on achieving measurable outcomes for residents. This specifically includes:

7. Creating financing and housing planning tools to provide CMSMs and DSSABs with adequate resources to assist with affordable housing targets in their communities.
8. OMSSA and its members request that the Province support the establishment of the Canada Housing Bank through sustained investment and by working in partnership with sector stakeholders, such as the Housing Services Corporation and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.
9. Strengthen/enhance the service system management role for CMSMs and DSSABs to address the range of municipal housing needs across Ontario.

We ask that CMSMs and DSSABs continue to be engaged as partners and the primary funders and accountable parties in the funding, provision and delivery of housing and homelessness prevention services in the transformation process.

Conclusion

We share the Province's goal for poverty reduction and building inclusive, sustainable and responsive communities where residents thrive. The preceding recommendations are ways to support this vision.

OMSSA, CMSMs and DSSABs are committed to improving the health and well-being of Ontario residents and look forward to continuing to work with the government on policy and program reforms to improve Ontario's communities and the lives and opportunities of Ontario's most vulnerable.