



November 23, 2022

Denise Allyson Cole
Deputy Minister,
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)
7th Floor, 438 University Ave,
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

Re: Centralized Intake Concerns and Potential Solutions

Dear Deputy Minister Cole,

The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) is a non-profit association whose members are Ontario's Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs). In Ontario, Service System Managers play a central role in the planning, funding, administration, and delivery of income support (Ontario Works) and employment services.

OMSSA and its members are ready to build on our relationships and work in partnership with the provincial and federal governments to lend our expertise and experience towards integrated human service delivery and improved outcomes in employment, income security, and poverty reduction.

On October 20, OMSSA held an in-person meeting with the 47 Leadership Table made up of Commissioners of Human Services at CMSMs and CAOs at DSSABs. During the policy discussion, issues came up related to Social Assistance Renewal, Employment Services Transformation, and the Centralized Intake rollout, these include:

- Centralized Intake was the focus of most of the discussion around social assistance. Concerns were expressed by Service Managers related to the rollout of Centralized Intake. Currently between 45-55% of all applications are referred to local offices by the Intake and Benefits Administration Unit (IBAU). This is well short of the goal set forth at its inception of 70% of all applications being completed by IBAU.
- No time is being saved for local offices due to the number of referrals sent back to the local office from the provincial central intake office.
- Clients are getting lost in the shuffle and having to tell their story multiple times due to lack of streamlined and efficient provincial processes.
- The Client experience and turnaround time is not happening as quickly as expected through Centralized Intake. (i.e., Days to Grant service standard is consistently not being met at the front-end of the process).

OMSSA and its members have an interest in working with MCCSS to find solutions to these issues and work together to ensure a smooth transition. During our discussion, several potential solutions were proposed by the 47 Leads for MCCSS to consider, they include:

- Restore the Joint Project Team issues table to ensure clearer communication between the province and local municipalities.
- Increase resources and training at IBAU. Consider assigning IBAU staff to specific geographical areas to ensure familiarity with the clients, area and services available within the community.

- Consider pausing central intake, evaluate initial outcomes, and fix any outstanding issues prior to moving forward.
- Consider simplifying the over 800 rules related to Ontario Works. Fast-track legislative changes to enable MCCSS to take on full application, granting and appeals authorities.
- Improve the auto-grant process. Rapidly enhance MCCSS' and Service Ontario's ability to process currently out of scope application types (interpreter cases, under 18, temporary care).
- Further clarification around provincial and local responsibilities, outcomes, and accountability.
- When calls are taken by Service Ontario, ensure that SAMS notes are read.
- The province should take responsibility for Emergency Assistance applications, which is different from crisis applications that should be processed locally.
- Share metrics used to evaluate Centralized Intake with service managers.
- Consistent timeline standards for the local and centralized intake offices on tracking days to grant.
- Verification standards should be 30 days, not 90.
- Improve process for entering evidence into SAMS.
- The current mechanism for local offices to report issues up to the provincial central intake office on behalf of clients is unclear and very administrative. A streamlined and efficient process is needed.
- Ensure the client experience is central to the goal of Centralized Intake and Social Assistance renewal.

OMSSA members appreciate our relationship with MCCSS and look forward to resuming the co-design process at the Provincial Municipal Human Services Collaborative (PMHSC) and Provincial-Municipal Social Assistance and Employment Committee (PMSAEC) tables to address issues around centralized intake and social assistance renewal.

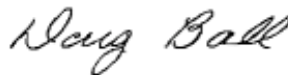
Service Managers want to partner with the province, work towards a clear vision for Centralized Intake, and ensure a smooth transition and implementation within local communities.

OMSSA appreciates MCCSS listening to local concerns and looks forward to working collaboratively on solutions that would improve the overall client experience and outcomes for social assistance in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Cathy Cousins
President



Doug Ball
Executive Director