

Deputy Minister's Office

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April 02, 2020

Memorandum to: Christopher Tyrell
Clerk of SCOPA

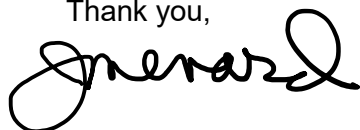
From: Janet Menard
Deputy Minister

Subject: Follow-Up of SCOPA Recommendations Ontario Works
(Section 3.11, 2018 Annual Report of the Auditor
General of Ontario)

As requested, attached is the Summary Table of actions taken and planned by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) and our four municipal delivery partners engaged during the 2019 SCOPA hearing to address SCOPA's recommendations for the Ontario Works program.

I am confident that the action plans developed in response to the SCOPA report, along with the ministry's overall social assistance transformation plan, will make our programs more efficient and effective for people while improving the integrity of social assistance.

Thank you,



Janet Menard

Attachment

- c. Susan Erwin, Assistant Deputy Minister, Social Assistance Programs Division, MCCSS
Jelena Payne, Community Development and Health Services Commissioner, City of Windsor
Suzanne Finn, Manager in Childcare, Region of Peel
Tom Azouz, General Manager, Toronto Employment & Social Services
William Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer, District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board

MUNICIPALITIES

Peel Region, Thunder Bay DSSAB, City of Toronto, City of Windsor

Ministry/Agency: Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

Report Title: Ontario Works (Section 3.11, 2018 Annual Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario)

March 2020

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Rec #	SCOPA OW VFM Recommendation	MCCSS Completed Undertaking / Implementation Status of Each OAGO VFM Recommended Action (see note below) and Steps Taken to Support the Status	MCCSS Outstanding Undertaking / Work Outstanding (if not fully implemented)	Estimated Implementation Timeline
11	11) The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with service managers to a) formalize a requirement to use the third-party verification checks that will be most effective in verifying an applicant's financial circumstances;	Peel Region - COMPLETE A process update for Initial and Special Update appointments was implemented in Q2 2019, to ensure completed third party checks are available for CW review prior to the appointment. Caseworkers are able to request any additional checks if needed. In addition, a tip sheet has been developed for staff to provide them with more information on what each third-party check entails. Training was also developed and launched to all staff in Q2 2019, to help familiarize CWs with the various 3rd party checks as well as what to look for in each document. The compliance rate for third party checks increased from 35% in June 2019 to 46% in Dec 2019. Ongoing end-to-end and targeted audits will continue to reinforce compliance.		
		Thunder Bay DSSAB - COMPLETE Collaboration with MCCSS has not occurred to formalize this requirement. Changes to CIVRS were made and this is now available in SAMS. Third Party checks continue to be used heavily in Eligibility Verification Program (EVP). Internal Training for Caseworkers (CW) occurred September 2018 and a job aid was created by our office to advise staff when and which third party verification checks are required at updates.		
		City of Toronto – IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED Toronto has internal policies, procedures that support "third party checks". For example, City of Toronto (TESS) has implemented mandatory requirements for third-party verification at first point of intake. To support continual improvement, TESS is developing/implementing a comprehensive Compliance and Integrity Framework. The Framework will establish consistent standards, expectations, processes and, (where relevant) indicators relating to the quality of service delivery and compliance with legislated standards. The Framework will form the basis for ongoing reassessment, monitoring and confirmation of eligibility for Ontario Works recipients. Tasks completed toward implementing the Compliance and Integrity Framework • Approval of implementation and staff recruitment plan • Project pilot (December 2019) to test indicators which included: ○ A process to randomly sample cases ○ The validation and refinement of compliance and integrity indicators ○ A review of 73 files to help establish baselines		

		City of Windsor – COMPLETE A “Grant Checklist” has been developed for caseworkers to ensure the appropriate third-party checks are completed at time of application. The checklist is available to all caseworkers. It is mandated for all new caseworkers to submit to their supervisor to review that all required processes are completed and third party checks are completed. The locally developed “Intake Guide” will include the information with which third-party checks are required.		
	11) The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with service managers to b) complete high-risk targeted eligibility reviews assigned to service managers by the Ministry;	Peel Region – COMPLETE Appointment checklists have been developed to support caseworkers with their review and documentation of all relevant information. The applicable directives, business procedures and the checklist were reviewed by all teams. This requirement is also being reinforced through targeted and end-to-end file audits. In addition, mandatory training to provide in-depth understanding of the checklist was completed by all staff in May 2019. Through reallocating internal resources and enhancing administrative supports, Peel has met the Ministry requirements for EVP.		
		Thunder Bay DSSAB– COMPLETE Grant [Eligibility] Checklist was created as a tool for staff to utilize to ensure all items and SAMS evidence/tasks are completed prior to granting a file. The checklist is mandatory for staff without signing authority to submit with recommendation to grant a file. It is reviewed by their Supervisor and feedback/corrections indicated if necessary. Notes are relied upon by our office for all appointments, verification received, and changes made to evidence. A Notes job aid exists for notes subjects so they are standardized for all staff. In January 2019 a memo of new expectations was outlined for EVP. These expectations highlight the quality of reviews, assignment within 15 business days, 90% completion expected before next Audit Plan is received. The Mandatory Steps Job Aid has been updated, sent out and reviewed for EVP to help offices meet the expectations and to provide consistent and clear directions on the requirements and expectation for all Audits. Quality Assurance reviews are completed on the audits and reports provided.		
		City of Toronto – IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED Toronto has internal policies, procedures that support "third party checks". For example, City of Toronto (TESS) has implemented mandatory requirements for third-party verification at first point of intake. To support continual improvement, TESS is developing/implementing a comprehensive Compliance and Integrity Framework. The Framework will establish consistent standards,		

	expectations, processes and, (where relevant), indicators relating to the quality of service delivery and compliance with legislated standards. The Framework will form the basis for ongoing reassessment, monitoring and confirmation of eligibility for Ontario Works recipients. Tasks completed toward implementing the Compliance and Integrity Framework • Approval of implementation and staff recruitment plan • Project pilot (December 2019) to test indicators which included: ○ A process to randomly sample cases ○ The validation and refinement of compliance and integrity indicators ○ A review of 73 files to help establish baselines Since December 2018, TESS has substantially increased its dedicated EVP team and introduced supports and investments to drive high quality, accurate and timely completion of EVP reviews. As a result of the steps taken, TESS has more than doubled its completion rate of EVP audits. TESS will be conducting Quality Assessments (QAs) reviews for completed EVP audits in dovetail with the SAMO implemented EVP QA Evaluation (circa beginning 2019) In 2020, TESS approved to increase the number of EVP auditors to address provincial compliance targets Compliance targets were set for EVP completions Supervisory reviews are being conducted to ensure compliance to Quality Assurance standards.		
	City of Windsor – COMPLETE A Job Aid on Form 1 Updates is available to staff to ensure that mandatory steps are completed during file reviews. This is posted on the internal website for staff to access. In line with the Ministry's priority to <i>Strengthen Program Accountability</i>, the City of Windsor has implemented a few operational changes to the EVP process, including how cases are assigned within the first 5 days of the audit plan being released and weekly tracking reports through the Cognos CRS 350 Report. For 2019, the Windsor CMSM has met or exceeded the mandate to complete 90% of EVP reviews within 60 days		
	Thunder Bay DSSAB – COMPLETE Manual task is input by CW to complete the Form 1 review in 24 months. SAMS does not have a field to advise staff when a Forms update was last completed or required. Adjustment made internally to the Task deadline to 22 months to ensure the Form 1 review is completed prior to 24 month mark.		

	Weekly, 40 total cases are sent to Supervisors to review when the Forms were last signed. If the Forms are overdue, an appointment is scheduled immediately. Supervisors are also reviewing to ensure the manual task is on the file for the next Forms review.		
	City of Toronto - IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED Toronto has internal policies, procedures that support "third party checks". For example, City of Toronto (TESS) has implemented mandatory requirements for third-party verification at first point of intake. To support continual improvement, TESS is developing/implementing a comprehensive Compliance and Integrity Framework. The Framework will establish consistent standards, expectations, processes and, (where relevant), indicators relating to the quality of service delivery and compliance with legislated standards. The Framework will form the basis for ongoing reassessment, monitoring and confirmation of eligibility for Ontario Works recipients. Tasks completed toward implementing the Compliance and Integrity Framework • Approval of implementation and staff recruitment plan • Project pilot (December 2019) to test indicators which included: ○ A process to randomly sample cases ○ The validation and refinement of compliance and integrity indicators ○ A review of 73 files to help establish baselines Since 2018, TESS has achieved a 50% reduction in the number of outdated financial reviews		
	City of Windsor– COMPLETE Windsor CMSM is proud to be one of the four service managers who strive to complete the file reviews every 12 months. Based on this practice, we continue to remain in compliance with the minimum Ministry mandate of 24-months		
	Thunder Bay DSSAB– COMPLETE In January 2019 a memo of new expectations was outlined for EVP. These expectations highlight the quality of reviews, assignment within 15 business days, 90% completion expected before next Audit Plan is received. The Mandatory Steps Job Aid has been updated, sent out and reviewed for EVP to help offices meet the expectations and to provide consistent and clear directions on the requirements and expectation for all Audits. Quality Assurance reviews are completed on the audits and reports provided.		
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	11) The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with service managers to	Peel Region IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED Out of the total current cases of alleged fraud, approximately 4.2% have exceeded the Ministry timeline of completion within 6 months. Recent approval to hire additional ERO resources will enable us to prioritize the remaining 4.2% and meet Ministry guidelines by June 2020. COMPLETE Since 2018, Peel continues to have an ongoing partnership with local authorities to refer all intent to fraud cases meeting established guidelines to the police. 7 Ontario Works cases were referred to Peel Regional Police in 2018; 2 of the 2018 OW referrals have been assigned to investigation officers and 5 of the referrals are in the queue to be assigned. In 2019, 8 OW referrals have been made to Peel Regional Police.	A workload analysis was completed to assess staffing resource capacity required to ensure timely completion of fraud referrals. We have recently received approval to increase staff resources, which will give us additional EROs to manage our current workload in an effort to meet Ministry guidelines.	June 2020
	c) investigate fraud tips promptly to ensure that only those eligible for the program are receiving assistance;	Thunder Bay DSSAB IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED Program Manager reviews SAMS to determine if there are any Open Investigations that have not had the Preliminary Review completed. CW are required to follow up on any open files (over 30 days) and action within 5 days. Eligibility Review Officer continues to investigate all allegations of fraud and refers to the authorities	Currently work is underway to ensure allegations associated with inactive cases are found and dealt with in a timely manner in order to reduce investigation times	Target date for clean-up is July 2020

		COMPLETE Referrals continue to be made to Authorities for investigation and prosecution. TBDSSAB has a 100% prosecution rate for those referred to the Crown.		
		City of Toronto - In process of being Implemented Toronto continues to investigate all allegations of fraud according to procedures for social assistance fraud investigations. TESS has a dedicated Fraud Review Unit (FRU) that manages the investigative process. Toronto also has a longstanding collaborative relationship with Toronto Police and Crown. The FRU provide information and referrals to Police and work with the Crown to represent the City at court and other hearings. In 2019 TESS significantly reduced the number of backlogged allegations which included 100% compliance to the Open Corrections Investigation Review		
		City of Windsor - COMPLETE The Eligibility Review unit is working through investigating outstanding investigations as outlined in the related Cognos reports. The job aid regarding the internal referral process to the Eligibility Review unit has now been updated and shared with the staff as of March 3, 2020. ERO's will be attending all team meetings in March to review and answer questions regarding the job aids The City of Windsor is committed to investigating all instances of fraud allegations. The Windsor CMSM has met with local law enforcement agencies and developed a draft protocol. In early 2020, the process was confirmed between the Windsor CMSM office and Windsor Police Services (WPS). The first case involving alleged fraud was forwarded to Windsor Police Services on February 28, 2020. Ongoing and regular meetings will continue to take place as cases are referred to WPS.		
	11) The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with service managers to d) reassess recipients' ongoing eligibility to ensure only those eligible for the program receive assistance.	Peel Region – IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED Additional staff were hired in 2019 enabling us to strengthen the capacity to complete the timely review of files.	Through the implementation of a new scheduling software, manual administration required for appointment scheduling will be reduced, and appointment booking for ongoing review of eligibility will be streamlined to increase booking capacity and automatic bookings for outdated cases. Peel is also developing in-house tracking tools for identifying cases that require a Special Update	June 2020
		Thunder Bay DSSAB – COMPLETE Manual task is input by CW to complete the Form 1 review in 24 months. SAMS does not have a field to advise staff when a Forms update was last completed or required. Adjustment made internally to the Task deadline to 22 months to ensure the Form 1 review is completed prior to 24 month mark.		

12	12) The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with service managers to ensure that they only waive the requirement to participate in employment support activities in eligible circumstances and also when supported by the necessary documentation.	Weekly, 40 total cases are sent to Supervisors to review when the Forms were last signed. If the Forms are overdue, an appointment is scheduled immediately. Supervisors are also reviewing to ensure the manual task is on the file for the next Forms review.		
		City of Toronto - IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED Toronto has internal policies, procedures that support "third party checks". For example, City of Toronto (TESS) has implemented mandatory requirements for third-party verification at first point of intake. To support continual improvement, TESS is developing/implementing a comprehensive Compliance and Integrity Framework. The Framework will establish consistent standards, expectations, processes and, (where relevant), indicators relating to the quality of service delivery and compliance with legislated standards. The Framework will form the basis for ongoing reassessment, monitoring and confirmation of eligibility for Ontario Works recipients. Tasks completed toward implementing the Compliance and Integrity Framework • Approval of implementation and staff recruitment plan • Project pilot (December 2019) to test indicators which included: ○ A process to randomly sample cases ○ The validation and refinement of compliance and integrity indicators ○ A review of 73 files to help establish baselines Since 2018, TESS has achieved a 50% reduction in the number of outdated financial reviews		
		City of Windsor– COMPLETE Windsor CMSM is proud to be one of the four service managers who strive to complete the file reviews every 12 months. Based on this practice, we continue to remain in compliance with the minimum Ministry mandate of 24-months		
		Peel Region - COMPLETE A targeted audit on participation requirements (deferrals, employment activities) was completed in Q2 2019. This audit along with ongoing end-to-end file audits is used as quality assurance tactic to ensure that all Ministry requirements, policies and procedures are being fully adhered to. Resource materials and tip sheets have been developed to ensure Outcome Plans in SAMS are completed correctly and that participation requirements are waived only for clients who are eligible for it.		
		Thunder Bay DSSAB - COMPLETE		

13		Training for staff was completed in October 2018 regarding Deferrals/ Restrictions. Training covered who can be deferred and required documentation. Legislation regarding Deferrals and Restrictions was also reviewed with staff during the training.		
		City of Toronto - IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED As part of the implementation of an overall Service Planning Renewal initiative that began in 2018 and is ongoing, Toronto implemented enhanced policy and operational guidelines to reinforce requirements for service plans and participation agreements. The Compliance and Integrity Framework (see 13a) will help to strengthen key activities, expectations and standards to ensure that any deferral of employment support activities are confirmed by the necessary documentation.& Participant Waivers”. Tasks completed toward implementing the Compliance and Integrity Framework • Approval of implementation and staff recruitment plan • Project pilot (December 2019) to test indicators which included: ○ A process to randomly sample cases ○ The validation and refinement of compliance and integrity indicators A review of 73 files to help establish baselines		
		City of Windsor – COMPLETE ○ In March 2019, the department implemented mandatory Outcome Plan training for all caseworkers. The participation requirements and processed to waive participation was reviewed as presented in Directive 2.5 and the SAMS User Guide “Creating & Managing Outcome Plans & Participant Waivers”.		
	13) The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should work with service managers to ensure they meet with clients regularly in accordance with Ministry requirements and connect all participants to appropriate employment supports.	Peel Region IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED Through an enhanced Employment Service delivery model, Employment Services Workers have been assisting with completion of outstanding Participation agreement appointments. Updated service delivery standards for the employment service model were implemented in Q4 2019, to help ensure that completion of participation agreements and employment outcomes are in accordance with Ministry requirements. Peel continues to work on adjustments within the model in Q1 of 2020, including enhanced local service measures and accountability structure/procedures, to improve participation agreement review requirements. COMPLETE Resource materials and tips sheets have been developed to help staff assign appropriate employment activities are assigned to all participants and ensure optimal outcomes. End-to-end file audits continue to be conducted to reinforce compliance to this requirement.	We are optimizing the new scheduling software to increase appointment booking capacity, full implementation is expected by June 2020.	June 2020

14a		Thunder Bay DSSAB IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED TBDSSAB relies on a manual task to ensure updates to outcome plans are completed within mandated timelines as there is no automated process within SAMS to flag when an update is due COMPLETE Employment Process review of Participation Agreements (PA) process at VI and use of Employment Readiness Scale (ERS) has been completed. Internal Employment programs updates are provided as necessary and completed at monthly meetings with all CW. PA refresher training occurred in October 2019.	TBDSSAB is in the process of introducing a stand aside case management tool that will provide this information without relying on manual processes.	The target date for the roll out of this tool is May 2020.
		City of Toronto - IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED Under the Service Planning Renewal initiative (see 16), TESS strengthened expectations for client engagement, development of service plans and appropriate documentation. Service planning renewal is an ongoing and iterative initiative and will continue to evolve.		
		City of Windsor - COMPLETE After the training held in March 2019, the supervisors have been actively reviewing the CRS 310 report to ensure that caseworkers are meeting with clients within the prescribed timeframes as mandated by the Ministry. These reports are reviewed with the caseworkers to implement processes to ensure that the outcome plans are up-to-date as well as ensure they are closing the Outcome Plans appropriately. Through the training provided in March 2019, a review of the activities, goals and objectives were reviewed with all attendees. Definitions and examples were provided of each activity to ensure the caseworker and client are determining the best activity for their situations. Updated resources have been provided to all staff.	Note: Although the re-training and education review is completed, this will continue to be an ongoing monthly review by supervisors to ensure all caseworkers stay in compliance.	
	14) The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services should a) increase the proportion of recipients referred to employment supports that have a track record of successfully assisting recipients to obtain employment;	Peel Region - IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED “Ready for work” caseload portfolio has been implemented to support clients; with little or no barriers to employment, achieve their employment goals. A new Employment Services delivery model was also launched to increase collaboration and knowledge transfer between caseworkers, employment services workers and job developers. Through this model, we provide wrap around supports to clients in order to help them achieve their employment goals. From July 2019 to present, referrals have increased over 30%, with increase in 2019 employed termination outcomes by 18%. Peel continues to work on adjustments within the model in Q1 of 2020, including enhanced local service measures and accountability structure/procedures, to increase referrals to employment supports and improve employment outcomes.	Evaluation of the new employment service model as well as current employment programs, to assess effectiveness and outcomes, is currently underway. Work is underway to enhance strategies and implement initiatives that will help achieve Ministry targets and the desired outcomes for the employment term of council priority. Peel is also committed to working with WCG; the service system manager for employment services in Peel, to support transition and help develop a service model that helps achieve outcomes for clients in Peel.	September 2020

	Enhanced supports for employment has also been identified as a term of council priority, in order to improve employment supports and opportunities in the community.		
	Thunder Bay DSSAB - IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED TBDSSAB uses the “Employment Readiness Survey” (ERS) to assess the readiness of clients to become involved in seeking employment. The ERS results of the caseload is used to target training needs and to inform localized training delivered by the TBDSSAB. Internal programming and partnerships exist with Confederation College and Employment Ontario. Personal Career Development, Essential Skills and Academic Career Entrance training is offered at TBDSSAB site. Other job training aligned with ERS, Employment and Soft Skills factors. There has been a significant increase in the percentage of Clients exiting to employment in 2019 versus 2018. This improvement was due to the filling of vacant CW positions at the beginning of 2019. These positions were intentionally held vacant during much of 2018 while awaiting an announcement from the Minister regarding the program direction. The Minister’s announcement in November 2018 signaled that more emphasis will be placed on directly assisting clients, to be made possible by a reduction in the number of rules. The CW vacancies were posted in December 2018 and filled in early 2019.	TBDSSAB is in the process of introducing a stand-alone case management tool that will provide skills and training information for each active client on the caseload as SAMS currently does not have this functionality.	The target date for the roll out of this tool is May 2020.
	City of Toronto - IN PROCESS OF BEING IMPLEMENTED Toronto has made targeted investments in effective employment supports. Toronto applies a consistent methodology to assess the impact, and cost effectiveness of funded employment supports. As a result of this assessment, in 2020, TESS has re-allocated 7% (~\$1M) of its employment programs budget to higher impact programs, specifically its contracted training and employment suite of programs, which have proven, positive results for clients. TESS has also completed a RFP for a renewed suite of contracted training and employment programs which includes a new stream of programming specifically designed to address the needs of specific populations within the skills training context. Toronto has a longstanding collaborative relationship with Employment Ontario (EO). TESS’ staff are knowledgeable about complementary EO services and regularly make client referrals to EO services based on individual circumstances.		
	City of Windsor - COMPLETE Windsor CMSM has an integrated employment team that supports clients on OW as well as the general public through EO services. This approach includes a warm hand-off for OW clients to access EO services, integrated job developers who have established relationships with over 400 local employers. This integrated approach has resulted in the Windsor CMSM having one of the highest “Terminations Exiting to Employment” outcomes in the province.		