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March 16, 2015

The Honourable Dr. Helena Jaczek
Minister of Community and Social Services
80 Grosvenor Street
Hepburn Block – 6th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9

Dear Minister Jaczek:

Thank you for our recent meetings when we discussed AMO's concerns with the implementation challenges of the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS). I appreciate your door being open to us on this matter and others.

As we discussed, there are deep concerns among our Board with the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS). We seem to agree that continuing effort, activity, and resource expenditure is needed in light of the current situation. I was pleased to hear about recent Ministry actions to help remedy the problems. In particular, the establishment of a third party advisor should be helpful in soliciting independent, expert advice to help chart the course forward in order to achieve a stabilized system in the short term, and a more effective one over the long term. It will be critical to the successful outcome of the exercise for the Ministry to direct the 3rd party advisor to speak with AMO and other municipal sector organizations such as the Ontario Municipal Social Service Association (OMSSA) and the Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA).

In addition, the visits by yourself and your Deputy Minister to various Ontario Works sites should be instructive and do send a vital message to our municipal and DSSAB staffs that you and the Ministry are making an active effort to listen, learn, and strive for solutions together in a collaborative manner. The creation of the front-line user group will also provide an opportunity for the Ministry to hear vital front-line input. We would ask, however, that the Ministry consider that the primary input should come from the senior staff in municipalities and District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs). These senior staffs are most appropriately positioned as the managers for the social assistance system, and as employers of the front-line staff.

While the Ministry's efforts to address the problems are acknowledged, one outstanding issue is that of financial compensation. As you are aware, municipalities and DSSABs have incurred significant overtime costs to ensure that payment runs are successful. It is not fair or reasonable that municipalities and DSSABs are incurring more ongoing costs associated with SAMS implementation. These costs cannot be considered part of the 50:50 administration formula.

While your Ministry has provided some initial mitigation funding, we are still looking for the Province to assume 100% responsibility for all the short and long-term costs associated with the implementation of the government's new software system. Therefore, I would again reiterate my earlier request of February 5th, 2015, that the Province reimburse municipalities and DSSABs for the additional ongoing costs associated with SAMS until such time as the short and long-term implementation problems are resolved. I would suggest that the Ministry start efforts to immediately survey municipalities and DSSABs to gauge the extent of the additional financial compensation required.

Minister, again I appreciate your willingness to discuss the SAMS implementation challenges with AMO and the municipal sector. I look forward to the Ministry's response on this matter.

Yours sincerely,



Gary McNamara
AMO President

cc: The Honourable Ted McMeekin, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Catherine Matheson, President, Ontario Municipal Social Services Association
Gary Scripnick, Chair, Northern Ontario Service Deliverers Association
Kristen Munro, Chief of Staff, Ministry of Community and Social Services
Bohodar Rubashewsky, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Community and Social Services
Richard Steele, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Community and Social Services