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| | REPORT No.: 2018-63 |
| MEETING DATE: OCTOBER 18, 2018 | DATE PREPARED: SEPTEMBER 19, 2018 |
| SUBJECT: SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MODERNIZATION | |

RECOMMENDATION

For information only.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with an update relative to provincial social assistance modernization.

BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2017, The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (Ministry) released a Social Assistance Modernization Road Map (Road Map) which included legislative and electronic changes to the way Social Assistance was delivered. The Road Map included a timeline of initiatives.

In the fall of 2017, the Chief Administrative Officer appointed the Manager, Client Services to the role of Change Liaison. The Change Liaison acts as a conduit for information between the Ministry regarding Ontario Works (OW) legislative and program delivery changes and the TBDSSAB. Each of the 47 OW service deliverers has appointed a Change Liaison.

COMMENTS

The following processes have been updated in accordance with direction from the Road Map:

Paperless Drug Card

In the fall of 2016, the Ministry commenced the removal of the drug card that was printed and distributed with the monthly assistance cheques by implementing a Social Assistance Portal. OW and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients could present their Ontario Health Card to pharmacies that access the Social Assistance Portal to determine eligibility for prescription costs. At that time, a drug card was still included

with the monthly cheques for those recipients who did not have an Ontario Health Number.

The Ministry provided reports to OW service deliverers identifying recipients who did not have health numbers present in Social Assistance Management System (SAMS). TBDSSAB staff confirmed that the correct information was on file and assisted recipients to apply for a number if required. This “clean up” is now repeated on a quarterly basis in order to ensure recipients can access prescription drugs through the Ontario Health Card.

As of August 2018, the paper drug card was removed for all recipients.

Third Party Vendor Direct Deposit Payments

In the spring of 2018, the SAMS was updated to allow electronic payments to third-party vendors. Previously, any payment made on behalf of a recipient, for example to a utility or a landlord, was paid in the form of a paper cheque. The Ministry has modernized SAMS in order to produce electronic payments for those vendors who wish to be paid in this manner.

The Ministry commenced a clean-up of all third-party vendors listed in SAMS and requested all OW service deliverers to follow a naming convention when setting up a new third-party vendor. Once this was completed, the Ministry began to set up the larger vendors, such as Ontario Hydro and Union Gas, as electronic payees.

In September 2018, OW service deliverers provided information to local vendors regarding the sign-up process which will be completed by them.

The electronic payments process is scheduled to be available in the fall of 2018.

Reloadable Payment Cards

Administration has been encouraging OW recipients to move from paper cheques to Direct Bank Deposit (DBD). Currently, 78% of recipients receive their monthly social assistance entitlement via DBD, however, there are barriers facing some recipients from receiving DBD. These barriers include:

- Identification (ID), which is required to open a bank account. While Caseworkers and community partners work with recipients to attain ID, for some recipients, this is an arduous task as they may not have been born in a hospital and not registered at birth.
- Another barrier can be a legal judgment against a recipient in which if funds are deposited into a bank account they are seized and forwarded to a third party to satisfy the judgment.

For those who are unable to open an account, or it is not feasible to deposit funds into an account, the proposed reloadable payment card will provide an option other than paper cheques. Because many recipients cannot open a bank account, they use independent

cheque cashing establishments that charge a percentage of the amount of the cheque. A reloadable payment card will eliminate this process and related charges for recipients. Through a procurement process undertaken by the Ministry, Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) has been awarded the Reloadable Payment Card administration. The date for the possible launch of this initiative is spring of 2019.

Simplified Earnings Reporting

In April 2018, the Ministry updated the OW Directives to simplify the earnings that recipients report. Prior to this legislative change, recipients were required to calculate their monthly net earnings, and reduce their gross income by mandatory deductions. The TBDSSAB staff would then recalculate those amounts to ensure accuracy before entering the client information into SAMS.

The calculation has now been changed so that recipients report gross and net income amounts, as stated on their pay statements, without any further calculation. TBDSSAB staff time to input earnings calculations has been correspondingly reduced.

New Prescribed Class for ODSP

There are situations under which an applicant can qualify for ODSP without going through the Disability Adjudication process. This is referred to as being a member of a prescribed class; for example, an applicant, 65 years of age or older, who is not eligible to receive Old Age Security.

In July 2018, a new Prescribed Class was added for persons in receipt of an award under the English and Wabigoon River Systems Mercury Contamination Settlement agreement. People who qualify do not have to complete the Disability Adjudication process and can immediately be granted ODSP. This equates to fewer applicants relying on OW while they wait for a decision.

Electronic Document Management

The Ministry is piloting Electronic Data Management (EDM) for ODSP applicants and recipients. The Ministry offered an opportunity to OW service deliverers to participate in a pilot as well. Because TBDSSAB Administration was researching electronic software for files, Administration has submitted its interest in the pilot relative to the OW files.

Once all documents are scanned into an electronic file, it would significantly reduce the need for paper files except for documents mandated by the Ministry to have a “wet signature”. Administration is currently awaiting a decision on its application to be part of the pilot.

Mobile Application

The Ministry is currently beta testing selected OW and ODSP sites with a Mobile Application.

The Mobile Application allows a recipient to check payment history, view and change addresses, phone numbers and email addresses, report employment income, and view letters issued by the TBDSSAB. The project is expected to move into the pilot phase in the fall of 2018. There is no confirmed launch date at this time.

In Addition to Ministry led initiatives, Administration has commenced internal process reviews to maximize streamlined service for recipients, and maximizing value for money and continuous improvement concepts throughout its processes.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Once fully implemented, there will be some financial savings, particularly with regards to the third party vendor DBDs and electronic statements. Annual savings of approximately \$13,000, including postage, would be realized as a result of not issuing and mailing paper cheques to third party vendors.



Qualitative outcomes for the client, as well as internal administrative efficiencies, are expected to result in enhanced value for money for the client experience.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that various social assistance modernization processes have been implemented at the TBDSSAB in accordance with the provincial Road Map, and that Administration is reviewing current processes to streamline delivery of Social Assistance relative to a customer focused delivery system.

REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED

Attachment #1 – [Social Assistance Modernization Presentation](#)

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| PREPARED BY: | Jennifer Lible, Manager, Client Services The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board |
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| SUBMITTED / SIGNATURE: |  William (Bill) Bradica, Chief Administrative Officer The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board |

Social Assistance Modernization



**THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD**

**Presentation to the Board on
October 18, 2018**

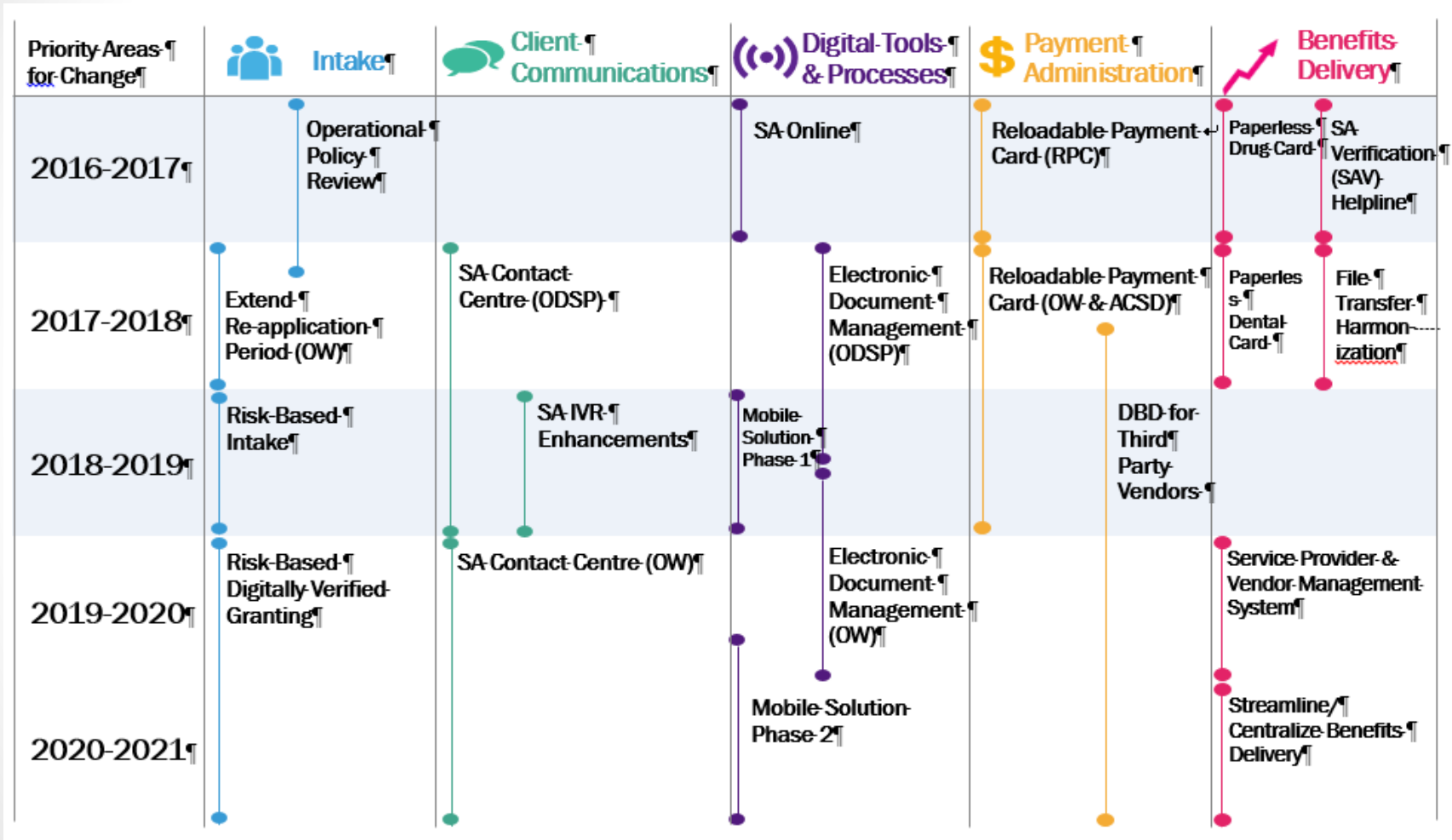
Presented by:

Jennifer Lible

Manager, Client Services



Social Assistance Modernization



Provincial Modernization Initiatives

1. Paperless Drug Card
2. 3rd Party Vendor Direct Deposit
3. Reloadable Payment Cards
4. Simplified Earnings Reporting
5. New Prescribed Class for ODSP
6. Electronic Data Management
7. Mobile Application



Paperless Drug Card

THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD
LE CONSEIL D'ADMINISTRATION DES SERVICES
SOCIAUX DU DISTRICT DE THUNDER BAY
231 May Street South, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7E 1G5

Member ID
Code D'ID du Membre

Benefit Period
Période assurée

Eligibility Number
N° d'admissibilité

First Name
Prénom

Surname
Nom de famille

Eligibility Number
N° d'admissibilité

First Name
Prénom

Surname
Nom de famille

(A) Adult/adulte (18+) (D) Dependent Adult/adulte a charge (18+) (C) Child/enfant (0-17)

THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD
LE CONSEIL D'ADMINISTRATION DES SERVICES
SOCIAUX DU DISTRICT DE THUNDER BAY
231 May Street South, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7E 1G5

DATE

CHEQUE NUMBER

| MEMBER ID / CODE D'ID DE MEMBRE | OFFICE BUREAU | CASELOAD C/L DE CAS | PERIOD COVERED PERIODE ASSURÉE |
|---------------------------------|------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | | | |

| BENEFITS / PRESTATIONS | AMOUNT / MONTANT | DEDUCTIONS / DÉDUCTIONS | AMOUNT / MONTANT | GRANTED ACCORDÉES | AMOUNT MONTANT |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
| | | | | ASSISTANCE AIDE | |
| | | | | LESS DEDUCTIONS MOINS DÉDUCTIONS | |
| | | | | SUBTOTAL MONTANT | |
| TOTAL | | TOTAL | | CHEQUE AMOUNT MONTANT DU CHÉQUE | |

STATEMENT OF ASSISTANCE
RELEVÉ DES PRESENTATIONS

PLEASE RETAIN FOR YOUR RECORDS/VEUILLEZ CONSERVER DANS VOS DOSSIERS

THE DISTRICT OF THUNDER BAY
SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD
LE CONSEIL D'ADMINISTRATION DES SERVICES
SOCIAUX DU DISTRICT DE THUNDER BAY
231 May Street South, Thunder Bay, Ontario, P7E 1G5

Royal Bank of Canada
Business Services
1159 Alley Drive, Suite 100
Thunder Bay, Ontario

CHEQUE NUMBER

DATE

RE: D D M M Y Y Y Y

PAY EXACTLY
CANADIAN
FUNDS

PER _____ AUTHORIZED SIGNING OFFICER

PER _____ AUTHORIZED SIGNING OFFICER

PAY TO THE ORDER OF

- ❖ Paper drug cards have been removed
- ❖ Recipients can access prescription drugs using the Ontario Health card
- ❖ Statement now lists those in the Benefit unit only



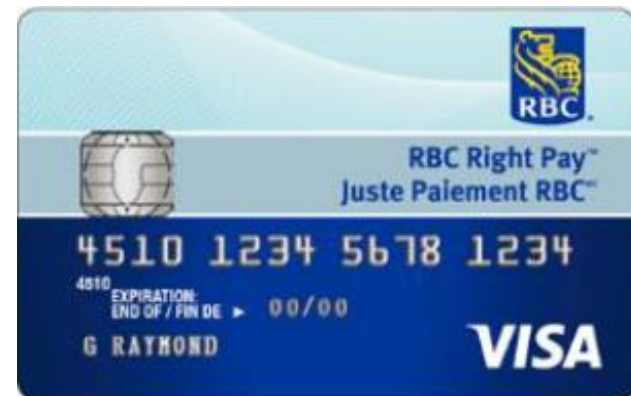
Vendor Direct Deposit

- ❖ Landlords and utilities
- ❖ Pilot testing – April to June 2018
- ❖ DBD Enrollment for Primary Vendors - early July, 2018
- ❖ DBD Sign up for Secondary Vendors – late summer, 2018



Reloadable Payment Cards

- ❖ Reduces the stigma of a “welfare cheque”
- ❖ DBD = Preferred method of payment
- ❖ Ministry has contracted RBC (Royal Bank of Canada) to administer the program
- ❖ SAMS is used to issue cards, load/reload cards and update cardholder profiles
- ❖ Cards can be issued locally from the TBDSSAB office, or via mail by RBC



Reloadable Payment Cards (RPCs)

❖ Pilot Programs to date:

❖ Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP):

- ❖ The average percentage of ODSP cases receiving the monthly payment by cheque decreased from 14% (47,746) in 2016, to 7% (22,759) in November 2017.

❖ Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS):

- ❖ The average percentage of TESS cases receiving the monthly payment by cheque decreased from 30% in July 2012, to 9% in January 2018.



Reloadable Payment Cards

❖ Key Target Dates:

❖ **May and June 2019**

- ❖ Selected OW pilot sites transition to RPC program.

❖ **Post-June 2019**

- ❖ Phased-in, Province-wide implementation of RPC program.



Simplified Earnings Reporting

❖ Income Reporting

- ❖ Clients no longer have to report mandatory deductions
- ❖ SAMS will calculate correct net income



Prescribed Class for ODSP

- ❖ Direct eligibility for ODSP
 - ❖ Persons in receipt of an award under English and Wabigoon River Systems Mercury Contamination Settlement agreement

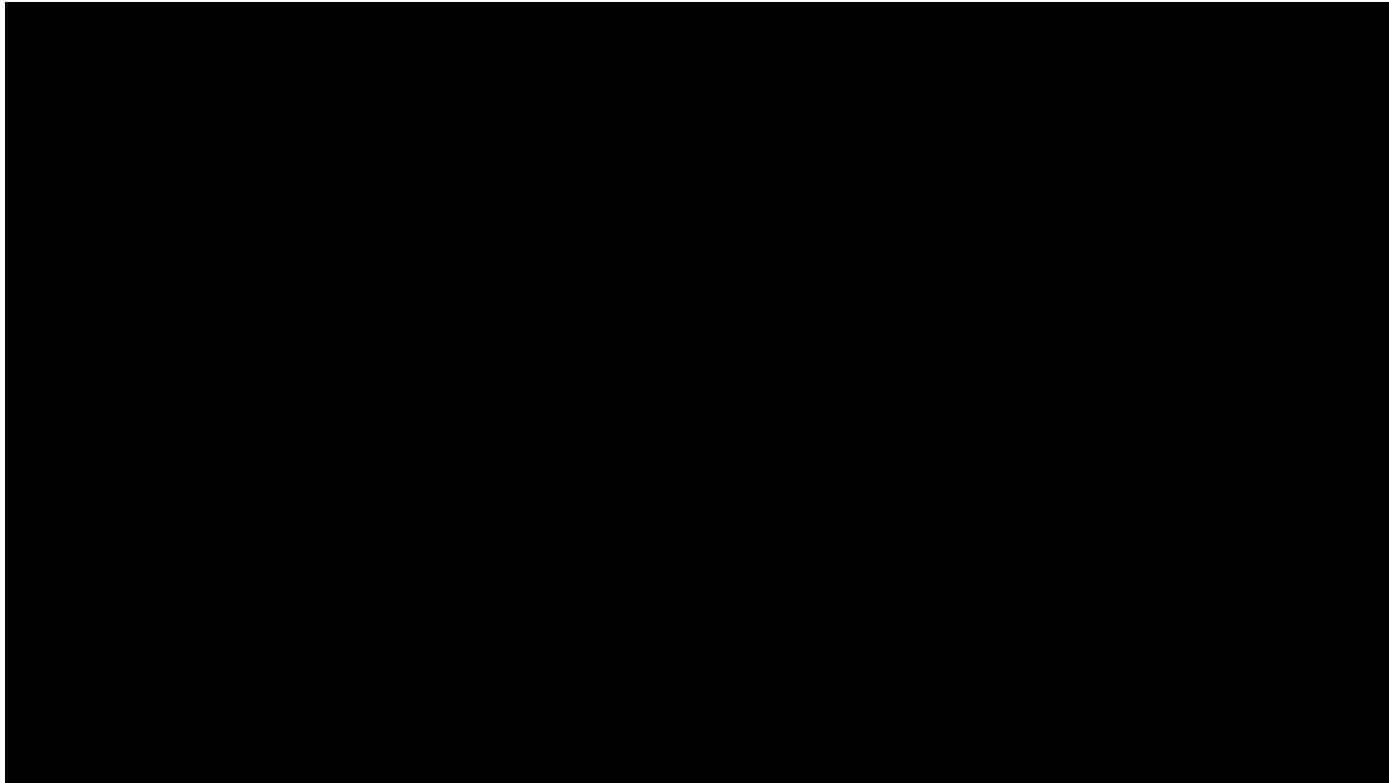


Electronic Data Management

- ❖ TBDSSAB possible pilot
- ❖ Remove the need for paper file, for most items
- ❖ Some Ministry Forms remain paper



Mobile Application



Thank you

Questions?

