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POLICY UPDATE

July 2, 2019

New Employment Services Prototype Regions Announced

Today the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) announced the three regions where Ontario will prototype its new service delivery model for employment and training services as part of Social Assistance Reform. The new model will see employment-related functions of Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program integrate with Employment Ontario into a single employment and training services system.

The new employment regions of Peel Region, Muskoka-Kawarthas and Hamilton-Niagara will transition to the new approach by fall 2019. A full provincial roll out will begin in 2022.

The Muskoka-Kawarthas region includes the District of Muskoka, the City of Kawartha Lakes, the County of Haliburton, the County of Peterborough, the City of Peterborough and Northumberland County. The Hamilton-Niagara region covers Hamilton, Brant County, Brantford, Norfolk County and Niagara Region. The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) and MTCU sent out a joint letter to all Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs) earlier today with information.

Organizations interested in serving as the employment service system manager in one of the three prototype regions will have to apply to a competitive process in the Ontario Tenders Portal. The deadline for Request for Qualifications submissions is July 23, 2019. A call for proposals will then follow. While municipal governments are eligible to apply, they do not have a right of first refusal and will need to compete with other interested organizations in the area.

AMO is actively monitoring Ontario's employment services initiative and the roll-out of the prototypes. We will work with the province and municipal governments to mitigate any negative municipal impacts in the transition to the new model, including in prototype regions and beyond.

Throughout the consultations, AMO has raised concerns about the fiscal, programmatic, accountability and labour relations impacts of this transition for municipal governments. There needs to be a seamless transition for clients regardless of who is chosen as the employment service system manager in a given region. The successful proponents must demonstrate an ability to serve vulnerable residents, including those who are far from entering the labour market and in need of additional supports.

This activity is in addition to other provincial announcements that may result in significant restructuring and labour relations challenges for municipal governments, including on public health and land ambulance. Ontario needs to be cognizant of the cumulative impacts of these provincial changes on municipal governments, local residents and the property tax base.

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