

**THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF WINDSOR**  
**Social Development, Health and Culture Standing Committee-**  
**Employment & Social Services**

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

*"Our City is built on relationships – between citizens and their government, businesses and public institutions, city and region – all interconnected, mutually supportive, and focused on the brightest future we can create together."*

<b>LiveLink REPORT #: 17636 SS2015</b>	<b>Report Date: January 14, 2015</b>
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**To: Social Development, Health and Culture Standing Committee**

**Subject: Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) – Update on the Conversion to the new Provincial Computer System and the Impact on Services and Operations in the Delivery of Ontario Works**

**1. RECOMMENDATION: City Wide:  Ward(s): \_\_\_\_\_**

**WHEREAS** the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services (the "Ministry") embarked on the multi-year Social Services Solutions Modernization Project (SSSMP); and

**WHEREAS** the project is part of the Major Application Portfolio Strategy (MAPS); a broader provincial government initiative to modernize technology for enhanced service delivery across the Ontario Public Service; and

**WHEREAS** the Ministry's objectives include:

- improving customer service through new online services and enhanced service tools
- streamlining business processes
- allowing for the timely implementation of policy and program changes
- effectively managing client data and other information to support service planning and delivery
- increasing audit capacity and accountability; and

**WHEREAS** the Ministry introduced the new technology called the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS); and

**WHEREAS** SAMS was implemented to establish a foundation case management application that can be built upon to support the evolution of human services delivery in Ontario; and

**WHEREAS** the SAMS provincial computer system is plagued with problems that are negatively impacting social assistance service delivery; and

**WHEREAS** the City of Windsor is committed to work with the Province towards the stabilization of SAMS and provide efficient and effective service in the delivery of Ontario Works;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the City of Windsor hereby **PETITIONS** the Province of Ontario (the "Province") to continue its work and specific actions to deal with immediate issues and improve the implementation of SAMS;

**AND FURTHER**, that in order to resolve the issues related to SAMS, the Province continue to work closely with the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSM's) and the District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSAB's), the Technical Working Group and Sub-Groups made up of municipal and provincial front-line staff;

**AND FURTHER**, that while the Province works on correcting the problems with SAMS that it bring the SAMS system down to minimum functioning to allow for the basics in service and operation, in terms of application-taking, data-capture of applicants' and recipients' most essential personal information, payments, letters, subsidy claims and financial reconciliation, and reports;

**AND FURTHER**, that the Province pay the full costs expended by CMSM's and DSSAB's during SAMS post-implementation until SAMS is fully functional and without problems, including:

- a) additional staffing costs,
- b) overtime,
- c) post-SAMS stabilization training,
- d) incorrect benefit payments,
- e) and other expenses related to SAMS and its operational impact on CMSM's and DSSAB's;

**AND FURTHER**, that due to the SAMS problems, the Province set aside the outcome performance targets, and not penalize CMSM's and DSSAB's relative to the outcome-based funding for non-achievement of outcomes;

**AND FURTHER**, that the Province provide onsite IT (Information Technology) support to liaise and work with CMSM's and DSSAB's to resolve SAMS issues;

**AND FURTHER**, that the Province develop and distribute to CMSM's and DSSAB's revised training manuals, guides, job aids, online training sessions and other resources once SAMS has been completely corrected;

**AND FURTHER**, that the Province refrain from implementing any legislative and/or program changes, new systems or initiatives that will impact municipalities delivering Ontario Works until SAMS deficiencies have all been rectified;

**AND FURTHER**, that the Province continue to communicate with CMSM's and DSSAB's throughout Ontario regarding the status of SAMS.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

The purpose of this report is to provide City Council with a comprehensive overview of the issues and problems surrounding SAMS and to assist Council to understand the request that they petition the Province to action specific recommendations towards rectifying the SAMS situation. This report is comprised of a number of sections and sub-sections detailing the various issues, mitigation strategies and proposed options.

The Department of Employment & Social Services undertook a considerable amount of preparatory work prior to SAMS conversion. During testing, using earlier versions of SAMS, our concerns were expressed to the provincial project team. We were told that they were aware of the issues and in the final version of SAMS they would be corrected. We were not given the opportunity to observe the SAMS output since overnight processing or “batching” was not done by the province as part of these tests.

Furthermore, testing of converted data from the previous system into SAMS was not within the provincial scope for our departmental testers in terms of eligibility and entitlement recalculations, and some features of the technology were still under development. Reassurances were given by the provincial project team that extensive testing was done and all systems were a go. Unfortunately, the amount of issues and complexities has been colossal and can be described as a technical tsunami, resulting in a state of continual crisis management – the “*new normal*”. The SAMS problems are not locally isolated, but rather are occurring across the province and severely impacting ALL social assistance delivery agents.

Management and staff are expending an inordinate amount of time assessing and attempting to address problem system errors; often having to complete applications by hand, as well as issue payments to clients manually. This has impeded Caseworkers’ ability to conduct effective case management, significantly delayed service to clients, and drastically reduced productivity. This is creating unnecessary strain on social assistance recipients who require a timely response to their financial needs and crises. In turn, these issues are negatively impacting staff. They are extremely frustrated, dealing with a heavy workload, and working excessive overtime, which is contributing to poor morale. Nonetheless, staff continue to do everything within their power to take care of their clients each day.

In collaboration with the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), the Province has established a joint Technical Working Group and Sub-Groups comprised of municipal and provincial staff. The goals are to address immediate concerns related to data conversion, payments and other high priority items. The Minister of Community and Social Services has appointed a third-party advisor to review and report on the SAMS matter. The Minister has also committed to site visits at over 30 locations to obtain input from frontline staff regarding SAMS. System improvements and additional training support is also part of the Minister’s action plan.

Although mitigation and crisis management strategies are in place and communication is ongoing with a variety of constituents, the fact remains that SAMS is a broken system that is not meeting the goals of MAPS and SSSMP set by the Province. With a current 50 percent resolution rate in correcting the numerous problem tickets logged across Ontario, it is proposed that a variety of options be considered while the system issues are corrected. The recommendations to the Province are: bring the SAMS system down to minimum functioning to allow for basic business transactions and reporting without the problematic features; deploy onsite provincial IT support for municipalities; develop new training materials and completely retrain all staff; set aside the outcome performance targets without imposing funding reduction penalties for non-achievement of outcomes; postpone any legislative and program changes; continue to communicate with municipalities regarding SAMS; and pay the full costs spent by municipalities during the SAMS post-implementation and stabilization period.

The City’s outlay of human resources and additional funds is not sustainable. The \$303,000 at 100 percent provincial subsidy for SAMS related project costs covers only a portion of the City’s total expenditures that continue to amass daily. More provincial funding is required to make this situation cost-neutral to the City.

Fixing SAMS and making it a fully functional and useful instrument is of the highest priority so that attention and efforts can be directed to assisting those most in need and helping them become self-sufficient.

## **2. BACKGROUND:**

### **Pre-SAMS Implementation**

The Province's implementation of SAMS is part of a larger provincial strategy with the following objectives:

1. Improve customer service through new online services and enhanced service tools
2. Streamline business processes
3. Timely implementation of policy and program changes
4. Effective management of client data and other information to support service planning and delivery
5. Increase audit capacity and accountability

One of the early implementation or GoLive dates for SAMS was November 2013, later deferred to May 2014 and eventually implemented on November 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>, 2014. Reassurances were provided by the Province that significant progress had been made towards implementing SAMS with respect to conducting several data conversion tests that met or exceeded quality and performance targets.

All preparatory work, change systems and mitigation plans were in place and the Department's readiness status was "Green" and "a go" from a local perspective. Some of the key pre-conversion activities included:

1. Extensive training for our departmental trainers, which was provided by the Province in Toronto.
2. The department's Local Business Expert (LBE) was sent to Toronto for two weeks as part of User Acceptance Testing (UAT).
3. Prepared comprehensive training and user manuals consistent with provincial documentation, as well as developed job aids and user guides.
4. Provided staff with extensive training, comprising of 3 phases of formal classroom training:
  - a. End User: each staff person was scheduled for 9 full days between January 13 and April 17, 2014.
  - b. Refresher: 10 half-days (or 5 full days) between June 9 and August 22, 2014.
  - c. Just-In-Time training: 6 full days between September 22 and November 7, 2014.

There were other opportunities as well, usually Fridays, for staff to practice on various training modules under the direction of a Subject Matter Expert (SME).

5. Created an Implementation Team consisting of: Manager, Supervisor, Staff Development Coordinator, Policy Coordinators, Trainers, and Clerical Support, along with frontline Caseworkers who volunteered to become SME's to assist staff during training, SAMS implementation and post-implementation.

A Communications Report regarding pre-implementation activities received by Council at their meeting of October 6, 2014 is attached as Appendix "D". (LL#17404)

Local use of the SAMS technology prior to conversion occurred primarily in three (3) forums:

1. As one of 20 pilot sites in Ontario, frontline Caseworkers used the system and identified various issues. When these issues or problems were conveyed to the Province, the responses were:
  - a. The issues are already known and would be fixed prior to implementation.
  - b. The pilot sites are using earlier versions of SAMS; these issues would be addressed in the final version of the product.
  - c. The resultant products or output (e.g., payments, letters, reports, etc.) from a transaction were never produced by the Province for us to see.

2. The department's Local Business Expert (LBE) involved in User Acceptance Testing (UAT) hosted by the Province in Toronto tested and documented the results from 7,000 cases converted from SDMT (previous system) to SAMS cases. However, the testing did not account for certain methods re-designed (or workarounds) in SDMT over the years and the unanticipated impacts that this would have when the converted data is interpreted by SAMS, particularly in terms of Ontario Works eligibility and entitlement recalculations resulting in over/underpayments. Over the course of the two weeks that our LBE was testing the system, the first week involved an older version of SAMS and only in the second week did he have an opportunity to see the newer version. Some features in SAMS could not be tested because they were still under development (e.g., the income reporting process). Therefore, he did not have the opportunity to test the integrity of the income reporting process relative to two consecutive monthly pay runs.
3. The training was conducted within a practice environment or Site Readiness Environment (SRE) that contained fictitious or sample data. Again, final results or output were not part of the sample data environment.

The provincial project team identified data conversion as the number one risk. Recognizing that this would be problematic, we raised this issue with the provincial project team both verbally and in writing through a Municipal/SSSMP group in February 2014. The provincial project team reassured us that rigorous testing and comprehensive plans were in place to achieve successful implementation of SAMS.

On October 31, 2014, the Province announced that SAMS implementation was a "Go".

### **Post-SAMS Implementation**

Over the course of post-implementation, the Province has recognized the impact that the new SAMS technology has had on municipal social assistance delivery agents. They have acknowledged that service delivery sites across Ontario continue to experience numerous problems, such as issues with the converted data and the need to complete paper applications and manual cheques to avoid any service interruption to clients. Poor staff morale has also been reported in many sites.

During the actual SAMS conversion or GoLive day (November 12, 2014 for Windsor), particularly during the "blackout period" (i.e., several days around conversion when no computer system was available), we went to manual systems, activated and staffed a SAMS Control Centre with computers in one of our boardrooms, and ensured that the SME's, departmental project team and supervisors were on the floor providing support.

As part of our contingency plan, we had accounted for the possibility that SAMS could experience complete system failure. The plan was to move to manual systems and continue to provide service to our clients until the system was up and running again.

Everything went according to plan until we entered the post-implementation phase and the first pay run of December 2014.

## **3. DISCUSSION:**

### **SAMS Problems**

The SAMS issue is a very complicated matter that has various dimensions to it. Just to list a few:

- It is touted as a "data rich" system requiring far more information than what was collected in previous provincial social assistance computer systems; requiring more time and more steps to complete a transaction than before.

- There are over 800 complex rules governing social assistance with sub-rules and many exceptions; SAMS is a very rule-based computer system.
- The urgency of people's needs and the need for discretion to address a multitude of situations that people face daily complicate matters even further.

A significant problem is the converted data from the previous SDMT Provincial computer system. When SDMT was implemented back in 2002, it was plagued with problems (e.g., transactional issues, lack of adequate reports, etc.) that required workarounds (or redesigned methods), which depending on the operational or service needs of each municipality, varied across the Province. Now, we have a data rich system that must interpret the converted data, which is what, from our perspective, is creating havoc for municipal social services delivery agents. As a result, it has become a mixed exercise of intensive analysis and intuitive detective work to determine why we are getting certain results in SAMS and then how to rectify it. Adding to the frustration is that staff are faced with this enormous challenge repeatedly on a daily basis.

Across the province, municipalities are experiencing: frustrated staff and clients; excessive delays in processing time; reduced case management as a result of dealing with the SAMS technology; work backlogs; and inaccurate system-generated documents.

Specific examples of the problems include:

1. Slow performance of the SAMS technology.
2. Features of the SAMS system not working in accordance to how staff were trained.
3. Unintended and unexpected results created by SAMS.
4. SAMS indicating that a payment has been made when in fact it has not been issued.
5. Irresolvable suspended cases that the Department has had to issue manual cheques to recipients to ensure that they receive their correct monthly payments.
6. SAMS reports that are not accurate.
7. The lack of adequate reports from the system impeding the City's ability to file accurate subsidy claims to the Province.
8. The new technology has been time-consuming, frustrating and negatively impacting staff morale.
9. During regular discussions (or Touch Point Calls) with the Province and other municipalities in the South West Region, the Department raised anywhere from 15 to 25 issues or problems (frequency was daily and now twice weekly).
10. There is a high probability that Ontario Works recipients/former recipients will receive inaccurate T5s. This is due to the possibility of invalid overpayments or arrears and manual cheques that may not have been posted in time. This will ultimately result in increased calls from people who will understandably be frustrated, and increased work for staff to reconcile.

Other examples of some of the issues and problems experienced are listed in Appendix "A". It is important to note that the problems are too numerous to document all of them in this report.

### Impacts

#### Social Assistance Clients

Some of the problems experienced by clients include:

1. Delays in receiving other benefits that are health-related and/or employment-related supports (e.g., transportation assistance).
2. Ontario Drug Benefit Cards and/or Dental Cards that did not print and therefore must be issued manually.
3. SAMS system errors that result in underpayments or overpayments that need to be corrected and proper benefits reissued. Clients who receive more than their entitlement then face the additional burden of having to repay the funds.

4. Since staff are spending an excessive amount of time fixing problems and addressing issues, clients are waiting much longer to receive a response to their inquiries or requests.
5. SAMS problems often necessitate issuing payments by way of cheque through the mail as opposed to the more efficient Direct Bank Deposit option, which increases the time it takes for clients to receive their payments.

The problems and delays have led to situations where clients have received eviction notices because their rent was not paid on time, lacked funds to feed themselves and their families, and/or were unable to obtain needed medications. While these situations receive our immediate attention to avert a terrible outcome, the technical problems create unnecessary distress and impose undue hardship on the people that we are commissioned to help.

### Departmental Staff

Staff have described the impact of the system shortcomings as extremely frustrating, exhausting and demoralizing. Like their colleagues across the province, our caseworkers and support staff take pride in their work and their ability to assist in handling some of the most difficult circumstances and crises that individuals and families face. The source of their frustration is their inability (through no fault of their own) to provide customer service at their accustomed level because the tool they need is broken. As one Caseworker poignantly expressed,

*I used to like my job but now, I do not have the tool required to deliver the service. SAMS is a constant source of frustration. [...] I have become a computer technician. My time is now primarily data entry and program problem solve. Case management is gone.*

Despite these challenges staff continue to conduct themselves as professionals and persevere in their attempts to serve clients. The Department is continually reorganizing work processes to provide supports to staff. We have also utilized the Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) to bring in counsellors and trauma experts to help staff deal with the emotional fallout from the daily strain created by the SAMS problems.

### Departmental Operations & Mandate

The post-implementation supports were in place and expected to be required for a limited time. Rather than winding the project down with a view to conclude it by December 31, 2014, all facets of the project and staff supports had to be maintained and bolstered. Although the Department was in a "Green" state of readiness prior to SAMS implementation, the current status is "Orange" to "Red" (i.e., Green, Yellow, Orange, Red; where Green means no issues/problems and Red is critical). Using the provincial criteria, this rating is primarily based on "*working with converted data*", "*payments/cheque printing*" and "*morale*".

Municipalities are echoing the concern of staff regarding the inordinate amount of time spent to attain the correct payment amount through SAMS. This realignment of time means the bulk of the normal program services/audit compliance requirements are not being delivered or are severely hampered, namely:

- Employment and training outcome plans (formerly Participation Agreements) that generate referrals to employment services assisting with skills training and landing a job.
- Referrals to the Disability Adjudication Unit (DAU) for those with medical/health issues seeking Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits.
- Referrals to Family Support and Eligibility Review.
- Completion of application updates.
- File Audits.

Due to difficulties experienced by Caseworkers in completing applications in SAMS, it is often necessary to complete hardcopy application forms by hand and then input the information in SAMS after the client interview. This is a duplication of work which delays the time it takes to determine eligibility. As a result of these difficulties and to allow the Caseworkers more time to process the applications and determine eligibility, 25 percent fewer applications are given to each Caseworker assigned to complete applications. However, this led to 10 to 13 fewer applications being completed per day, representing an estimated 28 to 36 percent loss in productivity in this area. For clients, this meant longer wait times for an application and eligibility decision beyond the 4 day standard prescribed under the Provincial Directives. Subsequently, we have had to assign more Caseworkers to the Intake and Application area to meet service demand and reduce delays. The downside is that this draws staff away from case management duties and associated provincial requirements.

Review of overpayments and underpayments to determine their validity requires Supervisors, SME's and LBE to devote a considerable amount of their time. This is compounded by the volume of calls that are made by anxious and upset clients, as well as political offices and community agencies calling on their behalf. Additional time is also spent on increased requests for internal reviews, with the potential for increased submissions to the Social Benefits Tribunal if the matter is appealed.

During the initial implementation, the Employment Services Caseworkers were reassigned to assist with customer service and support the OW Caseworkers. This took a number of them away from assisting clients with training and job search activities. Over the course of time, in order to avert serious decline in employment and training outcomes, we have had to rededicate the Employment Services Caseworkers back to employment counselling and job development with their clients and employers. Furthermore, Employment Services has also been facing numerous SAMS problems in completing Outcome Plans and issuing employment and training benefits. The Caseworkers have been using workarounds in the system to provide their clients benefits.

From an accountability standpoint, we have had to incorporate painstaking processes (some of which are manual) to ensure as much integrity as we can in the operation. This, coupled with the computer problems, has diverted our Caseworkers' attention away from proper case management and eligibility reviews.

### **Crisis Management - Departmentally**

Measures have been taken to mitigate SAMS problems, provide staff supports, and address client service issues, as much as possible.

1. Constant communication with MCSS, OMSSA and other municipalities through the 47 Leaders group, Directors – Administrators Reference Group (DARG), DARG – Municipal sub-group, South West Region Senior Management Group (SMG), Business Processes & Technology (BPT) Working Group, Touch Point Calls with the Province and South West Region Municipalities.
2. The Mayor has spoken to the Minister of Community & Social Services on several occasions to convey to the Minister the SAMS problems that we are experiencing locally and to offer some suggestions.
3. Maintained the SAMS Learning Centre for the training of new staff and re-training of existing staff with respect to new techniques and system fixes.
4. Maintained the SAMS Control Centre with computers to test-trial various processes to try and resolve system issues.
5. Development of User Guides and “Hint Sheets” to assist Caseworkers in navigating and using the system.
6. Deployed approximately 12 to 18 SME's (at any given time) in three (3) teams:
  - i. Triage Team – Provide on the spot quick answers to quick questions.



- ii. Issues Team – Problems not resolved by the Triage Team are escalated to the Issues Team who troubleshoot and try different possible solutions in the SAMS Control Centre.
- iii. Grant Team – Assist Caseworkers who are completing applications and experiencing technical difficulties in granting Ontario Works to applicants.

*{Note: The Triage and Issues Teams were later collapsed into one Issues Team in order to have a more coordinated and structured approach to problems as opposed to being inundated with questions. The ratio of SME's to Caseworkers is about 1:5 to 1:7.}*

7. Department Caseworker seconded to the Province as a SAMS Local Change Implementation Coordinator (LCIC) has been deployed by the Province to the South West Region to assist with the transition to SAMS. The LCIC has been assisting our Department as well as the other municipalities in the Region. Upon her return, she will bring back a great deal of SAMS knowledge that will be beneficial to the Department.
8. Completion of paper applications where SAMS systems issues have been a hindrance.
9. Issue manual cheques in situations where payments do not produce in SAMS or produce in the wrong amount.<sup>1</sup>
10. Various areas were enhanced to offset service productivity challenges resulting from poor functionality of SAMS. For example, existing staff were reassigned to the Intake and Application unit to reduce wait times for people applying for Ontario Works.
11. The Executive Director of Employment & Social Services met with all departmental staff on a weekly basis from November 14<sup>th</sup> to December 19<sup>th</sup> to keep them updated on the SAMS situation. These department-wide meetings with staff are continuing as needed. The Mayor attended one of the meetings in support of departmental staff and recognized their hard work.
12. Regular communications are issued to keep staff informed as to what is going on.
13. Revamped processes and introduced new methods and structure as to how we conduct business, particularly in relation to data entry and payments as well as the completion and supports around regular workflow.
14. Placed clerical staff in queue to handle the volume of incoming calls, in an attempt to reduce caller wait times.
15. Redeployed staff from other program areas (e.g., Eligibility Review, Enhanced Verification, Family Support, etc.) to assist with application-taking, day-to-day technical problem-solving, crisis management, and resolution of complex and time-consuming SAMS problems. The downside is that other work that needs to be completed is being severely impacted and suffering.
16. Since the conversion to SAMS, the Department has enhanced its payment review process by reviewing every payment.

For the pay runs in December, January, February and March, staff teams were assembled to review each payment, trouble-shoot problems, review and analyze anomalies. Payments of \$1,500 or more and any exceptional or odd payments were sent to an internal team for automatic review. During the February pay run, we had 48 hours in which to review approximately 4,000 cheques prior to mailing, and the following two days to review another estimated 6,000 direct bank deposit payments prior to release. This required an “all hands on deck” approach and a great deal of overtime to complete. Although we have met the payment deadline of the last business day of the month, this monthly payment review process (as well as the daily review of payments) is not sustainable. It has contributed to lost productivity relative to case management, staff burn-out and negative morale, as well as exorbitant overtime costs. Although not perfect, this payment review process has been beneficial as inaccurate payments have been flagged and recalled or withheld. In the future, we will be exploring a better, more expeditious approach,

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<sup>1</sup> The number of manual cheques issued between November 12, 2014 (i.e., SAMS GoLive) and January 27, 2015 is **336** (approx. 112 per month) in comparison to **365** (approximately 37 per month) over 10 months in 2014 prior to SAMS.

such as utilizing the SAMS payment register reports, once we are certain in their accuracy. At this point, we are not confident in their reliability.

These mitigation strategies are not sustainable in the long-term and are negatively impacting case management and customer service. A new support structure is being considered that will allow the SME's to return full-time to their caseloads. Unfortunately, this will require additional staff that will create significant cost pressures on the Department and the Corporation. Provincial funding at 100 percent subsidy is required to make this staffing mitigation strategy viable and cost-neutral for the municipality.

### **Provincial Response**

The technical problems associated with the SAMS provincial system have been widely publicized across Ontario and locally. The Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) asked the courts for an injunction to stop the province from using SAMS to process social assistance payments. To our knowledge a court decision is still pending. Some municipalities have taken a similar position as OPSEU that the province discontinue using SAMS and revert back to the previous SDMT system. Other jurisdictions have requested the Province to urgently repair SAMS.

In early December 2014, the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) took a very proactive role and met with the 47 Leads<sup>2</sup> of the 47 CMSM's and DSSAB's in Ontario to advise the Province as to what is required to mitigate the fallout of SAMS implementation. As a result, the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM), Social Assistance Operations, Ministry of Community & Social Services (MCSS) committed to a MCSS-OMSSA Technical Working Group and sub-groups consisting of municipal delivery agent representatives and Ministry officials to work together to address SAMS implementation challenges and find solutions. Key objectives include identification, communication and resolution of issues related to SAMS functioning, staff workload pressures, the impact on clients, and the implications on the regular business of Ontario Works (OW) and municipal delivery agents. The goals are to ensure that the new technology does not negatively impact the people that we serve, not add a financial burden to municipal delivery agents, and achieve system stabilization "*sooner rather than later.*"

The Technical Working Group has focused its' attention on issues related to data conversion, payments and other functional problems (e.g., Intake, letters, reports, and tasks). This has led to 10 top issues that are under the review of smaller working groups.

In a letter dated February 10, 2015, Dr. Helena Jaczek, Minister of Community & Social Services outlined specific actions to address the immediate issues and improve SAMS implementation. The plan consists of five (5) specific actions.

1. Appointment of a third-party advisor to conduct an independent assessment of SAMS, and provide an interim report by the end of March 2015, with comprehensive recommendations by April 30, 2015.
2. The Deputy Minister and other ministry officials will conduct face-to-face engagement with front-line OW and ODSP staff at over 30 locations in Ontario to obtain input to ensure SAMS meets the needs of delivery agents and their clients.
3. The Technical Working Group comprised of provincial and municipal front-line staff will continue to help the ministry improve SAMS implementation.
4. System improvements for February and March include:
  - a. Improving system calculations using converted data;
  - b. Reducing the complexities surrounding the re-granting of cases in SAMS;

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<sup>2</sup> City of Windsor's Community Development & Health Services Commissioner, Jelena Payne, is a member of the 47 Leads group.

- c. Improving the accuracy in the system letters.
5. Additional support for training and troubleshooting assistance.

### **Problems Resolved To-Date**

Is SAMS improving or getting better? The more insightful question is whether it is stable and at an acceptable level. Both quantifiable and qualitative evidence suggests that the system is still not stable and certainly not at a level that can be considered acceptable. Interestingly, staff are becoming more efficient in improvising solutions. The chart in Appendix "B" details the over 17,000 tickets logged by social assistance delivery agents that require provincial intervention, with just over 8,000 tickets addressed as of January 12, 2015. By March 7, 2015, over 22,000 tickets were logged with over 11,000 closed or resolved across the Province. Proportionately, the percentage of fixes to problem tickets logged is remaining the same at about 50 percent. Locally we have logged 183 tickets since SAMS implementation, whereby 73 (or about 40%) have been resolved by the Province (as of March 12, 2015). Additionally, communication from the Provincial Service Desk lacks clarity. The ticket numbers associated with reported problems, as well as messages indicating that a reported problem has been fixed, include little information or reference to the issue. Months after the fact we are being asked to review problems that we have reported and then advise the Province if they have closed them properly or not. Caseworkers are still having to deal with system generated inaccuracies and unpredictable results. There are still significant issues. For these reasons, the current state of SAMS falls short and well below what can be regarded as acceptable and stable.

### **Proposed Options**

SAMS is currently failing to meet four of the Province's five original objectives. It does not:

1. Improve customer service
2. Streamline business processes
3. Effectively manage client data and other information to support service planning and delivery
4. Increase audit capacity and accountability

Until the SAMS issues are rectified, any substantive policy or program changes provincially could negatively tip the balance at a municipal delivery agent level. As illustrated earlier, with a 50 percent correction rate and currently holding at that level, the problems with SAMS will take quite some time before they are addressed to any significant degree.

For these reasons, Administration requests that City Council petition the Province of Ontario to take the actions put forth in the Recommendation section until such time as issues with the SAMS system are resolved and staff have been able to return to delivering Ontario Works in their efficient and effective manner.

## **4. RISK ANALYSIS:**

See the "Risk Analysis Chart" in Appendix "C".

## **5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:**

### **Local Cost of Implementation**

During the pre-implementation phase of SAMS, the Province indicated that the conversion to the new system would not result in additional funding for municipal delivery agents. However, after several provincial postponements in the SAMS GoLive date, the Province initially committed to \$3million in December 2013 and subsequently an additional \$2million in May 2014 (all 100 percent

provincial funding) across the Province to offset some of the municipalities' additional implementation costs. Windsor's allocation from the first two apportionments was \$151,500 in total. The distribution of this funding was based on each delivery agent's share of the Ontario Works caseload.

The City's pre-implementation expenditures between January 1, 2014 and November 11, 2014 was \$445,613. The post-implementation cost from November 12, 2014 to December 31, 2014 was \$154,208. Thus, the total expenses for 2014 were \$599,821 which includes additional staffing costs, overtime, training, etc.

With all of the SAMS post-conversion issues experienced across the Province, the Ministry announced an additional \$5million (100 percent provincial funding) for municipalities. Again, Windsor will receive a third apportionment of \$151,500 for a total of \$303,000 in provincial subsidy for SAMS to-date; all of which must be spent by the end of the provincial fiscal year March 31, 2015. This will only cover a fraction of Windsor's expenditures on this project, especially when we continue to expend funds during this post-implementation/stabilization period. If the current SAM's staffing model continues to the end of the year, staffing costs including significant overtime (58% of staffing cost) plus other SAM's related costs is projected to be \$1.45 million. However, in order to adequately support this transition period until at least the end of the 2015 year and reduce the need for overtime, staffing levels would need to be increased. The gross cost of the proposed SAM's stabilization model is estimated to be \$2.55 million for a full year. This would only be recommended should the cost of the stabilization model be **fully funded** by the Province.

The Province provides Ontario Works Program Delivery funding to support *normal* program management and the provision of employment assistance activities and supports. Eligible costs include staffing, general office, technology, accommodation, and employment related expenses for OW recipients. A portion of program delivery funding is expenditure based and cost-shared at 50% provincial / 50% municipal (City and County), and a portion is outcomes-based and cost-shared at 88.6% / 11.4% in 2014 and 91.4% / 8.6% in 2015. Up to 15% of the outcomes based portion of program delivery funding may be recovered by the province if employment outcomes are not achieved.

Any SAMS related cost incurred in excess of the Province's \$303,000 SAMS allocation would draw down on the regular Program Delivery budget at a cost of 50% to the municipality (shared by City and County using the arbitrated assessment formula). The \$1.45 million current projected costs for 2015, could have a municipal budget impact as high as \$650,000, with the City's share of the projected deficit estimated at \$461,000 and the County's share estimated at \$189,000. This factors in **an additional \$151,500** in 100 percent provincial subsidy recently announced on March 19, 2015. This potential deficit could be lower depending on how much of the current Ontario Works Program Delivery budget is utilized.

### **Subsidy Claims & Reporting**

Ontario Works Financial assistance expenditures are cost-shared between the Ministry and municipalities at 88.6% Ministry and 11.4% delivery agent for 2014 and 91.4% Ministry and 8.6% delivery agent for 2015. The municipal cost is shared between the City and County using the arbitrated assessment formula.

Since the conversion to SAMS, the Department has enhanced its payment review process by reviewing every payment. The review of individual payments over the course of the past three (3) monthly pay runs since SAMS GoLive can be described by the following numbers.

### MONTHLY PAY RUNS

Benefit Month	Total Payments Printed on Monthly Print Run Day	Total Flagged for Further Review	Total Payments Recalled or Held	Value of Payments Held
December 2014	9,020	Info. not available	Initially 48 reduced to 33 (not able to recall 15)	\$39,503.59
January 2015	9,716	412 (4.24%)	81 (0.83%)	\$61,223.56
February 2015*	8,105	165 (2.04%)	44 (0.54%)	\$74,778.02

\*Payments not "pushed-out" by the Province; Income Reporting Statement Requirement Reinstated.

In comparison, the daily payments, which often include changes in accommodation costs, income, number of beneficiaries, etc., account for the bulk of system errors that need to be reviewed and corrected. For example, over 1,900 departmental payments since the implementation of SAMS required extensive review. As of March 13, 2015, over 700 still need to be addressed. Of this sample, just over **94 percent** are daily produced transactions in comparison to under 5 percent attributable to the monthly pay runs. The significance of this is that the daily transactions often involve retroactive calculations. It is our experience that this can trigger entitlement and eligibility recalculations in the period involving the previous SDMT computer system. Hence, another indication that the converted data from SDMT is a major source of the problem, and that the daily transactions require greater scrutiny than the monthly payments.

The subsidy claim process using SAMS was delayed by the Province until the back-end financials could be tested and validated. Therefore, Finance has not been able to complete the monthly subsidy claims to the Province for the months of November and December 2014 and January 2015. As an interim measure, the Province has been providing monthly subsidy advances to the municipalities based on the approved subsidy claim total for the three previous processed claims prior to SAMS GoLive (August-October). It is problematic not knowing what our actual monthly expenditures were for November and December 2014 and January 2015, nor do we have accurate and reliable caseload figures for those months. Subsidy advances based on pre-SAMS average claims likely underestimate the City's actual funding outlay as the Pre-SAMS claims would not include the full impact of the 1% OW benefit rate increase that came into effect on October 1, 2014, nor any of the additional payments erroneously generated by the new provincial system.

Moreover, this is also affecting the completion of accurate year-end financials. The good news is that the first subsidy claim reports in SAMS were released on January 30, 2015. Thus, this was a first step towards us being able to reconcile our expenditures for the months of November and December to ensure that correct provincial subsidy is received, and in knowing our caseload trends.

Unfortunately, the accuracy and the interpretation of the reports are still surrounded by questions. Clarification and training as to the compilation of the data and how the reports are to be interpreted are required.

In addition, the expenditure reports received do not properly segregate expenditures between City and County clients for cost sharing purposes, therefore estimates based on historical trends have been used for year-end purposes until the reports can be manually reconciled. Reports to monitor employment outcomes are also not available. While this is not problematic for the City this year as it has already met its performance targets for the current reporting cycle, not having reliable or comparable outcomes information will impede our ability to set performance targets for the coming two year cycle.

## 6. CONSULTATIONS:

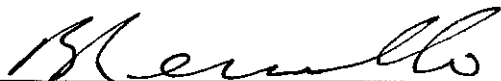
Information Technology	Departmental Managers and Supervisors
Departmental Staff	Departmental Local Business Expert
Finance	Housing & Children's Services
Other Municipal Delivery Agents in Ontario	OMSSA & AMO Communications
Strategic Management Group (South West Region)	Ministry of Community & Social Services
See Appendix "A" – Daily Issues Identified by Departmental Staff and Supporting Departments	Special mention to Sandra Bradt, Executive Initiatives Coordinator, who edited this report

## 7. CONCLUSION:

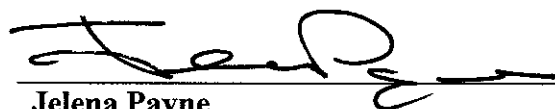
The SAMS provincial computer system was intended to be a data management tool to assist social assistance delivery agents in performing their work more effectively and efficiently, provide enhanced customer service, and increase accountability. In contrast to its intended objectives, the current condition of SAMS is severely impeding staff's ability to provide responsive quality service. It has caused CMSM's and DSSAB's to operate in a constant state of crisis management and to adopt aggressive mitigation strategies as opposed to winding the project down. It is causing a deterioration in customer service, unnecessary emotional strain on both clients and staff, incorrect payments, exorbitant staffing and overtime costs, poor morale among employees and is diverting caseworkers' attention and efforts away from case management and core programming.

While we fully support the Province's efforts to rectify this problem and transform SAMS into a completely functional operating system, we suggest that the Province proceed with a different approach that disengages the dysfunctional aspects of SAMS to allow us to provide core services within a stable environment. The current path will only continue the daily challenges and obstacles that are a test of everyone's perseverance and resiliency at a horrible price for all stakeholders.

This report is intended to provide City Council with a comprehensive overview of the issues and to assist Council to petition the Province to action specific recommendations to facilitate resolution. In this unprecedented situation, we have an obligation as well as a vested interest to put forth alternatives, options, and recommendations to the Province in a collective and concentrated effort. The intended result is to establish strategies leading to solutions that are in-line with the Provincial Government's objectives. SAMS must be fixed immediately.



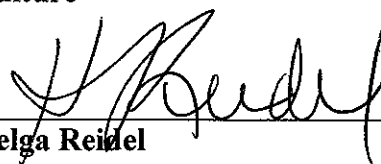
**Bruno Ierullo**  
**Executive Director of Employment & Social Services**



**Jelena Payne**  
**Community Development and Health Commissioner and Corporate Leader Social Development, Health, Recreation and Culture**



*for* **Onorio Colucci**  
**Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer/  
Corporate Leader Finance and Technology**



**Helga Reidel**  
**Chief Administrative Officer**

/BI

**APPENDICES:****Appendix "A" – Daily Issues Identified by Departmental Staff and Supporting Departments****Appendix "B" – Number of Problem Tickets Logged Across the Province vs. Number of Tickets Resolved – Chart****Appendix "C" – Risk Analysis Chart****Appendix "D" – Council Report on October 6, 2014 – Social Services Modernization Project (SSSMP) Phase II - Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) Fall 2014 Implementation – LiveLink #17404****DEPARTMENTS/OTHERS CONSULTED:****Name:****Phone #: 519            ext.****NOTIFICATION :**

Name	Address	Email Address	Telephone	FAX
Brian Gregg, CAO – County of Essex	360 Fairview Ave. W., Suite 202 Essex, ON N8M 1Y6	bgregg@countyofessex.on.ca	(519) 776-6441 X 325	(519)776- 4455

## DAILY ISSUES

### IDENTIFIED BY DEPARTMENTAL STAFF AND SUPPORTING DEPARTMENTS

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{Note: As of February 5, 2015, all departmental staff and staff from supporting departments (e.g., Finance) were asked to submit copies of letters, cheques, screen shots, and other products or results created by SAMS, as well as any anecdotal information describing their experiences in working with SAMS. The following are just some examples.}

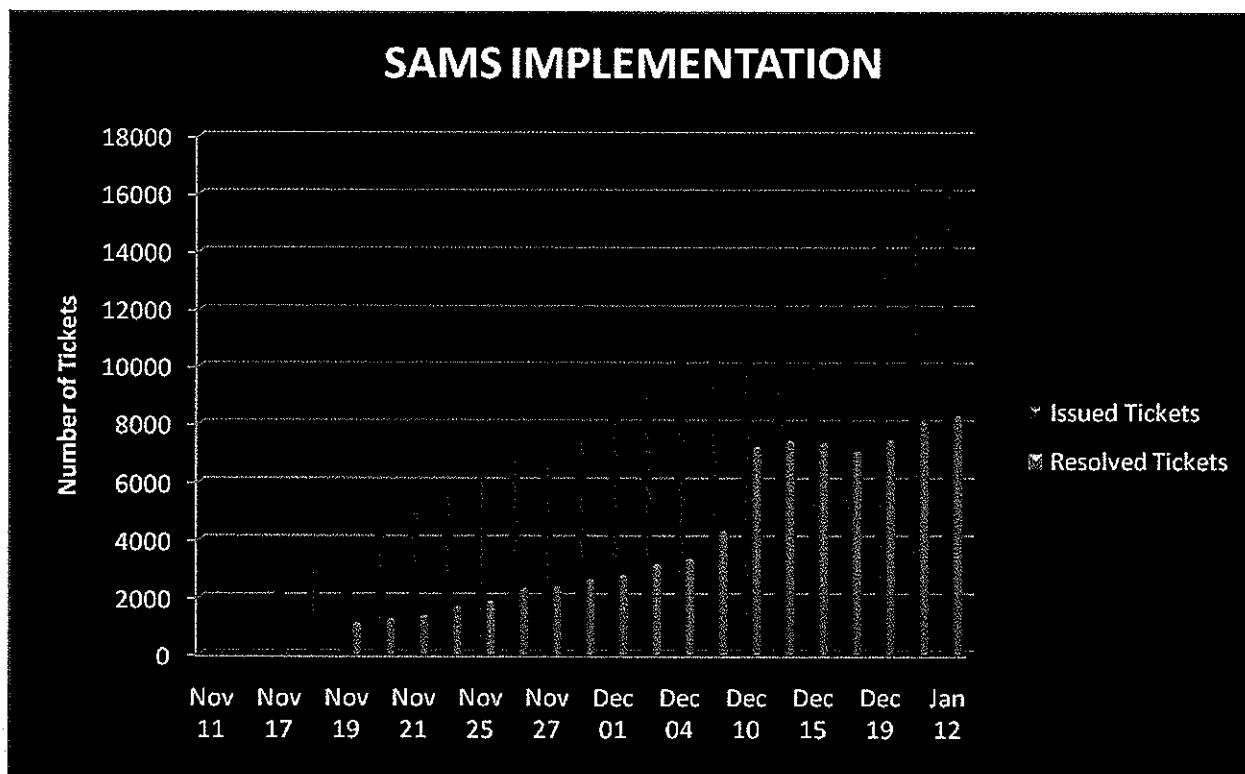
1. A letter was produced by SAMS stating, *"Your application for Ontario Works has been approved as of [...]. You will receive your first payment of \$881,427.00 [...]."* Of course, the letter was not released.
2. Another letter was produced by SAMS indicating, *"We have reviewed your file from January 1, 2015 to February 28, 2015 and determined that you received less money than you were eligible to receive. The amount is \$110,810.00."* Again, the letter was, of course, withheld.
3. Assessment of an overpayment by SAMS covering a five (5) month period for one client at over \$333,000, which is not possible.
4. Another extreme example that exemplifies some of the foregoing issues relates to a requirement in SAMS to reconcile people's relationships within a benefit unit. The "Household Relationships" evidence feature, in simple terms, requires that the relationships among individuals in a family are identified and described. However, this may extend to others that they may have had a past relationship with who were in receipt of OW or ODSP. In this particular example, the Caseworker had to reconcile 110 relationships and it took her six (6) hours to fix this one case.
5. Another example is a Caseworker trying to input an Income Reporting Statement (IRS) in SAMS. The situation involved employment earnings, a court order and verbal agreement for support. Difficulties in applying these changes in SAMS required two SME's, a Family Support Worker and the Caseworker to work on it for four (4) hours to find a workaround.
6. Simple transactions are taking an excessive amount of time.
  - a. A straightforward Income Reporting Statement used to take 5 to 10 minutes, whereas now it can take an average of 15 to 30 minutes.
  - b. What took about 5 minutes to change an address, now can take over 2 hours if plagued by data converted issues.
7. Ontario Works applications can take 2 or 3 times longer to complete in SAMS.
8. In one reported case, benefits for a newborn baby could not be issued until the Caseworker serendipitously changed the infant's school status in SAMS to "attending school".
9. Different addresses appearing on separate SAMS screen pages for the same client.



10. The head of household appearing on one SAMS screen page but missing from another.
11. Letters issued by SAMS that make no sense at all.
12. A local case being suspended by another municipality. This should not occur.
13. Cheques being issued by the system without the required signatures.
14. Instances where Ontario Drug Benefit and Dental Cards are not issued by the system.
15. Transportation assistance related to job search was applied to an existing overpayment as opposed to issuing it to the client.
16. The system selecting the wrong income deduction for a converted case from the previous computer system.
17. Incorrectly assessing overpayments and/or arrears over a time period that crosses into the previous computer system.
18. Difficulties in searching for a specific person in the system.
19. The cancelling of cheques and overpayments is an extremely difficult process and can result in other errors.
20. Child support information in SAMS involves numerous steps and a lot of time to complete.
21. System difficulties experienced in trying to grant Ontario Works cases to the Ontario Disability Support Program.
22. Inability to grant some cases through SAMS, and thus, having to issue monthly cheques manually.
23. Caseworkers being inundated with tasks and unnecessary letters, which are generated daily by SAMS.
24. Transition Child Benefit is being issued by SAMS to clients that are not eligible, while others who are entitled to it are not receiving it. Each case is quite complex and takes considerable time to address.
25. All arrears payments produced in SAMS are automatically suspended by the Province, which is a good control mechanism, but they require extensive time-consuming review to verify and adjust as necessary. This is a daily task.

**Number of Problem Tickets Logged Across the Province vs. Number of Tickets Resolved**

**CHART**



Date	Number of Issued Tickets (cumulative)	Number of Resolved Tickets (cumulative)	Percentage
Nov 11	131	n/a	n/a
Nov 14	1715	n/a	n/a
Nov 17	2371	n/a	n/a
Nov 18	2895	n/a	n/a
Nov 19	3601	1124	31%
Nov 20	4287	1284	30%
Nov 21	4914	1396	28%
Nov 24	5514	1697	31%
Nov 25	6158	1889	31%
Nov 26	6878	2335	34%
Nov 27	7516	2410	32%
Nov 28	7962	2639	33%
Dec 01	8394	2792	33%
Dec 03	9741	3158	32%
Dec 04	10382	3350	32%
Dec 08	11272	4312	38%
Dec 10	12096	7220	60%
Dec 12	12843	7440	58%
Dec 15	13037	7353	56%
Dec 17	13891	7079	51%
Dec 19	14314	7474	52%
Jan 09	16406	8113	49%
Jan 12	17297	8306	48%

**RISK ANALYSIS CHART**

	<b>Risk Identified</b>	<b>Severity Level</b>	<b>Likelihood of Occurrence</b>	<b>Mitigating Strategies Implemented by Dept.</b>	<b>Recommended Strategies (with Provincial Funding Support @ 100% Subsidy)</b>
<b>1</b>	SAMS is not functioning properly.	<p>Severe. Impact includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prone to system errors, inclusive of payment errors</li> <li>• productivity loss</li> <li>• creating workload backlog</li> <li>• hindering effective case management and other mandated provincial directive requirements – could also result in increased caseloads</li> <li>• low staff morale</li> <li>• impeding good client service</li> </ul>	High and Occurring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review of all payments prior to release.</li> <li>2. Correct erroneous payments and issue manually if necessary.</li> <li>3. Reduced number of applications taken by Caseworkers by 25% to focus on client requests, payments and SAMS issues.</li> <li>4. SAMS Control Centre to trial and test possible solutions.</li> <li>5. SAMS Implementation Team refocused on solving SAMS problems.</li> <li>6. Volunteer Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) deployed to assist Caseworkers with SAMS problems; however, they are still carrying a caseload and the demand is becoming too much for them; Caseworkers who need SME assistance sometimes wait up to 5 days to receive assistance. Also, a third of the SME's have decided to cease as SME's and focus on their caseloads.</li> <li>7. Plan to designate 5 Caseworkers full-time to address</li> </ol>	<p>Necessitates the introduction of full-time Subject Matter Experts (SME's). To assist Staff will daily SAMS technical problems regarding OW application grants, issuing payments/benefits, completion of outcome plans, etc.</p> <p>Also, there is the need for experts with a focus on client emergencies and crisis management, as well as complex and backlogged SAMS generated issues.</p> <p>Increased clerical support is needed. Maintain staffing levels at full complement at all times. Call volume at switchboard is especially high due to inquiries about cheque issuance, problems/issues, late cheques, delays in mail, replacement drug cards, incorrect T5's. Assign additional Team Clerks to phones to handle volume (as many as 400 calls per day to switchboard observed, however, exact call volume reports not yet in place with new phone system). Additional clerical support is needed to take calls, both switchboard and zero-out calls, as well as retrieving Caseworkers' voice messages and getting back to callers, as Caseworkers have fallen significantly behind in being able to respond to their clients' calls. Also, due to the complexity of issues, client calls are taking longer as they require more time to review the issues and often result in extensive</p>

	Risk Identified	Severity Level	Likelihood of Occurrence	Mitigating Strategies Implemented by Dept.	Recommended Strategies (with Provincial Funding Support @ 100% Subsidy)
				<p>highly complex SAMS technical issues.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. Overtime.</li> <li>9. Allowed Caseworkers to complete handwritten applications and enter into the system after meeting with the applicant.</li> <li>10. Accelerate the filling of Caseworker vacancies.</li> <li>11. Initiate "Equalization of Caseloads" and elimination of vacant caseloads with temporary coverage.</li> <li>12. Continue with Supervisors' audit of client files.</li> <li>13. Reassign Eligibility Review Officers (ERO's) to address day-to-day SAMS issues and assist with the input of client Income Reporting Statements (IRS), and from an audit perspective serve as a second set of eyes on client files.</li> <li>14. Family Support Workers (FSW's) assist Caseworkers on cases that involve more than one absent parent within a family; they are quite complicated and require an inordinate amount of time.</li> <li>15. Continue to work with the Provincial Project Team (e.g., Touch Point Calls, etc.).</li> </ol>	<p>explanation. This contributes to the backlog of phone calls and caller wait times. Mail volume is also heavy with Income Reporting Statements (IRS), benefit requests, etc. At the present time, large number of IRS's do not have a Caseworker identified, thus the Clerks must look up in SAMS to find the proper case owner or Caseworker. Team Clerks complete large number of manual drug cards, food vouchers, and other related requests, especially with the SAMS payment problems; more situations arising where clients have emergency needs due to lack of funds. SAMS has made it more cumbersome for Clerks to complete EI assignments, information is not as easy to locate, thus takes more time.</p> <p>Additional Data Room Clerks are required. Enhanced payment verification processes, increased volume of SAMS letters to print, tracking of SAMS payment errors, increased printing of manual cheques, printing of real-time cheques (new under SAMS), etc. require added staff support.</p> <p>Additional support at Intake Reception to assist with in-office client traffic and numerous inquiries requiring lengthy explanations.</p>

	Risk Identified	Severity Level	Likelihood of Occurrence	Mitigating Strategies Implemented by Dept.	Recommended Strategies (with Provincial Funding Support @ 100% Subsidy)
				16. Bring in Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) counseling for Staff to help address extreme stress levels.	
2	Application-Taking and Determination of Eligibility taking longer due to SAMS issues.	Moderate.	High and Occurring.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Redeployed Caseworkers from the Enhanced Verification Program (EVP) (since EVP has been placed on hold by the Province) to the Application &amp; Intake Unit to assist in the completion of applications.</li> <li>2. Need to dedicate more Caseworkers exclusively to Applications &amp; Intake; this will result in higher caseloads for other Caseworkers, but would focus solely on case management.</li> </ol>	Because of the SAMS problems, Caseworkers are unable to maintain a good work balance between Application-Taking and Case Management. Far too much time is spent addressing SAMS issues. Therefore, a Team is needed to be dedicated to OW Applications and Grants.
3	With all the issues related to the SAMS conversion, for the benefit months of December 2014 and January 2015, the Province removed the income reporting requirement (or "pushed-out" the payments).	Moderate  Clients remained eligible, even if the income reporting evidence was not entered for December and January. It is important to note that income reported in November 2014 was applied as a deduction in the two following months as part of the "push-out".	High and Occurred.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. During the "push-out" months Staff were still encouraged to enter client income in order to ensure correct client entitlement was produced; however, this was not possible in every case due to SAMS issues and related workload and time constraints.</li> <li>2. Income Reporting was reinstated for the benefit month of February 2015. This means that clients with varying income each month needed to submit an</li> </ol>	Added Staff supports will allow the OW Caseworkers to effectively manage their caseloads in terms of meeting with their clients, provide good customer service, conduct outcome planning, and conduct case audit review to ensure overall accountability.

	Risk Identified	Severity Level	Likelihood of Occurrence	Mitigating Strategies Implemented by Dept.	Recommended Strategies (with Provincial Funding Support @ 100% Subsidy)
				<p>Income Reporting Statement (IRS) in order to establish eligibility and entitlement amount; otherwise, payments were suspended.</p> <p>3. The majority of clients (anywhere from 80 to 85%) do not have an income source or have consistent monthly income (e.g., CPP, support, etc.) which would have been deducted despite the income reporting waiver or "push-out".</p> <p>4. While some clients may have been overpaid, others may have been underpaid. With the reinstatement of income reporting requirement, some will be reconciled with overpayments assessed or arrears issued. However, SAMS is not doing this properly in all cases and the Province is working to fix this issue.</p> <p>5. As fixes to SAMS are implemented by the Province, this will also trigger a review in some cases where issues need to be resolved.</p> <p>6. Caseworkers will need to address benefit months affected by the "push-out" as they meet with their clients (i.e., income reporting</p>	

	Risk Identified	Severity Level	Likelihood of Occurrence	Mitigating Strategies Implemented by Dept.	Recommended Strategies (with Provincial Funding Support @ 100% Subsidy)
				periods will cover Oct. 16 – Dec. 15, 2014); however, there is the possibility of some being missed.	
4	Lack of Reports and Inaccuracy of Reports	High – Impact includes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of information to make operational decisions or planning.</li> <li>2. Questionable data as to caseload and trends (i.e., increasing, decreasing, same) – how much are we doing?</li> <li>3. No statistical information to determine if we are meeting our mandated outcome targets – how well are we doing?</li> <li>4. Unable to submit accurate subsidy claims; thus, the potential for a lower provincial cash flow relative to actual expenditures.</li> <li>5. Unable to accurately complete year-end financials; estimates need to be used.</li> </ol>	High and Occurring – some reports started to be released by the Province (esp. end of January and February); however, accuracy of reports needs to be determined. In addition to accuracy, it is not clear or known where the information or data is being drawn from.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The need for reports conveyed to the Province by municipalities.</li> <li>2. Inaccuracy of some reports also conveyed to the Province by municipalities.</li> <li>3. Windsor has logged a ticket with the Province regarding the need for termination reports and to ensure their accuracy.</li> <li>4. May need to manually review terminations to determine number of persons who found work to determine if we are meeting our provincially mandated outcome targets.</li> <li>5. Province recognizes delays in Outcome Reports related to municipal targets. Reassured that difficulties in SAMS reporting will be considered relative to municipalities achieving their targets.</li> </ol>	Ensure accuracy of the reports and provide extensive training on interpreting the reports.
5	SAMS erroneously performing Retroactive Budget Calculations	High – Impact includes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Large arrears/cheque amounts which clients</li> </ol>	High and Occurring – A Province-wide problem.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review all payments.</li> <li>2. Suspend payments that are inaccurate or not resolvable.</li> <li>3. Issue manual</li> </ol>	<b>Note:</b> The Province has programmed SAMS to “Auto Suspend” arrears payments calculated retroactively prior to SAMS implementation.

	Risk Identified	Severity Level	Likelihood of Occurrence	Mitigating Strategies Implemented by Dept.	Recommended Strategies (with Provincial Funding Support @ 100% Subsidy)
	(RBC) as far back as January 1, 2013 in numerous cases.	2. Assessing large overpayments to clients which are not correct.	These payments cannot be cancelled at this time as they will reissue.	cheques to eligible clients. <b>Note:</b> There were approximately 1,900 payments that were being held, primarily due to erroneous RBC by SAMS, as well as other system errors. These are gradually being reviewed and reconciled.  <b>A special assignment "clean-up" team is needed to address this backlog.</b>	<u>A fix by the Province is required.</u>
6	County/City Cases served from Windsor are not always assigned to the Proper Jurisdiction.	High – Impact includes: 1. City/County Costs not being apportioned correctly (involves about 400 to 450 County cases being served by the 400 City Hall Square Office).	High and Occurring – SAMS is not matching all client postal codes correctly and assigning the costs to the wrong jurisdiction.	1. In the previous system (SDMT), ad hoc reports were used to correct such discrepancies; however, these are not available in SAMS. 2. Maintained the bulk of these cases (around 400) under one Caseload in order to keep track of them. These cases are being redistributed to 3 or 4 Caseworkers so that proper case management can occur and to facilitate correct cost allocation between City and County. 3. Will attempt to identify mismatched postal codes in the current SAMS report to try and align the costs of the mismatched cases to the proper jurisdictions (i.e., City/County).	<u>A fix by the Province is required.</u>
7	Letters Produced in SAMS have numerous	Moderate – Impact includes: 1. Issuing letters on every item	High and Occurring	1. Caseworkers review a multitude of letters every day.	<u>A fix by the Province is required.</u>



	Risk Identified	Severity Level	Likelihood of Occurrence	Mitigating Strategies Implemented by Dept.	Recommended Strategies (with Provincial Funding Support @ 100% Subsidy)
	Issues.	<p>issued (e.g., bus pass).</p> <p>2. Advising clients that they can appeal a decision even when the benefit was granted, and even when the item is not appealable to the Social Benefits Tribunal (SBT).</p> <p>3. Miscommunication where the letter simply does not make sense and is embarrassing.</p>		<p>2. Letters are not sent unless reviewed by the Caseworker.</p> <p>3. Caseworkers may amend letters and then release them.</p>	
8	Staff Training	<p>High – Impact</p> <p>Once SAMS is stabilized, there will be numerous changes in how to operate the system. All Staff will need to be retrained.</p>	High	<p>1. SAMS Learning Centre at 68 Chatham St. E. is still in operation for training of new incoming Staff and retraining of all other Staff on various workarounds and fixes to the system.</p>	<p>In addition to training <u>new</u> hires, need additional Trainers to educate <u>existing</u> Staff particularly on the changes and fixes in the SAMS system. Therefore, increased training capacity is required during post-SAMS <u>implementation</u> and <u>stabilization</u>. The Trainers can also serve as Subject Matter Experts (SME's), trouble-shoot, review and learn system fixes, assist with hint sheets, job aids and user guides.</p>



552014

COUNCIL AGENDA  
COMMUNICATIONS  
Item No 6 2014  
19  
NO.

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF WINDSOR  
Community Development and Health Services - Employment Social Services

**MISSION STATEMENT:**

"Our City is built on relationships - between citizens and their government, businesses and public institutions, city and region - all interconnected, mutually supportive, and focused on the brightest future we can create together."

LiveLink REPORT #: 17404	Report Date: Sept. 25, 2014
Author's Name: Theresa Kralovensky	Date to Council: October 6, 2014
Author's Phone: 519 255 - 5200 ext. 5386	Classification #:
Author's E-mail: tkralovensky@city.windsor.on.ca	

To: Mayor and Members of City Council

Subject: Social Services Modernization Project (SSSMP) Phase II - Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) Fall 2014 Implementation

1. **RECOMMENDATION:** City Wide:  Ward(s): \_\_\_\_\_

THAT City Council RECEIVE for information Employment & Social Services Communication Report regarding the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) Fall 2014 implementation.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

N/A

CITY OF WINDSOR  
COUNCIL SERVICES

OCT 03 2014

2. **BACKGROUND:**

**RECEIVED**

The Social Services Solutions Modernization Project (SSSMP) is part of a broader government initiative called the Major Application Portfolio Strategy (MAPS), which involves modernizing aging technology that supports service delivery across the Ontario Public Service. The current provincial social assistance technology was identified as a priority application for replacement, based on the MAPS risk assessment.

Cúram Software has been chosen as the software to replace the current Service Delivery Model Technology (SDMT) functionality. The Cúram software platform is a proven case management solution that integrates best practices in human service delivery from many jurisdictions in Canada, the U.S. and internationally. SAMS will establish a foundation case management application that can be built upon to support the evolution of human services delivery in Ontario. The software offers the advantage of being a commercial off-the-shelf product with the business and technical flexibility required to allow the ministry and delivery partners to meet their business objective and enhance service delivery including:

- Improving customer service through online services and allowing a greater focus on client needs and outcomes
- Facilitating policy and programs changes in a timely manner
- Ensuring improved controllership and audit capabilities
- Reduce ongoing operating costs

The SSSMP is a multi-phased project. Phase 1 focused on the On-Line Application software which interfaces with SDMT and was implemented in May of 2011. The web-based On-Line Application provides access for Ontario residents to apply for social assistance via most internet based connections. It includes:

- an initial screening process to enable applicants to assess potential eligibility for all programs (Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program, and Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities); and
- English and French language capacity.

The on-line application is accessible through Service Ontario, the Ministry of Community and Social Services public site and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services' public site. Local municipal IT staff also created a link to the site for easy accessibility via the City's website.

The next phase of the project is replacing the technology that supports social assistance (SDMT) with the implementation of the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS).

SAMS implementation is set to take place Tuesday November 11, 2014. SAMS will be utilized in municipalities that are open on Remembrance day; all others, including Windsor will go live on Wednesday, November 12, 2014.

### **3. DISCUSSION:**

In the Summer of 2012, the call went out for municipalities willing to take part in the SAMS Pilot Project which is a live field test of the new system. The City of Windsor Employment & Social Services Department expressed a desire to take part by way of a submission that was prepared and sent in the Fall of 2012. Of 60 delivery sites, Windsor was chosen as one of the 20 successful test sites. The Pilot project incorporated the work of four Caseworkers and one Clerk for two weeks of training as well as a three week period of live field testing that operated from the end of July to mid-August 2013. The results and experiences were later presented by the project team to the South West (SW) Region, Business Process and Technology Group, the Provincial SAMS Project Team and the SW Region Senior Management Group.

During this time, a select number of managers and staff received advanced training so as to enable them to act as Subject Matter Experts (SME's) during end user training and to support staff during implementation.

In early 2013, an Implementation and Training Team was assembled in the preparation of training approximately 250 staff who would become SAMS users. At that time, the go-live date was planned for late Fall of 2013 or early Spring of 2014. Numerous reasons cited by the Provincial Project team resulted in more than 2 delays of the implementation.

In January 2014, a SAMS Learning Centre was retrofitted at 68 Chatham Street. The province supplied the resources, curriculum user guides and training modules which were program specific to the different user groups (i.e., clerical, supervisory, caseworker, financial etc.). In

addition, numerous engagement activities were planned for staff throughout the year in an effort to build familiarity and comfort with the terminology and different application processes of the SAMS software system.

Current Ontario Works recipients will receive written correspondence from the province advising of the new system and subsequent changes they may see relative to their cheque, drug card and statement. Communication material in the form of pamphlets, posters, key messages and media releases will be provided by the MCSS for departmental use as appropriate to further inform clients.

Community partners and support agencies will be invited to an information session prior to implementation which will be hosted by the Employment and Social Services team along with a designated project lead from the province. The overview of the SAMS will include ways to support applicants and their varying needs.

SAMS implementation is set to take place between November 6th —10th, 2014, with a GoLive date of November 12, 2014. The period in which SAMS will replace SDMT as Ontario's social assistance delivery system is called the Crossover Period. During the crossover period, regular SDMT will be shut down to allow for data conversion. Resources and tools will be provided by the province to assist the department with business continuity during this time. As part of the contingency plan to ensure business continuity, manual processes will be introduced so that we continue services for citizens in need of assistance.

#### 4. RISK ANALYSIS:

Two main risks are identified in the chart below:

	Risk Identified	Severity Level	Likelihood of Occurrence	Mitigating Strategies
1	SAMS System failure, whereby the system is not operational.	Severe in the absence of other systems.	Medium to Low likelihood of occurrence.	Contingency plans include manual operations which will bring severity of risk to low. Plans include ways to address backlog of work to be entered into system should this occur.
2	In-Office appointments may take longer considering the learning curve of staff.	Low as numerous plans are in place to support staff during applications.	High to Medium.	Subject matter experts and training staff will be available to support staff as needed during this time. Extensive training has and is taking place to maximize staff readiness.

#### 5. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

The Province has provided Employment & Social Services with one time 100% funding dollars in the amount of \$151,500 to be expended over the period January 1, 2014 to March 15, 2015 to offset costs associated with the conversion to the new SAMS system. These funds are located in Deptid 0206116.

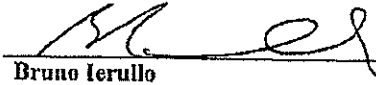
**6. CONSULTATIONS:**


There has been extensive consultation with the Province, other Municipalities and Corporate Departments. We wish to acknowledge and thank the Information Technology Department for their assistance and ongoing support, Facilities Management for the set up of the SAMS Learning Centre, Financial Planning Unit and Administration for their ongoing support and financial management of this project and finally, Human Resources for assisting with the establishment of the temporary SAMS Project Implementation Team.

**7. CONCLUSION:**

The SAMS Implementation and Training Team along with the staff have been fully engaged in learning the SAMS system and are planning for the business process changes that will come with this new technology. New guidelines, procedures and job aids have been developed as resources for staff, so that they can continue to provide support and assistance to meet the varying needs of the clients. Enhanced customer service continues to be a driving force behind all of our services and programs. The department is well positioned and prepared for this exciting change in technology, and in the way we do business.

  
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