

---

**REPORT TITLE: Ontario Works Electronic Document Management**

**FROM:** Sean Baird, Commissioner of Digital and Information Services  
Stephen Van Ofwegen, Commissioner of Finance and Chief Financial Officer  
Janice Sheehy, Commissioner of Human Services

---

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**That staff be authorized to enter into direct negotiations with Nimble Information Strategies, Inc. in order to implement an Electronic Document Management (EDM) system for Ontario Works client files;**

**And further, that subject to successful negotiations with Nimble Information Strategies Inc. in establishing firm pricing and contract terms and subject to available budget, that the Commissioner of Finance and Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner of Human Services be authorized to approve the final contract award, in accordance with Procurement By-law 30-2018;**

**And further, that approval be granted to extend the contract for four 12-month terms in accordance with the agreement, subject to satisfactory performance and pricing submitted for each contract term;**

**And further, that the Commissioner of Human Services, be authorised to execute the agreement on business terms satisfactory to the Commissioner of Human Services and on legal terms satisfactory to the Regional Solicitor.**

## **REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- As part of Social Assistance reform, the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services (MCCSS) is moving to an Electronic Document Management (EDM) system and the Region of Peel, as the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager for Ontario Works, is expected to do the same.
- Continuing to evolve to a digital system will help eliminate manual processing which will reduce the potential for errors.
- The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need to transfer to an EDM system.
- MCCSS conducted an open competitive procurement process for an EDM solution.
- Nimble Information Strategies Inc. (Nimble) was the successful vendor of record in the MCCSS procurement process.
- The EDM solution provided by Nimble has been implemented in thirteen Ontario Disability Support Program offices with plans to implement it in all thirty-seven offices in 2021.
- Several other municipalities, including the City of Toronto and City of Hamilton, are using Nimble for their EDM.

## Ontario Works Electronic Document Management

- After reviewing other available options, staff concluded that engaging with Nimble provides the best EDM solution for Ontario Works.
  - Using Nimble enhances the Region's ability to provide a modern, efficient, secure and client-focused approach, which will result in a more streamlined and consistent service to Ontario Works clients.
  - It is anticipated that administrative efficiencies will be realized through adopting this technology.
- 

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Background

As part of social assistance reform, the Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services (MCCSS) conducted an open, competitive procurement process to select a vendor to implement an Electronic Document Management (EDM) solution.

Nimble was the successful vendor in the MCCSS procurement process and was awarded the contract for the provision of the EDM solution.

The goal of the EDM solution is to aid social assistance recipients and municipalities in processing, storing, and accessing documents in a centralized location, which would allow for document portability and availability. Once digitized, files will be accessible through the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS). Appendix 1 provides a visual of the EDM solution.

The province is currently rolling out EDM to all Ontario Works Consolidated Municipal Service Managers. This process began as a pilot program with the City of Toronto Employment and Social Services which selected Nimble Information Strategies for file digitization through a non-competitive procurement.

Nimble was also awarded the contract for the digitization of Ontario Disability Support Program client files by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and has been the vendor of record in thirteen ODSP offices with plans to implement in all thirty-seven offices in 2021.

Consolidated Municipal Service Managers have the freedom to choose the Electronic Document System technology solution that best suits their needs.

### 2. Electronic Document Management at the Region

#### a) Current State

Since 2016, Human Services has been digitizing all active Ontario Works (OW) client paper files to the Region's Electronic Information Management system (EIM). In 2017, all active historical OW client documents were digitized.

Although the Region has made great strides in moving to a digital system, the current approach still requires staff to spend considerable time sending, reviewing, scanning and managing documents through fax, email and traditional mail and by interacting with both our internal file servers and the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS). The work is cumbersome and relies on manual processes.

## **Ontario Works Electronic Document Management**

### **b) The impact of COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent emergency closure has meant that staff had to move to working remotely. This served to highlight the importance of having a fully digital system in place. Additionally, current economic forecasts indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic will likely mean an eventual increase in Ontario Works caseloads in 2021. Given that administrative funding will still be limited, the Region must continue to find efficient ways to manage these increasing caseloads while effectively serving OW clients.

### **3. Rationale for Recommendation**

While Nimble Information Strategies Inc. was the successful vendor of record for the Province, municipalities have the option of procuring an EDM solution from any vendor for the digitization of their Ontario Works files or completing the digitizing of records in-house.

All available options to acquire an EDM solution were reviewed by subject matter experts at the Region including representatives from program areas, information technology, privacy, procurement and finance.

Of the options reviewed, the subject matter experts all concluded that engaging with Nimble presents the most efficient method to implement EDM, creates process and technological efficiencies, and ensures that standards and compliance responsibility for document handling and scanning are transferred away from the Region of Peel, resulting in several benefits as outlined below.

The decision to proceed with Nimble is in accordance with Procurement By-law 30-2018. One of the key advantages is that once documents are scanned by Nimble, they are directly entered into the Ontario Public Service repository and become the property of the Province. This would reduce the risk of document handling because the Region would no longer be responsible for demonstrating that the chain of custody has been maintained for all scanned documents. With this system, Nimble becomes the sole handler of the clients' documents and email, which also increases the privacy protection for client files.

### **4. Efficiencies**

By reducing the period of time spent on document management functions, and allowing for electronic document retrieval in real-time, the Electronic Document Management project will create opportunities for enhanced service delivery, free staff time for active case management functions, and enable staff to make expeditious decisions for their clients. It is anticipated that there will also be administrative cost savings associated with eliminating several manual processes.

## **RISK CONSIDERATIONS**

Contracting with a vendor other than Nimble Information Strategies Inc. could result in the Region incurring additional costs to establish the infrastructure that would enable the vendor to communicate with the Province's network. These costs will not be incurred with Nimble Information Strategies Inc. as the infrastructure is already in place.

## Ontario Works Electronic Document Management

In addition, the Region would not be responsible for the cost of any technical and administrative changes in the digitization process that might result from technology changes in the provincial Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) application.

With the prospect of future COVID-19 waves, implementing EDM is a critical action to support the seamless delivery of the Ontario Works program in the future as caseworkers may continue to be required to work remotely.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The ongoing costs for the Electronic Document Management system would be eligible as an Ontario Works administration cost, 50 per cent of which would be cost shared with the Province. There are sufficient funds in the 2020 budget to cover the estimated costs which are \$152,000 for initial start-up costs and \$221,300 in operating costs. Each year the operating cost will change slightly based on the Ontario Works caseload. For 2021, the anticipated annual operating costs are \$258,300, which would be offset by administration efficiencies.

The Contract is for one 12-month period on the basis of a firm price for its duration. The Region has the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to extend this Contract for four optional 12-month periods, based on the same terms and conditions.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis above and with the goal of providing modern, efficient, secure, client-focused services to Ontario Works clients, staff recommend that the Region enter into direct negotiations with the MCCSS Vendor of Record, Nimble Information Strategies Inc. to deliver scanning and digitization services of all incoming OW client documents and files with an implementation date of Fall 2020.

## APPENDICES

Appendix I - Electronic Document Management Visual

---

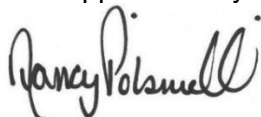
*For further information regarding this report, please contact Suzanne Finn, Executive Director, Community Access, Human Services, Ext. 7242, [suzanne.finn@peelregion.ca](mailto:suzanne.finn@peelregion.ca).*

*Authored By: Alexandra Walsh, Advisor, Human Services*

### ***Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:***

Department Commissioners, Division Directors, Financial Support Units, Legal Services and Procurement.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.



---

N. Polsinelli, Interim Chief Administrative Officer