AMO Pilot Report

Municipal Experiences Using Electronic and Digital Signature Solutions

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Background

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario's (AMO) report on municipal digital government transformation, _#OnMuni Online: Towards Digital Transformation and Opportunities for Ontario's Municipal Governments_, identified trusted electronic and digital signatures as a scalable solution for municipal governments. Particularly a solution that unlocks operational efficiencies, generates cost savings, and enhances security measures to existing electronic document management practices. Because of the many benefits for municipalities of this potential opportunity, AMO launched a search to pursue a partnership with a service provider for an electronic and digital signature solution.

In late 2017, following a competitive RFP process, AMO announced a partnership with Solutions Notarius Inc. with the aim to offer members two distinct solutions: state-of-the-art digital signature solutions and an advanced and legally reliable e-signing platform solution. Notarius electronic and digital signatures provide high assurance levels of signer identity and document integrity, authenticity and longevity. Using this technology, municipal governments can streamline processes, reduce costs for document storage and safeguard the integrity of important municipal records in a legally reliable fashion.

Pilot Overview

In January 2018, AMO and Notarius launched an Electronic and Digital Signature pilot to test digital signing solutions and determine the benefits, challenges, opportunities, and possible improvements that may be required of a robust service for the membership.

The duration of the pilot was six months to give participating municipalities a reasonable amount of time to test electronic and digital signature solutions in the day-to-day operations of a municipality. For that six-month period, pilot municipalities were offered the different Notarius solutions at no cost. After that period, if the municipality continued operationalizing the solutions, the municipality would pay the normal cost of service to Notarius for the technology.

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the pilot were threefold:

1. Provide participating municipalities with the technology to create legally reliable documents by signing documents with secure and encrypted digital and electronic signatures;

2. Demonstrate the cost effectiveness, efficiency, and user friendliness of electronic and digital signatures;

3. Determine if there is a cost avoidance when using electronic and digital signature solutions compared to the current status quo, and if the service supports comprehensive electronic document management for municipal governments.

Pilot Participants

Six pilots participated in the project:

1. City of Brampton
2. Dufferin County[1]
3. Simcoe County
4. Municipality of Kincardine
5. Municipality of Red Lake
6. United Counties of Prescott & Russell

A key requirement in AMO's partnership with Notarius was that their electronic and digital signature solutions should be scalable to the varying administrations and operations of municipal governments in the province.

All participants implemented Notarius digital signing solutions within a variety of departments to assist with the electronic management of documents including, but not limited to HR, Legal, Finance/Treasury, Purchasing, CAO's office, Building and Planning, Clerk's office, Public Works, and IT.

Two municipalities, Prescott & Russell and Kincardine, provided early feedback using Notarius solutions at a concurrent session at the 2018 AMO Conference in Ottawa.

Notarius Electronic and Digital Signature Solutions

Notarius provided the technology to create and verify digital records (authentic electronic documents) including electronic and digital signatures, legal expertise in relation to electronic documents, provincial and national contextual information to municipal digital transformation efforts. If requested, contextual recommendations in relation to the broader municipal information environment, including electronic records management practices, software as a service, and infrastructure as a service was also offered.

CertifiO

The CertifiO digital signature ensures the integrity and authenticity of signed electronic documents while certifying the signer's identity and professional status (CertifiO for Professionals) or the signer's affiliation to an organization (CertifiO for Employees).

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[1] Dufferin County participated as a partial pilot but provided feedback that is included in this report.

In the case of a signature affixed to a document on behalf of an organization or department, CertifiO ensures the integrity and authenticity of the signed electronic document while certifying that the signature does, in fact, come from the signing organization or department (CertifiO for Organizations and CertifiO for Departments).

ConsignO

Simple and efficient, ConsignO significantly improves productivity when signing documents. This product range allows you to perform advanced and exclusive digital signature operations on PDF documents.

ConsignO is available in three different configurations: Cloud (Digital and trusted electronic signature workflow platform), Desktop (PDF signature software), and Server (Solution to integrate digital signatures within your automated document management systems)

Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in the pilot, the municipality had to meet the following conditions:

- Select a class of documents that possess high reliability requirements e.g. engineering drawings and plans, licenses, permits, bylaws, agreements, etc.
- Select a process of online application that will automatically generate a document requiring a signature by the external person(s).
- Select one or several classes of documents that currently are generated and distributed on paper, to be replaced by reliable electronic documents that are digitally signed.
- Commit to a pilot project definition meeting in which the scope of the project will be agreed to by the municipality and Notarius.
- Identify how the continued use of the technology could be paid for after the conclusion of a successful pilot.

What was included in the pilot?

- Two preliminary meetings to ascertain what documents the solutions will address as well as possible use cases.
- One document workflow meeting with the objective of confirming how the documents are created, received, produced, and/or issued and by whom they are signed (facilitated by Notarius)
- Document validation follow-ups as required
- Project Charter/ Letter of Intent for the pilot

- Technical support to the municipality in implementing Notarius electronic and digital signing solutions
- Quality assurance and user acceptance training
- Monitoring and support (business, technical and legal) during pilot period
- Periodical pilot evaluation meeting
- Post pilot Meeting

Evaluation

AMO and Notarius supported participants throughout the pilot process with appropriate measures that ensured successful implementation of the solutions. AMO and Notarius committed to evaluating the pilots at the conclusion of the six-month period.

This final report is the culmination of the test period and details feedback AMO and Notarius received from each of the participating pilots. Pilots were provided with an exit questionnaire with the following questions:

- Why was your municipality interested in a digital signature service?
- What departments were involved in the pilot project?
- What kind of documents were digitally authenticated?
- What do you think about the concept of digital signatures?
- What challenges, if any, occurred while using the solutions?
- What lessons were learned/benefits gained from using the solution?
- What processes changed if any?
- Were users of the solutions comfortable in working with the software?
- What, if any, cost savings were realized from using the solutions?
- What areas in the technology would you like to see improved?
- Based on the cost sheet provided, is the cost of the solutions in line with what you currently spend or would expect to spend?
- Do you anticipate continuing to use the Notarius solutions beyond the pilot period?
- What advice would you give to municipalities looking to use digital signature solutions?
- Please provide any other feedback/input regarding your experience with the Notarius solutions.

This final assessment will help AMO and Notarius address gaps and challenges to ensure lessons learned from the pilots will improve municipal outcomes of members' that choose to use Notarius electronic and digital signature solutions.

Questionnaire

Why was your municipality interested in an electronic and digital signature service?

All of the pilots were interested in making a shift towards using digital technologies to simplify, streamline, and improve administrative processes. Connected with improvements to internal processes, municipalities recognized the opportunities digitalization offers to benefit residents and to maximize efficient use of resources. Several pilots were interested in using digital signatures for public facing departments where the platform was used to provide clients with another method for completing paperwork, while providing better customer service.

The possibilities with electronic and digital signatures in helping to create the infrastructure possible for document storage was also recognized. Municipalities were interested in ways electronic and digital signatures could be used for electronic form submission to decrease the need for hard copy records, reduce record keeping requirements, and expedite/automate workflow processes.

What departments were involved in the pilot project?

One of the major benefits of using digital signature solutions is that they can be tailored to any functionality within a municipal government. Pilots used the solutions in a wide variety of functions, most notably for CAO and General Administration as well as for Council & Clerk departments. One pilot used Notarius digital signing solutions within eight distinct departments, while another used it solely for one purpose only.

Municipal departments that used Notarius digital signing solutions included CAO and General Administration, Council & Clerk, Procurement, Legal/Risk Management, Information Technology, Human Resources, Protection Services, Public Works, Planning and Building, Social and Family Services, Recreation and Cultural Services, and Treasury.

What kind of documents were digitally authenticated?

All pilots used Notarius electronic and digital signing solutions for documents that required municipal and/or supplier authentication e.g. contracts. Others used it to sign off on documents that required municipal authentication only such as by-laws and council resolutions. Two pilots used digital signatures for documents that required both the municipality and citizen to sign e.g. permit requests. One pilot used the solutions to authenticate documents that were internal to the municipality itself.

What do you think about the concept of digital signatures?

When AMO was exploring preferences for a digital signature partner, ease of use of the solution was a key requirement. Pilots agreed that Notarius' ConsignO Desktop software and ConsignO Cloud platform were user friendly. The capability of using templates (software and

platform) was also considered useful. Also useful and efficient was the ability to add more than one signer to the document and to be able to set the order in which individuals must sign.

Although quantitative costing data is unavailable at this time, pilots observed that staff time associated with preparing documents for the signature process and in securing the signatures was reduced. The notification function for a project makes distributing a signed document seamless. Staff could launch a project and have the document returned signed almost instantaneously. They did not have to wait for the individual to be physically at the office to sign.

Once documents are signed, documents can be transferred to a municipality's electronic records management system or emailed without having to print a paper copy, thereby reducing paper and postage costs. One small municipality indicated that the disruption of digital signatures to previous processes had a positive impact with staff:

"The building inspector did not have to take his fax machine on vacation with him, which is priceless."

Pilots saw the value of having a digital signing process in place over current traditional signing means.

There was interest from one municipality in having clients sign forms without first dealing with staff (i.e. for application forms). A possible future use for Notarius digital signing solutions is having a platform integrated on municipal websites so documents can be signed electronically online. AMO will work with Notarius to explore this concept further. Notarius is also partnering with other software vendors that cater to the municipal sector in Ontario in order to implement a signing capacity in various other digital tools such as a meeting management platform.

What challenges, if any, occurred while using the solutions?

As with most technology that has transformative impacts, challenges will emerge during its implementation. With technical implementation/application and with change management among the personnel using the technology.

With the CertifiO digital signature technology, pilots experienced challenges setting up the digital signatures and then activating the certificate. The process took time for some, in part due to the need for prior IT support and proxy/firewall configuration[2] in the municipality's IT environment. Notarius was able to respond quickly and work with the technical resources of the municipality to resolve any challenges pilots had with setting up a digital signature through CertifiO.

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[2] For more information, please see https://notarius.com/en/help/kb/firewall-configuration/?blsc=true and https://notarius.com/en/help/kb/proxy-configuration/?blsc=true

One concern raised by a municipality was regarding records management. The ConsignO Cloud platform is a workflow tool and it is not meant to be used as a storage site for documents that are digitally/electronically signed. There is a set time limit (7, 30, or 90 days) on how long a final signed document can be stored on Notarius platforms before it expires and is deleted. This timeline depends upon the type of account and account configuration. The user will receive multiple notifications prior to document deletion. It is useful that the project deletes from ConsignO Cloud as it encourages municipal staff not to use the platform as a records repository. When dealing with electronic records as original records, municipalities will need to consider having processes in place for the management of electronic records while implementing Notarius technology.

The onboarding process for adding email contacts to ConsignO to sign documents was identified as a process that could be further streamlined. An option to add all of an account's contacts to the address book automatically is a potential path forward. A pilot identified a preference to set up users in bulk, providing names and email addresses, and have the users choose the two-factor security authentication method on their own. ConsignO Cloud is offering CSV importation for contacts and will soon include other plug-in for contact importation.

There was feedback from users that the signature stamp on those documents signed by ConsignO Cloud do not look like a traditional handwritten signature. Since the conclusion of the pilot, Notarius is now offering a feature allowing signers to personalize signature appearance. ConsignO Desktop includes a signature appearance wizard so you can import an image of your handwritten signature, your initials and, if needed, your professional seal.

One municipality flagged complex installation of the digital signatures solutions in a municipality of its size particularly when installer rights are restricted due to the restricted IT environment within this particular municipality. That assessment is true for any software that will require installation on municipal computers.

Change management is a challenge that municipalities will need to manage regardless of the technology implemented. Users will revert to manual processes for signatures if they do not completely understand how to use the technology. Municipalities will need to convince staff/users to rethink processes; that they will save time in the end by using technology like electronic and digital signature solutions. Notarius is available to help guide municipalities through digital transformation processes and offers a range of support options when using their solutions.

Most technology implementation has its bumps and bruises as users become more familiar and proficient at using the solutions. Notarius recognizes this and encourages its clients to reach out to them to identify possible improvements to their technology. Technology is adaptive, and an iterative process with users allows Notarius to update and improve its solutions to meet its clients' needs. The pilots drove innovation within Notarius to improve the software further for the municipal user in regards to bulk uploading of contacts and custom signatures. These features have either been implemented in the newer release of

ConsignO Cloud or are on the software roadmap. Notarius encourages municipal users to reach out and to provide feedback on improvements or features they want to see in Notarius solutions. AMO appreciates this continuous improvement approach from Notarius and our members' constructive feedback to make the technology work best for them.

What lessons were learned/benefits gained from using the solution?

Overall, key benefits identified from the pilots recognized that the use of electronic and digital signatures makes administration and operational processes more efficient and accessible for residents, enhances business activities, is environmentally friendly, and expedites workflow processes for staff.

One municipality identified the need to embrace technological change as a key lesson learned. Once their users bought in, their processes became leaner and more efficient as electronically and digitally signing documents saves time and effort. Another municipality recognized the need to train their elected officials and staff on how to use digital signatures and have their Council buy-in to the change of using this transformative tool. To expand the use of Notarius solutions to other municipal processes, they recognized that curtailing resistance to the technological change with good training from their IT department is required.

From a small municipality, their biggest lesson learned was that that they could start using electronic and digital signatures immediately, with no loss of functionality, and gain all of the benefits of using Notarius solutions. One of the key requirements AMO identified during the procurement process was the ability to scale the solutions for smaller municipalities without demanding further resources and staff time. We are pleased to see that this was the case.

What processes changed if any?

The key process that has changed for municipalities that tested the solutions is the way signatures are secured and the associated steps to receive those signatures. A needed signature can be received almost immediately when using a digital signing solution. Using digital and electronic signatures has eliminated the need to print paper copies of most documents and allows for easy transfer to municipal electronic records management systems.

One municipality is at the early stage of changing its internal processes to include digital signatures as part of its administration and operations. Its staff/users are slowly integrating digital process within their workflows. Their plan is to release an internal policy in 2019 that will enforce the use of digital processes for signing documents.

Another municipality appreciated combining digital and electronic signing with notifications of completed signatures for its purchase order process. Additionally, the mobility of their building inspector has significantly improved with the ability to authorize permit

applications from anywhere as well as copy billing and planning with the signed documents needed to complete the process.

Were users of the solutions comfortable in working with the software?

For the most part, users found both the cloud and desktop platforms of ConsignO very easy to use. After understanding the different use cases of the technology, staff were comfortable and surprised by the ease of securing signatures on documents.

There was some confusion when navigating between the ConsignO Cloud (e-signature platform) and CertifiO Digital Signature and the difference between electronic and digital signatures. For clarification, CertifiO is the commercial name for the digital signatures that certifies the individual, department, or organization (CertifiO *for Employees* and CertifiO *for Departments* are two different solutions). The ConsignO Line includes productivity tools. ConsignO *Desktop* is the software provided with a CertifiO subscription that allows for advanced digital signing operations and conversion to PDF/A whereas ConsignO *Cloud* is a web-based electronic and digital signing workflow platform.

Feedback from one pilot indicated that users wanted paper copies of the signed documents for traditional filing. Digitally signed documents can be easily printed if there is still interest in holding a paper copy, however, such printed copies are copies of the original that remains the digitally signed version.

What, if any, cost savings were realized from using the solutions?

Since this is a technology that is relatively new to Ontario's municipalities and the trial period during the pilot lasted six months, it is too early to provide quantifiable cost savings in a dollar value. However, there were observations that implementing electronic and digital signatures allows municipalities to have leaner and efficient processes and to realize digital transformation efforts. One municipality stated that Notarius electronic and digital signature solutions are a time saver. A contract that took three to four weeks to sign can now be signed in just a few hours, potentially minutes. This also saved the travel time it took the head of council from driving to the municipal office to sign the documents by hand. AMO staff will check in with pilots later in 2019 to determine if there has been measurable cost savings.

What areas in the technology would you like to see improved?

Several pilots identified the process of setting up the CertifiO digital signature needs to be improved. One municipality also suggested that if a municipality is intending to implement a CertifiO digital signature, a review of the host municipality's software system, perhaps in tandem with representatives from Notarius, should also occur. It is important for the user to be aware that they may need additional assistance from their IT department over and above the installation of the software.

Improved integration between the desktop version and the cloud platform of ConsignO was suggested. In addition, integration of ConsignO Cloud with software such as Microsoft Office could be beneficial to many municipalities that use the Microsoft suite of tools. At the time of writing this report, Notarius is working on this integration.

Another suggestion was to synchronize automatically all signed documents to storage servers with a smart tagging system that could facilitate automated filing during a sync.

As the desire for electronic and digital signature grows in Ontario's municipal sector, Notarius is partnering with other software vendors to enable electronic and digital signing in their platforms and software. Municipalities are encouraged to request such integrations from Notarius.

AMO was pleased to see that Notarius was responsive to the feedback and suggested improvements brought forward by our members as well as AMO's experience using the technology to sign municipal funding agreements related to our administration of OMAFRA's Main Street Revitalization Initiative. Much of the input that Notarius gathered is being integrated into updates of the technology.

Based on the cost sheet provided, is the cost of the solutions in line with what you currently spend or would expect to spend?

Pilots that responded to this question indicated that the costs for the solutions are reasonable and in line with their expectations. It would be beneficial to Notarius if you could provide an estimate of the number of projects that require signing so that they can help find a solution that is right for you.

For more information on pricing, please visit consignocloud.com and notarius.com/certifio

The Notarius Sales team is there to answers your questions and inquiries. Do not hesitate to contact Fred Mazzarello, Director, Business Solutions at sales@notarius.com or 1-888-588-0011.

Do you anticipate continuing to use the Notarius solutions beyond the pilot period?

Almost all participants indicated that they would continue to use Notarius electronic and digital signature solutions (both CertifiO digital signatures and the ConsignO Cloud platform) beyond the trial period. A few participants are reviewing their experience using the technology as well as the cost estimates to determine if it is feasible to continue using Notarius solutions within their 2019 budgets. One municipality hopes to continue using the solutions, as they believe electronic and digital signatures can remove many existing limitations on operational and administrative processes and change the way they do business with their residents.

What advice would you give to municipalities looking to use digital signature solutions?

Several pilots identified one or many users within the municipality (this could be either elected officials or staff) that could champion electronic and digital signature solutions and that would be willing to help implement the technology. This is particularly helpful when implementing any disruptive digital technology may require a culture change internally. It is important to have a champion within your municipality that understands the technology and can train other staff on its use thereby increasing comfort level and enabling others to see the benefits of the solutions.

Before implementing digital signature solutions, one municipality recommended analyzing and understanding each use case as well as rethinking internal processes before making the digital transformation.

Another pilot recommended establishing a Notarius user group so that municipalities could share experiences and offer suggestions on use cases of the technology that may be unique to the municipal sector.

One pilot suggested that municipalities go through an exercise of reviewing software used in your municipality and how electronic and digital signatures could be used in those software solutions and platforms.

Another pilot suggested an internal process of reviewing how the ConsignO Cloud API could be leveraged for resident-signed documents and how electronic signing could be extended to residents.

Please provide any other feedback/input regarding your experience with the Notarius solutions.

In this section, we will let the pilots speak for themselves.

"Notarius staff were very supportive and reactive to our enquiries."

"All of the Staff at Notarius were incredible and very patient with us as we tried to activate signatures and certificates including their Help Desk."

"Notarius has been very helpful during the entire pilot. They have the resources in place to make improvements to the solution. Not only does the platform have all the tools, but they also have the professional expertise to help us implement each use case."

"It was a great! Having the free pilot allowed us to try something that we would otherwise not have had the opportunity to explore, and showed the value in a platform for digital signing as something attainable and reasonable for municipalities of our size."

"We were excited to be a part of this pilot project and although we were not able to fully utilize the program as we had hoped due to some other competing projects, we can certainly see the value in the product."

"Notarius was a pleasure to work with, excellent support!"

Next Steps

Throughout the project, pilot municipalities identified a number of best practices that AMO and Notarius will work together to bring forward to help municipalities when implementing digital signature solutions:

- Offer sample template Digital Signature Policies from peers that have implemented the technology for those municipalities that may require a policy before moving forward.
- Provide a "Before We Start" checklist[3] document for municipalities[4]
- Outline cost and benefit considerations when evaluating the feasibility of implementing digital signatures.[5]
- Establish an AMO/Notarius user group so that municipalities could share experiences and offer suggestions on use cases of the technology that may be unique to the municipal sector.

AMO will post relevant materials to our website that members can use to help make informed decisions on Notarius electronic and digital signature solutions.

With the conclusion of the pilot, AMO and Notarius will be marketing and promoting digital signature solutions in 2019 and beyond. Notarius will have a presence at the 2019 AMO Conference in Ottawa so please drop by their booth in the Exhibit Hall and say hello.

Town Hall Webinar

On November 15, 2018, AMO hosted a Town Hall webinar with Notarius and the pilot municipalities. Over 100 participants learned how Notarius electronic and digital signatures were implemented and tested by the pilots.

We encourage you to watch that webinar and read the material available to get a better understanding of how Notarius digital signatures could work for your municipality.

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[3] Notarius offers a digital signature deployment checklist at https://notarius.com/checklist
[4] For example, if considering digital signature technology, a municipality may want to review its software system to ensure it aligns with Notarius solutions.
[5] For example, the expense of storing physical documents as a potential cost that could be avoided.

Thank You! Merci!

AMO would like to thank all of the pilot municipalities for testing Notarius' electronic and digital signature solution offerings. Your feedback was invaluable to improving electronic and digital signature solutions offered through Notarius to the broader membership.

AMO would also like to thank our partners at Notarius who worked tirelessly to ensure that our participating members' questions were comprehensively addressed and were there throughout the entire pilot process with help and support when needed.

In particular, AMO would like to recognize those individuals that worked closely with us through this pilot project:

- Justin Bromberg, United Counties of Prescott & Russell
- Marc-André Drouin, United Counties of Prescott & Russell
- Donna MacDougall, Municipality of Kincardine
- Sharon Chambers, Municipality of Kincardine
- Josh McDougall, Municipality of Red Lake
- Steve Pellegrini, City of Brampton
- Rebecca Whelan, Dufferin County
- Andrea Fay, Simcoe County
- Nada Belhadfa, Notarius

Thank you! Merci!