Social Inclusion Through Strategic Investments

Partnership and Action Plan
2014-2015

The Provincial Network
on Developmental
Services

Introduction

The Provincial Network on Developmental Services represents over 300 non-profit agencies throughout Ontario, consisting of membership from Christian Horizons, Community Living Ontario, Faith and Culture Inclusion Network, Great Lakes Society, Toronto Developmental Services Alliance (TDSA – formerly MARC), Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs (OASIS), Developmental Services Ontario Provincial Network and the Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities (OADD). We are a network of grass roots organizations that have played a vital role in the building of inclusive communities throughout the province. Our local membership organizations have a proven track record in listening and responding to the needs of families and individuals with a developmental disability. Each of our member organizations is led by a volunteer board of directors, many consisting of self-advocates, families and committed citizens. At present, organizations represented by The Provincial Network provide support to over 36,000 people with developmental disabilities and their families, and employ over 40,000 full and part-time staff.

Partnership and Action

A new era of partnership built on collaboration and the strength of our stakeholders provides us with an opportunity to make real impact on the lives of people in the community. The new investment of $810 million in the Developmental Services sector can be the catalyst to create full social inclusion for people with a developmental disability by developing a long-term plan that builds on the strengths and expertise of all stakeholders. But to do that, we must look at new ways of doing things building on what we have accomplished..

We are proposing that a comprehensive, multi-faceted and multi-year plan be developed based on the following four pillars, and implemented through a collaborative process. In developing this plan, we will ensure that the critical issues in the sector are addressed now and into the future, and will provide the framework for an ongoing, effective cross-ministry, agency and family partnership.

The four pillars of this plan are:
- Workforce Stability
- Infrastructure for Quality Services
- Employment of People With A Developmental Disability
- Creative and Innovative Support Models

Building on What We've Achieved Together

The Provincial Network has a long history of working with government, families and the public and private sectors to improve opportunities for full social inclusion of people with a developmental disability and is always seeking opportunities to build on our shared success. Our recent proposal to create a DS Council focused on workforce issues will build on these partnerships to work collaboratively to sustain quality services. Other recent examples of collaboration and partnership include:

Developmental Services Human Resource Strategy

In 2007 the Provincial Network worked in a collaborative partnership with the Ministry of Community and Social Services to develop a Human Resource Strategy for the Developmental Services Sector. The partnership was created to address many challenges the sector was facing, including declining enrollment in college programs, low recruitment rates, inadequate qualifications, poor retention of employees, low wages, low morale and the inability of Colleges to meet the increasing need for trained staff.

Community Networks of Specialized Care and Ontario Partners on Aging and Developmental Disabilities

We know that our connections and supports must be far reaching and diversified in order for us to empower, and to meet the often complex nature of our stakeholders. The Community Networks of Specialized Care (CNSC) and Ontario Partners on Aging and Developmental Disabilities (OPADD) are two additional models that have promoted cross-sectoral and collaborative approaches.

The Community Networks of Specialized Care brings together people from a variety of sectors including developmental services, health, research, education and justice in a common goal of improving the coordination, access and quality of services for these individuals who have complex needs in the communities where they live.

OPADD is a partnership formed between the developmental and long term care service systems to support quality of life for older adults with a developmental disability. Representation on this committee includes the federal and provincial governments, municipal government, long-term care service providers, developmental service providers, planning and coordinating bodies, provincial associations as well as regional and local groups involved in cross sector aging and developmental disabilities projects.

Why these models were successful

The HR Strategy and community networks were designed to create solutions, and sustainable long-term plans for addressing critical sector issues, and drew on our collaborative strengths due to:

- Co-leadership between the sector and government
- Cross-sector stakeholder expertise capturing the diversity of Ontario (urban, rural, unionized, non-unionized) as well as membership from various ministries and stakeholder groups (MCSS, MOL, MTCU, Colleges, Labour Unions, Families and Agencies).
- Design of an expert panel, working groups and the leadership within those groups
- Adequate funding to maintain the strategy and build and expand its success

The partnerships, with effective communication strategies and identification of champions across all levels were key in engaging the strategies with all stakeholders. This model of partnership and collaboration, and the processes developed to achieve them, are integral to moving services and supports for people with developmental disabilities into the future.

Action Built on Partnership

Our *Partnership and Action Plan* can be the catalyst in the evolution of Developmental Services towards an inclusive Ontario. The development of short and longer term strategies to champion our shared goals would be framed in the four critical pillars. The overarching drivers for the four pillars is to focus on the right priorities that focus on system and community capacity maximizing the expertise of all stakeholders as we transform our supports for people with a developmental disability.

Workforce Stability

Building on the strengths of the Developmental Services Human Resource Strategy, Agencies are well positioned to respond to the vast needs of the families and individuals with developmental disabilities and able to ensure quality supports and service through their workforce of professional support staff. Agency staff have been trained and are evaluated against the standards and definitions set out in the HR Strategy's core competencies definitions.

A prolonged inattention and commitment to provide base funding adjustments has resulted in increased workloads, staff reductions and outstanding collective bargaining agreements, all of which pose a significant threat and have reduced sector stability while eroding the necessary support systems and infrastructures.

Current financial pressures have had a negative impact on staff resources, services and training, as well as the ability of agencies to foster innovative and creative opportunities that can increase capacity and service delivery. A reduction in staff hours is felt in the entire system as supervisor and management responsibilities increase to accommodate. In addition, support for individuals with complex needs and dual diagnosis has resulted in the need for highly trained staff and complicated work environments. To reduce the impact of a system that is focused on maintenance and crisis management rather than quality investment a plan is required to:

- Invest in a range of professional staff who are well trained in, and reflect and embed the core competencies into their daily work, and promote inclusion and social participation of people with a developmental disability;
- Address the pressures of Pay Equity, which is making it increasingly challenging for agencies who are mandated to meet proxy pay equity obligations and is creating a wage gap between agencies offering the same services;
- Provide stability to the system by making sure labour needs are met.

The government has acknowledged in its 2014 budget to support the continued professionalization of the community and developmental services sector by investing in salaries and wages for front-line workers, including those in lower wage bands. We commend them on their acknowledgement of the need and are committed to investing these dollars to increase the stability, capacity and readiness of agencies to respond, change and implement transformation of services. However, agency support beyond the frontline is necessary to ensure that services are sustainable and innovation is supported.

Infrastructure for Quality Services

Developmental Service agencies provide quality supports and services to families, and have done so for over 60 years. Agencies also have close connections with families, enabling better communication, creation of proactive, responsive services and supports and ongoing evaluation.

However, agencies continue to be vulnerable to manage without added investment. Added pressures on agencies to support individuals with increasingly complex needs require that staff are trained and experienced, and that homes meet the needs of those living there to provide a safe, secure residential environment.

To address these and other sector issues such as the waitlist, supports for families, and other critical pressures, a plan is required to stabilize the sector, ensuring full social inclusion by providing quality services and supports

that uphold the vision of equality, equity and citizenship. A stable sector requires building partnerships with all levels of government, community, agencies and families that addresses current pressures and finds solutions that balance risk and safety with quality services:

- Enabling flexibility through blended funding models that support fee-for-service initiatives that are fair and equitable, providing the tools necessary to provide supports and expanding capacity for service.
- Agency investment to ensure sustainability, quality service and innovation
- Quality Assurance Measures that are not only consistently implemented anywhere money is spent to support a person with a developmental disability, balancing quality with the ability to continue to develop innovative services. Fair and consistent accountability measures would improve standards across the developmental services sector.
- Fire safety regulations that are less costly and invasive balancing an acceptable level of risk, with a concern for quality of life in individuals' homes and social innovation.
- Increasing inter-ministerial cooperation that not only supports an individual's transition through life, but enhances sector development and training by reducing duplication of services.

Employment For People With Developmental Disabilities

Getting more people with developmental disabilities into the workforce has both social and economic benefits. Adults who are employed attain many more benefits and outcomes related to social inclusion goals than those who are not in the workforce. Social circles broaden and enrich people's lives. People also want to contribute – to society and to their community.

We need to bring together experts on employing people with developmental disabilities, employers, individuals with a developmental disability, families and government to create a comprehensive plan for providing employment success for those who can and want to work. Such a plan will improve the quality of life for people with developmental disabilities while reducing their reliance on social assistance helping them break the cycle of poverty. It will also:

- **Educate and encourage employers to hire people**
  Businesses are becoming more aware of the viability and benefits of including people with developmental disabilities in the workforce. There are many studies and examples of businesses that have enhanced their operations and reduced costs by becoming inclusive employers. It is critical that we continue to tell these stories and educate the business sector about these benefits, reducing barriers and myths and creating inclusive workplaces through collaboration.

- **Support employers and employees in the workplace**
  Long term success is dependent on ensuring people who have a developmental disability and the businesses that employ them are properly supported.

Creative and Innovative Support Models

Agencies have been working with families, government, the public, and increasingly, the private sector to develop new supports and programs that increase capacity and meet a person's goal of social inclusion. Innovative models are being developed all across Ontario and bring together stakeholders who can help to create and sustain these solutions. It is important that cross-Ministerial contribution and support reduce barriers to inclusion, increasing sector capacity and thereby reducing the waiting list. Further expanding and creating a vision for innovative models by bringing together stakeholder expertise will provide stability, yet reduce risk:

- **Housing**
  Ending the Wait, a 3 year plan for housing alternatives was recently commissioned and accepted by the Partnership Table. The creation of the DS Housing Task Force, one of the outcomes of this report, is an excellent example of different stakeholders working together to identify the next evolution of community life. Innovative housing options require bringing together stakeholders including different ministries and levels of government to build affordable housing and explore new models of support.

Also critical in the development of housing options is that the vision of transformation drives decisions.. A person's home should be comfortable and secure, yet not be so restricted by fire regulations that it no longer resembles a home.

- **Community Participation Supports**
  Innovative meaningful day supports, including fee for service models, provide opportunities to build skills, expand social networks and foster inclusion for individuals who cannot or choose not to work. Diversity in service delivery models and provision of community based programs is key to ensuring transformation is built on the principles of social inclusion, building sustainable systems and promoting service capacity. With a commitment and focus on the provision of opportunities to expand and develop the life skills of transitional-aged-youth, we will ensure that they are well-positioned for their entry into the adult world, and well informed when identifying goals that will help them achieve increased independence.

Benefits of the Partnership and Action Plan

Developing a comprehensive, long-term multi-faceted plan for developmental services to create a sustainable service model is key to providing stability and encouraging innovation. It is critical that a plan that integrates the four pillars of social inclusion stabilizes the developmental services sector so that it can contribute to the lives of people with a developmental disability, increasing their opportunities for inclusion and participation in our communities across Ontario.

By developing this plan in partnership with government ministries, sector agencies, people receiving services and other stakeholders we will achieve a transformed system that is sustainable, equitable and meets the needs of individuals with a developmental disability now, and into the future. By creating this plan together:

- The community waitlist will be drastically reduced and people will be supported appropriately so that they have every opportunity to contribute and participate in life in Ontario;
- Individuals who are trained and skilled will realize their goal of obtaining competitive employment and economic self-sufficiency;
- Individuals who do not enter the world of employment have a choice of activities and fee for service supports that expand their social networks and skills;Communication and evaluation will be embedded into the plan, ensuring participation and engagement of stakeholders from the beginning;
- Stakeholders from across the sector and the broader community will be engaged adding stability and expanding capacity within the system;
- Stress on other sectors of the Ontario government will be reduced as a result of addressing the urgent needs of Ontario families and people with a developmental disability;
- Champions will be identified in all stakeholder groups, increasing success and building new integrated models for capacity;
- Agencies will be stabilized and positioned to continue to offer high quality, person-directed supports and services with trained, professional staff.

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How to Move Forward Together

Now is the time for action:

- We need to invest in the evolution of supports for all individuals in Ontario with a developmental disability.
- We need to ensure that our continuum of services provide the rights supports at the right time at the right intensity with the goal being   an inclusive Ontario.
- We must move more of our energies from reacting to crisis to supporting life transitions.

And we must do that in partnership. The model for a long-term comprehensive plan that brings together a multitude of stakeholders has already been realized through the Developmental Services Human Resource Strategy and can be applied to our *Partnership and Action* Plan. Building on the four pillars outlined in this plan, bolstered by a communications strategy focusing on engagement and evaluation, we are confident that comprehensive and sustainable strategies can be developed and achieved by bringing together expertise from across Ontario to work in partnership. We have, and continue to appreciate the collaborative work we have done– we value the partnership we have developed, and together we can transform the developmental service sector.

By engaging all stakeholders through all areas of the planning process, partnerships will be expanded across government and with community partners, agencies and families, resulting in a sustainable plan that will build on the spirit of Transformation.

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