



Thriving Communities

a strategic direction for the Ministry of Community and Social Services

03	From the Minister
05	From the Deputy Minister
07	Looking to 2015
09	Ministry Core Businesses
11	Section I: Long-Term Direction Vision Mission Values
14	Ministry Operating Principles
17	Section II: Priorities and Transformation Strategies Champion Community Inclusion Build Individual Resilience and Opportunity Collaborate with Partners for Social Change Safeguard Vulnerable Ontarians Model Excellence in Public Service
29	Ministry Strategic Framework

Table of Contents

From the Minister

I am proud to lead the Ministry, “the Heart of Government, the Soul of the Community.” And I am very pleased to write to you about the Ministry’s future directions. This document outlines these directions, highlights our vision and mission, the principles that we will uphold, and the priorities and strategies that will guide us.

We know that government plays an important role in supporting the disadvantaged in modern economies. Market forces alone cannot be relied upon to assure everyone reaches their potential. Effective social services are as important as our public utilities, such as safe drinking water, sustainable energy sources or highway and transit systems.

Our social service system is characterized by an enthusiastically optimistic view of human potential. We believe that everyone can and should have opportunities to maximize his or her potential to engage in community life. From time to time government will be called upon to support individual efforts – and that is as it should be. These individual efforts are what make our communities strong.

I believe there is a place for all in Ontario’s communities. Ontario benefits when there are

opportunities for everyone to contribute to our economic and civic life. And we know that such participation favours people most when it is as deep and rich as it can be.

Our task in the Ministry is to assist those who lack ready opportunities. People with disabilities, lone parents awaiting financial support, Aboriginal peoples, abused women – all face special challenges in achieving economic independence or regaining attachment to community life.

There was a time when disability inevitably involved institutionalization. There was a time when spousal separation meant economic hardship. There was a time when being born into poverty meant a predictably poor future for Ontarians and their children. There was a time when homelessness was considered the end of hope. We repudiate these pessimistic views.

We are convinced that, with the right supports at the right time, all Ontarians can achieve their potential. We require the determination and foresight to embrace new opportunities to make these supports available. And we must look in new directions for partnerships to assist us in this task.

Corporations, for example, are looking to become part of, rather than separate and apart from, broader democratic society. More and more, corporations are focused on their role as democracy-enhancing vehicles for public benefit. We have an opportunity to harness that desire for greater social responsibility, and for meaningful community involvement.

Equally, there are organizations in society whose goals specifically include social improvement, and aim to realize these gains through the marketplace. We believe these organizations, as part of the “social economy”, may be willing partners in furthering employment and social inclusion goals.

We also recognize our obligation to modernize the government’s relationships with families, municipalities and non-governmental organizations. Their commitment and ability to deliver necessary supports to disadvantaged Ontarians is a matter of record. We must assist

them so that their capacity to support can be fully achieved.

Developing and sustaining the potential of all Ontarians to make greater contributions to community life through work and other meaningful activities is the Ministry’s task. Employment can be the most fulfilling of those community contributions, leading to greater financial independence and social attachments. Work alone, however, is not the only way that Ontarians’ lives can be enriched. All of us are enriched through greater community participation. We gain a better understanding of ourselves and are able to expand our worldview to one that embraces diversity and the unique contributions of all community members.

I am pleased to endorse ‘Thriving Communities’ as the Ministry framework for a contemporary approach to supporting Ontarians who are struggling to succeed. I believe it represents a significant long-term commitment to embrace community and modernize the government’s partnership with all those who share our objectives.

Sincerely,
Sandra Pupatello
Minister

From the Deputy Minister

We have an obligation to respond to the increasingly complex challenges and expectations of Ontarians. Our success depends on our ability to clearly understand those expectations and to then embrace strategies that accurately respond to them. We will continue to demonstrate the optimism and resolve that have been the cornerstones of this Ministry.

‘Thriving Communities’ builds on several previous Ministry strategic documents. On most fronts, our direction remains constant, but our commitment is to reach out more broadly into the community for partnership opportunities. This framework affirms the Ministry’s vision of full citizenship for all Ontarians and its role in building community capacity and advancing personal well-being and resilience. Additionally, it links the goal of full participation with strong economic performance for a healthier Ontario. It reinforces the Ministry’s stewardship responsibilities for public resources while retaining a commitment to the development of community-based delivery. This direction will be advanced through strong policy development and research, based on an enhanced commitment to gathering data and reporting on results.

‘Thriving Communities’ recognizes the overriding importance of people in any human service endeavour. Much of the good work we sponsor is carried out by others in the community.

Our relationships with these partners depend on fairness and integrity. Our desire to more clearly align our internal behaviour with the stated values of the organization represents a significant commitment to our staff. We believe that well-supported staff will serve clients and partners better. Moreover, our commitment to community includes a specific intent to re-engage with service users, citizens and stakeholders in order to work more collaboratively.

For more than 75 years, staff have given more than what was asked of them, and I know we will continue to meet the public’s expectation for responsive, quality public services.

‘Thriving Communities’ will guide our work with one another, with our community partners and with the people of Ontario over the next ten years.

Sincerely,
Kevin Costante
Deputy Minister

“ *Thriving Communities* affirms the Ministry’s role in building community capacity and advancing personal well-being and resilience ”

Looking to 2015...

This Ministry plays a leadership role in supporting vulnerable or disadvantaged Ontarians, and in developing the vitality of the social service infrastructure throughout the province. Within the broader mandate of government, this document provides a framework that will guide this Ministry over the next decade.

ntarians understand the importance of a social safety net for those affected by difficult transitions in life or for some people with disabilities. They also demand that we, as stewards of these programs, administer them sensitively and with integrity. More and more, our programs will be viewed as important gateways to employment or other meaningful participation in the community.

Ontario's largely community-based delivery system is facing significant challenges. Substantial financial pressures threaten long-term sustainability. As the system formalizes, cost pressures arise out of increasing regulation, rising wage demands and the escalating costs of doing business. At the same time, governments and the donor community are experiencing competing demands for funding. The Ministry must be strategic in leveraging technology and employing new models of service delivery wherever possible in order to assure sustainability.

Immigration and urbanization have contributed substantially to the economic growth and cultural diversity of Ontario. However, our traditional service models have not kept pace with societal change. The special needs and barriers faced by many, including those going through transitions, are also challenges for the Ministry.

There are short and long-term tensions implicit in developing social support capacity. As new needs are identified and legitimized, as social crises occur, initiatives are launched in response. Systemic and more strategic change occurs less frequently and with more difficulty. Strategic change, however, –

integration, prevention, innovative partnerships and technology – is where the Ministry can add significant value and facilitate substantial improvements for Ontarians.

In the past, social services were viewed as charitable assistance for the weak. We now expect that our social services support community capacity-building and opportunity development. The Ontario public and stakeholder communities expect more involvement in policy formulation. There are frequent demands for greater transparency and accountability in policy and administrative decision-making. Moreover, the expectations of Ontarians for more choice, more portability and more guaranteed support are rising. Families and individuals are not simply looking for a collection of services; they expect an integrated experience. Administrative decision-making must meet increasingly high standards for transparency and fairness.

The Ministry is strongly positioned to meet these complex challenges and to pursue opportunities which further the interests of all Ontarians. First and foremost, the Ministry has a committed and sensitive workforce whose first interest is the well-being of Ontarians. The Ministry is renewing its emphasis on policy development and is actively developing collaborative relationships with other ministries and other levels of government in the social policy field. As a decentralized organization, we maintain a strong community presence throughout Ontario and have especially strong relationships with local governments and the non-profit community sector.

Ministry Core Businesses

Employment Supports

To promote attachment to the work force, the Ministry provides specialized employment support programs to Ontarians with disabilities who want to work.

The Ministry also supports municipalities to provide assistance to people in temporary financial need to prepare for, find and retain employment.

Enforcing Family Support Responsibilities

To ensure that parents receive the financial support they need to maintain their families and fully participate in employment and community life, the Family Responsibility Office is mandated to ensure that parents meet their court-ordered family support obligations.

Developmental Services

The Ministry works with individuals, families, communities and organizations to build the foundation for the next generation of services for adults with developmental disabilities.

The Ministry is committed to providing appropriate opportunities for all those with developmental disabilities to contribute to, and participate in, their communities.

Services for Victims of Domestic Violence

To provide safer environments and living supports for victims of family violence and their children, the Ministry funds a system of services across the province. This system supports women to live independently in safety.

Adult Community Services

The Ministry funds community agencies and municipalities to provide supports for Aboriginal communities, the homeless, adults with special needs, the deaf-blind and others who are socially disadvantaged.

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities

To achieve accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities by 2025 by developing and enforcing accessibility standards and by providing public education and guidance, tools and resources for accessibility planning and programming. The Ministry works with people with disabilities, various sectors of the economy and government Ministries.

Income Supports

To assist people to live as independently as possible within their communities, the Ministry provides income supports and basic health benefits to Ontarians who are most in need. Income supports are delivered by municipalities through Ontario Works and directly by the Ministry through the Ontario Disability Support Program.



Vision

Thriving Communities

The Ministry envisions thriving communities sustained by the economic and civic contributions of all Ontarians.



Thriving communities depend on high rates of participation in the labour force and the social attachments that people form through their many interactions in the community. Work, family, friends, neighbourhoods and economic and social interactions contribute to the well-being of individuals and sustain communities. Community participation should be available and accessible to all Ontarians, because everyone benefits when all have the opportunity to contribute.

Mission

Resilience

The Ministry's mission is to build resilience among Ontarians who have limited or threatened social and economic opportunities.

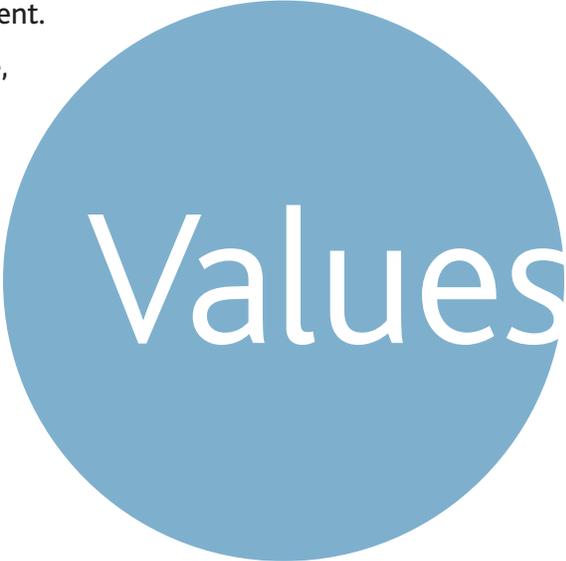


Ontarians have diverse skills and abilities; some have personal, social or economic circumstances that impede progress towards full participation in community life. Because maintaining a high quality of life is important to all communities, our focus is on maximizing the natural strengths of people, removing disincentives where they exist, providing training where appropriate, and creating innovative opportunities for work and other meaningful participation in community life.

Organizational Excellence

The Ministry culture relies on the values of integrity, continuous learning, fairness, social responsibility and interdependence.

Ontarians expect that public servants fulfil their functions guided by the principles of fairness and integrity. They do this best when they are trusted, managed fairly, and supported by a culture of learning and improvement. Men and women choose to work in public service, and in particular in this Ministry, to fulfil their sense of social responsibility. They understand that the success of their work is dependent on the contributions of many others in the human services field.



Values

Ministry Operating Principles:

Commitment to the Public

As a steward of Ontario's human capital, the Ministry will be guided by these management principles:

1

The Ministry develops and sustains the potential of Ontario's at-risk populations

2

The diversity (the differences in ability and perception) of Ontarians, enhances the richness of our communities and adds depth to the human experience

3

Prudence and economy will guide Ministry spending decisions

Commitment to Community Partners

As a partner, the Ministry will be guided by principles of community development:

1

Accountability, fairness and sustainability will influence decision-making processes

2

A systems approach will be taken when planning and allocating resources

3

Discretion for decision-making will be accorded to the most appropriate community level

4

Change will be characterized by meaningful engagement with the general public and those affected by the proposed change

5

Strategic directions will be informed by research and expert views

6

Policy development will support integrated delivery

Commitment to Staff

As an employer, the Ministry will be guided by these leadership principles:

1

Leadership integrity will require that organizational behaviours accurately reflect the Ministry's stated organizational values

2

The Ministry's growth will depend on the development and support of staff through training, mentoring, and opportunities

3

Innovation and imaginative problem solving will flourish in the Ministry when honest mistakes are tolerated and emphasis is placed on learning and appropriate risk taking

4

The Ministry's organizational health will require a fair and transparent approach to the recruitment and retention of skilled employees

5

The Ministry, as an open organization, will minimize cumbersome processes, encourage the sharing of ideas, and delegate decision-making

6

The Ministry's purpose and pride will be strengthened when its members enthusiastically contribute to building community capacity

Section II: Priorities and Transformation Strategies

In order to further the Ministry's vision of thriving communities, five priorities for transformation are identified:



Champion
Community
Inclusion



Build
Individual Resilience
and Opportunity

Collaborate
with Partners for
Social Change



Safeguard
Vulnerable
Ontarians



Model
Excellence In
Public Service

Champion Community Inclusion

1

Some Ontarians are especially at risk of social exclusion. Poverty is not simply a problem of inadequate income. Its consequences inevitably lead to losses in social attachments, subsequent isolation and even ill-health. Strong families, welcoming and accessible communities and comprehensive supports are keys to promoting the meaningful participation of all Ontarians.

See Page 19

Build Individual Resilience and Opportunity

2

Permanent attachment to the workforce can be the most rewarding of all life's accomplishments. But for some it can be an experience of marginal employment, frequent rejection and frustration. Our goal is to intervene early, to remove obstacles that impede success, to make new opportunities available and to provide basic economic security.

See Page 21

Collaborate with Partners for Social Change

3

The Ministry will continue to work with community partners to deliver locally sensitive and accessible services. Additionally, the Ministry will consult with this sector for policy advice and to share responsibility for the development of rational and effective systems of supports to families and individuals.

See Page 23

Safeguard Vulnerable Ontarians

4

The safety of vulnerable Ontarians must be a primary consideration in every intervention that the Ministry sponsors. The management of the risks involved in the successful integration of individuals into community life is also an important responsibility of service providers. Due diligence and public accountability are obligations the Ministry shares with the service-provider community.

See Page 25

Model Excellence In Public Service

5

Public service excellence is only possible when staff are engaged, supported and have sufficient context to pursue a common vision. The Ministry believes that the way in which goals are achieved is as important as achieving them.

See Page 27

Champion Community Inclusion



Focus on the strengths of individuals and communities rather than only attempting to address deficits. Emphasize inclusion; focus on citizens rather than people needing services. Provide incentives for work and participation. Facilitate independence. Recognize that the willingness and capacity to care for one's family members is a great asset to the community.

Transformation Strategies

1 Enable Families and Caregivers

- a Provide families and caregivers with the tools and supports needed to cope with the challenges they face, and to support one another and their family members (e.g. facilitate communication between families, self-help groups and the sharing of best practices)
- b Develop progressive policies that support families and caregivers
- c Explore opportunities to expand individualized funding
- d Enable families, caregivers and others to develop new service structures by offering flexible contractual relationships (e.g. co-ops, microboards), and requiring proportional levels of accountability

2 Promote Full Civic and Social Participation

- a Move individuals from the remaining three provincial institutions into the community
- b Contribute to and influence municipal and federal decisions that affect the inclusion of individuals into the community (e.g. zoning, granny flats, accessibility planning, innovative approaches to housing the homeless)
- c Model best practices as an employer by offering inclusive workplaces, volunteer opportunities, work placements and promoting equal opportunity practices
- d Champion accessibility for all Ontarians

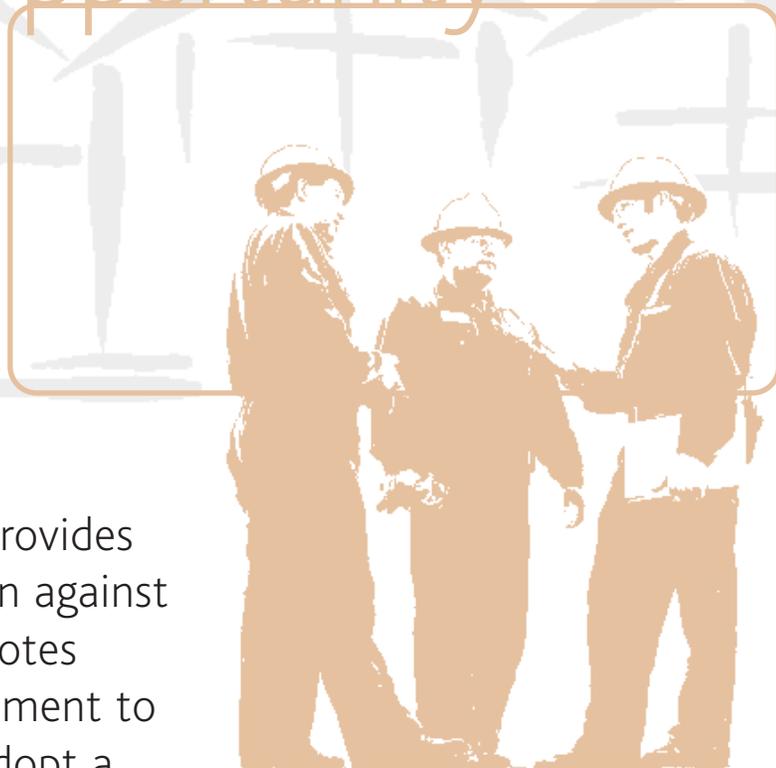
3 Encourage Innovation

- a Validate social innovation through demonstration projects and research
- b Promote and share best practices and innovative services
- c Develop the capacity to lead community inclusion
- d Use technology to improve services and to increase access to services
- e Rebalance the importance of sensitive and responsive relationships with the people who use our services, with the need for efficient business processes and technology
- f Design work environments so services can be delivered in a way that balances client access and privacy with staff safety

Priority 2

Build

Individual Resilience and Opportunity



Ultimately a job provides the best protection against poverty and promotes meaningful attachment to community life. Adopt a social and economic development model that promotes employment for those with limited or threatened employment opportunities, while maintaining a commitment to the preservation of a basic financial safety net. Focus on building individual resilience and innovative partnerships. View community capacity through a wide lens in order to take advantage of potential opportunities. Value will be added by collaborating with new and non-traditional partners.

Transformation Strategies

1 Intervene Early to Prevent Loss of Employment

- a Expand connections to employers to develop early intervention strategies that keep those at risk employed
- b Promote early return to work for those experiencing difficulty, in order to prevent long-term unemployment and loss of productivity
- c Apply early intervention best practices as an employer

2 Remove Barriers to Employment

- a Remove disincentives to employment, and fairly reward efforts towards employment
- b Enable people to retain benefits and some entitlements as their earnings increase
- c Value part time work and volunteerism as accomplishments that lead to greater community integration, greater fiscal independence and, potentially, a step toward full time employment
- d Engage advocacy groups and reach out to clients to promote better understanding of rapid reinstatement provisions
- e Assist people to successfully navigate the systems when services are needed
- f Provide incentives to employment service providers for assisting their clients to secure sustainable work (results-based funding)
- g Model employer best practices for community outreach and recruitment — set targets and publish results
- h Enforce accessibility standards to allow people with disabilities to participate equally in the workforce

3 Partner With The Social Economy Sector

- a Partner with venture philanthropy organizations, non-governmental organizations and social entrepreneurs to further build a sustainable social economy and infrastructure
- b Partner with credit unions, financial institutions and businesses to increase access to banking services, including bank accounts, business loans and grant programs for disadvantaged Ontarians
- c Draw on the unique strengths of businesses and social institutions to build opportunity

4 Ensure Basic Economic Security

- a Provide Ontarians with economic assistance, when it is needed, to allow them to overcome barriers to employment and independence
- b Support dependent spouses and their children by championing processes that support family stability and diligently pursue financial support on their behalf

Collaborate with Partners for Social Change



Define partners in terms of the support they provide to families and individuals. Optimize the natural strengths of each partner in the formal system; municipalities as service system managers, transfer payment agencies as providers of professional supports and the Ministry as providing the necessary legislative and policy framework. Provide partners with the tools they need to satisfy accountability requirements.

Transformation Strategies

1 Re-engage with Community Planning Processes

- a Contribute to community-based planning and priority setting initiatives with other funders, stakeholder groups and the academic community
- b Provide guidance, tools and assistance to businesses and interested individuals to develop public and workplace accessibility plans
- c Prior to adopting policy or operational changes, facilitate deliberative dialogue with individuals using the Ministry's services, other stakeholders and the general public

2 Adopt a Systems Approach to Service Delivery

- a Establish and strengthen local communities as the hub for service delivery and champion self-sufficiency as a worthwhile community goal
- b Promote greater service delivery integration, provide a unified provincial presence in the community and work towards a broad human services approach to meeting the special needs of Ontarians
- c Lead the integration of policies that affect vulnerable populations
- d Champion sectoral/community outcome reporting and increased public disclosure
- e Retain accountability for the fair and efficient allocation of resources

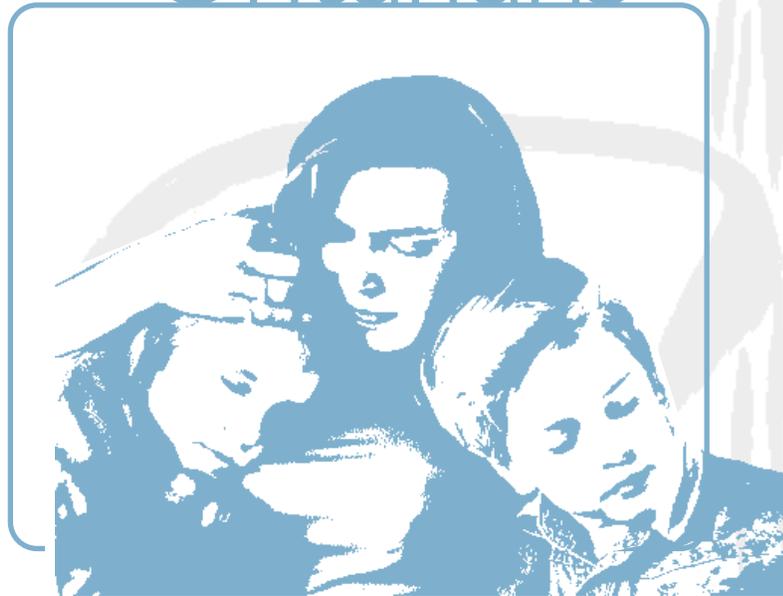
3 Focus on Strategic Policy

- a Provide robust strategic policy to support community development
- b Deepen and broaden social policy information
- c Focus policy on strategic goals – integration, prevention, partnerships and technology
- d Validate new policy directions with users, service providers and researchers
- e Adopt consensus building as the preferred approach for community change management initiatives

4 Support Accountability

- a Continue the discussion with municipalities about their evolving role as service system managers. Work collaboratively towards the ideal mix of administrative flexibility, input into policy formulation and accountability for outcomes
- b Endorse community-driven efforts to develop credible third-party accreditation in sectors where appropriate
- c Balance the impact of developing new supports for families with the need to sustain transfer payment agencies
- d Publicly recognize community volunteers for serving on transfer payment boards of directors
- e Assist volunteer boards of directors to fulfill their governance, ethics and compliance responsibilities, by supporting credible training opportunities

Safeguard Vulnerable Ontarians



Individual and community safety must be the priority in the provision of services to vulnerable people. This is an appropriate platform upon which to build other community supports. Transparency and accountability in the matter of safety will build public confidence and trust, and will establish a foundation for further and more meaningful community inclusion.

Transformation Strategies

1 Reinforce Accountability for Safety

- a Prioritize safety considerations as the focus of contract compliance monitoring
- b Require community partners to publicly report on safety issues via a safety report card
- c Require transfer payment agencies to complete training on client safety
- d Take advantage of the Ontario Public Service Inspection and Enforcement Initiative in order to monitor safety in a timely and effective way

2 Develop Specialized Services for Adults with Special Needs

- a Strengthen the community's service capacity for persons with complex medical needs, challenging behaviour or a dual diagnosis through academic research, innovation and best practice
- b Develop a fair and equitable process for the allocation of resource-intensive specialized services

3 Develop a Continuum of Services for Abused Women

- a Build public confidence in the safety of the shelter system for abused women by publishing reports on expected outcomes and results achieved
- b Co-ordinate policy development across ministries
- c Promote greater service delivery integration
- d Support public education strategies for preventing assault

4 Prepare for Emergencies

- a Further develop the Ministry's emergency management plan
- b Support the leadership position of municipalities during times of emergency
- c Respond to any emergency that requires shelter, clothing and food

5 Manage Transitions Effectively

- a Systematically plan for appropriate transfer of responsibility at life transitions
- b Ensure protective services are available for vulnerable adults where necessary

Model

Excellence in

Public Service



Public service has become increasingly complex. The Ministry's work of setting strategic directions and managing change demands new skill sets. Decisions must be made more quickly and, oftentimes, without access to all the information. The Ministry requires trusted and trusting leadership to support an engaged and adaptive staff group. Leadership must contribute clarity, choice and opportunity in order to build a proud workforce, focused on providing excellent service. To consistently model excellence, our first challenge is to strengthen our leadership culture.

Transformation Strategies

1 Promote Pride

- a Promote the Ministry as a modern, knowledgeable, professional organization, well-equipped to help people participate more fully in society
- b Make informal recognition strategies part of the Ministry's culture
- c Tell our positive stories – publish examples of the good work done by Ministry employees

2 Actively Encourage and Support Work/Life Balance

- a Promote flexible work arrangements to encourage a better balance between work and life
- b Adopt business best practices for supporting employees who are experiencing personal difficulties
- c Model best employer practices for caregiver accommodation and return-to-work protocols

3 Emphasize Values-Leadership and Learning

- a Through the pay for performance system, reward and recognize leaders who model values-based behaviours, and who value process along with outcomes
- b Enable staff to safely provide feedback on organizational wellness
- c Encourage frequent cross-divisional project and work opportunities in order to foster organizational understanding

- d Promote a culture where constructive discussion and suggestions are valued and considered, even when they challenge current thinking
- e Continue to emphasize the importance of the interdependent relationship with bargaining agents
- f Develop the leadership talent within the Ministry – wherever it may be found – by offering leadership training to current and future leaders
- g Make tangible commitments to learning

4 Make the Best Possible Decisions

- a Develop a decision-making culture that allows for an appropriate level of discretion
- b Establish a culture that values innovation and responsible risk taking, and tolerates honest mistakes that are made in pursuit of a worthwhile goal
- c Provide the necessary context to enable staff to make thoughtful and appropriate decisions in an increasingly complex environment
- d Develop a framework to inform strategic policy development and decision making

Ministry Strategic Framework

The Ministry strategic framework purposefully weights Mission and Foundational Values equally. The Ministry relies on an engaged workforce to deliver services and to manage relationships sensitively. How the Ministry achieves its Mission is critical to the organization's sustainability.



Ministry of Community and Social Services

We would like to acknowledge the time, effort
& input we received from Ministry staff, who
contributed to the development of this document

www.mcass.gov.on.ca

ISBN 0-7794-9188-2

This document is available in alternate formats upon request.

Contact (416) 325-5666

TTY (800) 387-5559