

January 25, 2019



Hon. Lisa MacLeod
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
Hepburn Block
6th Floor, 80 Grosvenor St.
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1E9

Dear Hon. MacLeod,

Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region (EAFWR) were saddened to hear that the Independent Facilitation (IF) Demonstration Project, which provides people and families with independent facilitation services through seven IF groups in communities throughout Ontario, is coming to an end without any Ministry plans for more permanent foundational support for independent facilitation to continue.

As a Developmental Services agency that receives MCCSS funding for a variety of programs, we see the positive impact that independent facilitation (provided by the independent facilitators of Bridges to Belonging) has upon the people we support, in addition to the formal services they receive from us. EAFWR provides Coordination and Case Management support, Brokerage of funds, and supervised Direct Support People in support of families using their Special Services at Home, Passport and Respite programs, as well as a FamilyHome Program and Community Participation Supports. Over the last several years our case coordinators have observed that independent facilitation truly has an important role in helping people and families in a variety of situations, to plan, find their direction and increase their citizenship involvement, which complements and enhances the formal services we can provide through our programs. With over 500 Passport contracts at EAFWR, this has been a great advantage for families, and in turn has helped EAFWR be more efficient and strategic in administering people's funds.

For a person supported through Passport funding, EAFWR Case Coordinators, often along with a Direct Support Person (DSP), work with the person and family to develop an individual support plan (ISP) to help the person identify areas that they would like to pursue using their funding. The DSP and the person will then work together towards the goals. An independent facilitator involved in this process is able to cultivate the relationship further with the person and consequently help them explore and identify their gifts, strengths and hopes to a greater degree. Their knowledge and concentration upon community opportunities and ability to help the person connect and find places where they can become involved, lays good foundation for the DSP who continues to support the person in the spaces and places they wish to be. Thus, the person is more likely to use their funding to create the kind of activities and life that gives them meaning and opportunities for true citizenship and contribution. In addition, funding is spent in a way that utilizes skills appropriate to the type of support needed to maximize the success of

the person in achieving what they hope to do, utilizing a broad range of community and other resources. In our experience, we believe independent facilitation can reduce reliance on government funded supports and enhance involvement of natural supports and the broader community. I would be very interested in reading the program evaluation report for the Independent Facilitation Pilot. Has this report been made public? Please let me know how I may obtain a copy.

The work of modernization initiatives, such as the IF Demonstration Project and the Developmental Services Housing Task Force, reflect approaches that engage "the whole of government" and "the whole of society" for the successful life in the community for a person with a developmental disability. Through these modernized initiatives, the province can improve the person's quality of life, while simultaneously reducing their reliance on MCCSS funded Developmental Services. These forward-thinking approaches build capacity for the province's DS funding, helping address the urgent needs of thousands of people who desperately need our services, yet linger on registries or waiting lists.

As a developmental services agency built upon **Community, Dignity and Belonging**, we fully support independent facilitation, and our local agency, Bridges to Belonging in being able to continue this service. We would urge our Provincial leaders to see this as an essential component in building inclusive communities where everyone can make a valued contribution. We understand that people and families can use their Passport to continue to purchase independent facilitation. But the limited fees they can afford through their Passport funding will not provide enough funds to sustain the organizations that provide this service. Having an organization such as Bridges to Belonging offers stability, well-trained and recognized facilitators, accountability, resources and professional credibility which gives people and their families the trust, confidence and commitment to use independent facilitation to help in the creation of good lives for all. Please continue to fund this essential component of a modernized Developmental Services system in Ontario.

Sincerely,


Liz Hedley
Board Chair


Allan Mills
Executive Director

Copy: EAFWR Board of Directors
Belinda Karahalios, MPP, Cambridge
Laura Mae Lindo, MPP, Kitchener Centre
Amy Fee, MPP, Kitchener South
Mike Harris, MPP, Kitchener, Conestoga
Catherine Fife, MPP, Waterloo