

# IFCO Citizenship News



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## DIRECT / INDIVIDUALIZED FUNDING IS COMING TO ONTARIO

**The 'Coalition' welcomes the change, and hopes that the MCSS Transformation will move quickly beyond 'Passport' to more opportunities for living out the 'New Story.'**

### Grassroots Work

The Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario (IFCO) recognizes that it is the work of our members and the strength of our partnerships that provide us with energy and direction to continue with grassroots education. This includes the Common Vision Group.

People, their families and their support networks used the recommendations developed by the *Common Vision* Group to develop responses to the MCSS framework for a new service system.

Local and provincial networking is an important and effective support for people, families and support networks. Ideas, information, and encouragement are provided while the building of strong relationships occurs within communities. Many people with disabilities and families are expressing their desire for a different way of accessing and working with the supports that they require. The 'Coalition' gets many requests from families and organizations who are interested in new ways of working.

Thank you to all who participated in the 'Public Consultation' bringing forward the voices of Ontarians who are ready for the *new story* and *a good life* through individualized funding and what is needed for successful implementation.

The Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario (IFCO) welcomes the new directions proposed in the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) paper entitled *Opportunities and Action*. "We are pleased that direct / individualized funding on a broader scale for living is coming to Ontario," said Michelle Friesen, Coalition co-chair. "We are anxious for the day that lives will not be pieced together with supports from various funding pots and programs and will be viewed holistically." In addition, Yona Frishman, the other Coalition co-chair has stressed, "The good news is not just about funding, but independent planning and facilitation which is key to success in a direct funding approach." Friesen added, "According to feedback from our membership and from Common Vision members, all this can not happen soon enough. Our members and others across Ontario are anxious to move forward.

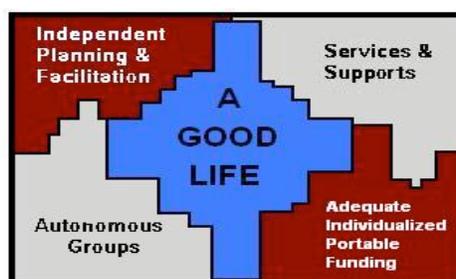
In its response to the Ministry paper, the IFCO expressed appreciation to the government for basing its transformation on particular values, especially **citizenship** and **portability**. The Coalition has long espoused that citizenship needs to underline the continued development of an Ontario society where the participation and contributions of people with disabilities are valued as full citizens, with their status equivalent to other citizens. They also believe portability is fundamental and will greatly enhance citizenship.

The Coalition has indicated its support for the MCSS commitment to **independent planning**. Both Friesen and Frishman noted that the IFCO believes that independent planning and direct / individualized funding are cornerstones in transformation and will empower people, their families and their support networks. IFCO believes that the establishment of

**independent planning and facilitation** is essential as a mechanism for overcoming the deep prejudices that have faced people with a developmental disability. In addition, the extensive history of segregation, (well documented in *Opportunities and Action*), has created a culture where the contributions of vulnerable people have been underestimated. Independent facilitators can assist those who are interested to explore what may have appeared impossible in years past.

The Coalition believes that a transformed system would ensure that **key functions are separated**. Planning would be separate and independent from service delivery and from the access centres. '**Access**' and '**Allocation**' processes would need to be **respectful, private, equitable and fair**. Strong citizen-based voices (family networks, People First, etc.) must be autonomous and sustained partners in Ontario communities. Agency based services and supports need to be separate from all the other functions named above.

As MCSS begins to move toward implementation of its transformed system, it must guarantee that these functions are truly separate and that each is based on principles of empowerment.



## Ontarians are Ready for Individualized Funding

Ontario has long experienced a fairly traditional system of services and supports for adults with developmental disabilities. Recently, the province has looked at new investments in people who have a developmental disability. These investments include, among other things, closing the last of the large institutions by the year 2009, significantly increasing funding for supports like Special Services at Home, investing in people and families who want to “create their own home” and implementing a Direct / Individualized Funding program called Passport. Although all are forward moves, these alone will not further advance the citizenship aspirations of many people with disabilities and their families and support networks.

People and families are ready and waiting for a more comprehensive approach with regard to individualized funding. Families have:

- proven themselves as trustworthy with funding (Special Services At Home program),
- been creative in the planning process and accountable for community outcomes (*Moving Toward Citizenship: A Study of Individualized Funding in Ontario* – Lord, 2006); and
- are ready for systemic change (as affirmed through the provincial community engagement processes hosted by the Individual Funding Coalition for Ontario).

Across the province, the Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario is hearing the same message from persons with disabilities, their families, and their support networks. It is a message asking for real transformation as a route to genuine citizenship.

### ***The Basis for Real Transformation***

The basis of real transformation of developmental services lies in the understanding that people with disabilities and their families must be able to:

- Define their own dreams, ambitions, and needs, along with the supports they require and how they access and use them.
- Have real opportunities to contribute socially and economically to their community
- Have funding that is individualized and fully portable
- Have ongoing access to independent planning and facilitation to assist with planning, ideas, information, and more.

### ***Self-determination***

Citizenship for people with disabilities focuses on the building of meaningful opportunities for self-determination within an individualized and responsive support system.

The right to self-determination and equality is protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Like others in community, people

with disabilities, their families, and friends are asking for the opportunity to have an everyday ordinary life; where people dream, pursue their goals, establish and nurture their personal relationships, as well as have work, social and recreational involvements.



Persons with disabilities, their families and networks are ready to reclaim their right to be included, have valued roles, and be contributing members of their community. In other words, they are ready and wanting to pursue a *Good Life* in a different way.

The ‘Coalition’ is constantly amazed at the resilience and aspirations of families. Families want to contribute to the well-being of their family members with a disability. Families know that Individualized Funding and Independent Planning and Facilitation are two necessary elements that people with disabilities must be able to access in order to gain independence and control over their lives. Families across the province are asking “where can I get a facilitator?” Persons with disabilities are eager to have a planning process in place that is separate from the supports they receive from a service agency. They understand that an Independent Facilitator will assist them to think and plan for a *Good Life*.

Building on their experience with Special Services at Home funding, family members have repeatedly said, that “we” have to change the way we think. ‘We have to move to a way of thinking that recognizes our sons and daughters for their gifts and personal capacity, and that values their contribution; utilizes our local community, and builds together our capacity as citizens.’ People with disabilities and their families are ready for Individualized Funding because it makes sense to have the maximum choice and control over their lives as they grow, learn and experience within their communities.

Supporting the right of citizenship for people with disabilities is the obligation of all Ontarians. With Individualized Funding and Independent Planning and Facilitation in place, persons with disabilities, often with the support of their families and support networks, will lead the way! The government of Ontario must fully provide for Individualized Funding and Independent Planning and Facilitation as a support to the realization of Citizenship. The time is now. People are ready and waiting.

### **Contact Us!**

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