

# EXTRA!!! Common Vision EXTRA!!!

## Government Publishes New Paper called 'Opportunities and Action'

by Joe Citizen

Provincial Coalitions claim "this is a government document whose time has come."

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The Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services recently released a document called *Opportunities and Action: Transforming Supports in Ontario for People Who Have a Developmental Disability*. Published in May, 2006, this important paper highlights new directions for the developmental services sector, and proposes ways that services can be transformed to benefit citizens with developmental disabilities.

Common Vision, a collaboration of four provincial groups, is calling for

investments that will make transformation a reality. Leaders of these groups note that the Ministry of Community and Social Services has spent a great deal of time developing a vision for transformation of the developmental services sector. The Ministry is now poised to build on this valuable work by investing in some of the features described in the government's own paper, *Opportunities and Action*. These investments will result in what Common Vision is calling 'Real Transformation' in Ontario.

Common Vision is proposing that as more dollars become available for the

developmental services sector, that the government choose its investment areas carefully. Some are suggesting that the sector just needs more money. For Common Vision, it is not just about the total amount invested in the sector but, more importantly, where and what the money will be invested in.

Common Vision is pleased that the Province is focusing on citizenship, the essence of which is participation and contribution. Moving toward citizenship means the Ministry is stepping away from a charity model of service for this sector! With genuine transformation, systems and services will no longer be built on pity and benevolence.

Common Vision is pleased that MCSS has highlighted the importance of

Direct Funding and Independent Planning and Facilitation in its document. These two features need to become viable and adequately funded options for people with a developmental disability and their families. As the document *Opportunities and Action* states, these are key elements of transformation.

Common Vision is calling on the Government of Ontario to find the funds to bring these aspects of the *Opportunities and Action* document to life.

See page two for an interview with leaders in this social change movement.

*Common Vision, a collaboration of four provincial groups, says: "The time is now for investments that will make transformation a reality."*

### COMMON VISION - Four Provincial Groups

Family Alliance Ontario <http://family-alliance.com>

Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario [www.individualizedfunding.ca](http://www.individualizedfunding.ca)

Special Services at Home Provincial Coalition [www.ssahcoalition.ca](http://www.ssahcoalition.ca)

People First of Ontario [www.peoplefirstontario.com](http://www.peoplefirstontario.com)

## An Interview with Leaders in the Social Change Movement

*Can you tell us what it is you like about the government document Opportunities and Action?*

For the first time ever, we have a document and a direction for Ontario that embraces the principles of citizenship and supports the values of self-determination and portability. Outlined in this new direction are features of a system that, over time, could ultimately result in the real participation of adult citizens with disabilities in their communities - something we have not seen before in Ontario. ***Investing strategically to make this happen will be worth the results and will have a huge impact on others in the community.***

With these proposed directions, it is very exciting that, with help from an independent facilitator as well as family and friends, people can be assisted to make choices, develop relationships, and have the option of receiving direct funding to design the life they would choose in the community. Direct individualized funding will allow disability supports to be more individualized and tailored to the person. As a result, others in the community will benefit from people's talents and contributions. If people want to make a change in their lives, they will have the ability to do so with the principle of portability. The Ministry's support for portability means that people will have control and choice over the disability supports that are designated on their behalf. This is a key element of citizenship.

***You have referred to Independent Planning and Facilitation as a***

***needed support or infrastructure; can you tell us more about that?***

Independent facilitation is something the government has already been investing in around the Province of Ontario in 'pockets' over many years. However, it has not been available to everyone.

The idea is for people to have access to a facilitator who is independent of the direct service system. The facilitator works just for the person and family. This facilitator would assist with planning and support network development, facilitate meetings, help look at options, help connect people to their community, broker services, mediate, negotiate and more. By investing in this type of support or infrastructure across Ontario, the government would ensure that this support is available to anyone who needs it regardless of culture, economic status, or educational background.

Recent research in Ontario has demonstrated that people and families with access to a facilitator and individualized funding are more involved in their communities and less dependent on the system. Independent planning and facilitation was vital to the success that people were able to achieve. ***The front end work of an independent facilitator has a hugely positive impact on people, their families and, ultimately, their communities as a whole.***

Independent planning and facilitation complements effective family support. Autonomous family networks and other supports for families need to be nurtured in any transformation.

Independent facilitation is becoming part of transformed systems of support in many parts of the world. Australia, Great Britain, several US states, and British Columbia have all created independent mechanisms for facilitators, who work with individuals and their families. ***As the Common Vision group has stressed, Ontario needs to invest in facilitation supports in every area of the province.*** Such a systemic approach should be available to all families, regardless of economic status or cultural background.

Some families are asking to have dollars so that they can contract their own independent facilitator. This is an important option and would work well, if put in place as an enhancement to and in combination with a significant investment in independent planning and facilitation supports or infrastructures. Such infrastructures would ensure that independent facilitators are accessible and available to all.

***The time is now for government to invest in independent planning and facilitation because it is the right thing to do.*** It is needed to make direct funding a viable option for people and families who choose this route. It will ensure choice and fairness. And most importantly it is simply an expansion of what the government is already doing.

***Direct funding is a new feature introduced in Opportunities and Action. What is it and what is needed to make this a success in Ontario?***

The government of Ontario is using the term 'Direct Funding' for its individualized funding approach. The Ministry of Community and Social Services has introduced this type of annual funding on a small scale through its new Passport Program. It gives people the option of choosing direct funding to purchase supports that they can tailor to their own needs. Common Vision groups have heard from families in various parts of the province who wish they had access to an independent facilitator with this new Passport program - someone who could walk with them and do more than just planning. Many families have felt vulnerable and alone. ***Independent planning and facilitation, as an infrastructure, is needed for success with Direct Funding.***

Adequate funding is the other key to success. In order for government to see the greatest results through Direct Funding, people and families must be able to access adequate amounts of funding to build a good life and contribute to their communities. Many families have been layering small amounts of funding and supports through various programs and 'pots of money.' It is time consuming, exhausting and, in many situations, inadequate! The cost to the government to operate all these different programs instead of having one adequate allocation is huge. While government considers how to streamline and cut costs, people and families cannot wait. They need support for their lives as a whole, not just portions of it, just like those who are supported to live in conventional programs. ***Invest now in people who choose Direct Funding!***