
A Message from the Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario

October 2022

Now is the Time!

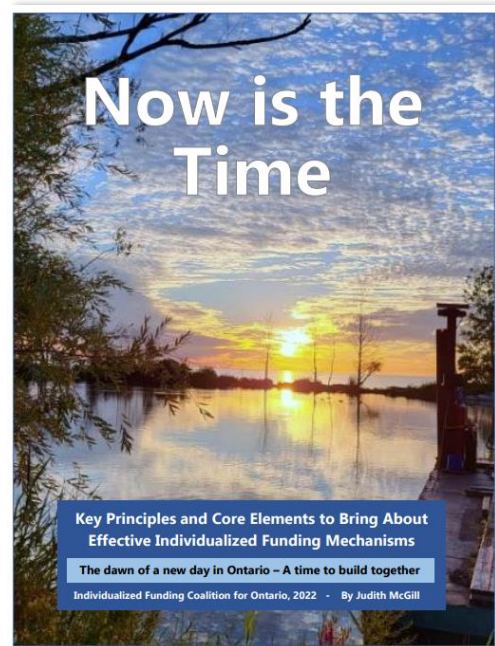
The Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario (IFCO) is pleased to be launching a comprehensive paper called: *Now is the Time, Key Principles and Core Elements to Bring About Effective Individualized Funding Mechanisms in Ontario*. [Click this link to download Now is the Time](#)

This paper is a synthesis of many of the writings produced by IFCO, as well as some provincial, national and international research reports and information, and direct input from people, families and others. It is about individualized funding, third party assistance like independent facilitation and planning, individualized mechanisms and structures for people including the recognition of rights, support for decision-making, social networks and more. All this leading to an effective individualized approach for living an everyday, ordinary life of inclusion and social connections.

The principles, core elements and approaches described in this paper apply to all people living with vulnerabilities at every stage of life from young children and families looking for community inclusion, to youth and adults living their own unique lives, to elders and seniors who want to stay in their homes, neighbourhoods and communities.

IFCO has had opportunity to collaborate with many like-minded individuals, families, allies, agencies and provincial partners over the past 28 years while working to build positive change. The kind of change that leads to people and their trusted others having control over key decisions, and having the funding and supports they need to live a good life expanding relationships and meeting others.

The values and principles taken up by IFCO have been affirmed by individuals, their families and/or trusted others over time and proven to be central elements of a desirable individualized funding model. These principles include community inclusion, community first, natural relationships and access to third party structures, (like independent facilitation and planning supports), to foster an everyday, ordinary life of inclusion. They have been re-affirmed recently with input from people, families, and allies at 10 different gatherings where IFCO was presenting and/or facilitating discussions in 2021 and 2022.



Affirmation also came through many international research reports that have been published in the last 4 years that identify shared values and principles, similar to those we have named as crucial to the success of individualized funding, also lending credibility to the work.

The primary purpose of the first individualized funding programs developed in Ontario was to promote social inclusion by supporting individuals to remain in their homes and to contribute in their neighbourhoods and local community. The focus on social inclusion and supporting individuals (of all ages) to live in their homes, neighbourhood and local community has been significantly lost over the past 10 years.

Today, we are seeing less investment for individualized, inclusive type/home support funding being allocated for individuals with physical disabilities, individuals living with developmental/intellectual disabilities, and older citizens who need extra assistance. We are finding that the individuals and families who were devoted in their advocacy for social inclusion and who worked at creating individualized custom supports feel defeated. Not only because they are aging and have less capacity to continue to advocate for coherent options, but because they see a bleak future for their loved one and even for themselves. One of our allies has summed it up best: *“For people with disabilities needing support it is like having a straight line to Long-Term Care.”*

We all know that Long Term Care institutions continue to be heavily funded to grow and expand as a ‘residential’ option. LTC institutions appear to be the acceptable default option for seniors and people with disabilities. We have seen LTC being promoted and favoured for those living with significant needs in social media. Without investments in individualized funding, supportive housing arrangements and daily life, the future looks grim.

At recent IFCO gatherings, we heard loud and clear that people and families were highly dissatisfied with the lack of adequate and equitable individualized funding, the unreliability of the funding, and the lack of power and control they were given over the funding. They were also frustrated with the lack of resources they were given to engage independent facilitation and planning support to enhance their capacity for creating an everyday ordinary life in the community.

The *Now is the Time* paper outlines individualized funding approaches that recognize basic rights with supports for decision-making, along with good principles, and adequate funding to live a good life – all together keystone pieces that make a significant difference moving forward. The paper presents a way to ground joint action in core values and principles.

The Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario recognizes the need to bring like-minded individuals, families, trusted others, allies, independent facilitators, agencies and provincial partners together for collective action and moving forward. We leave off with an invitation forthcoming for collective action . . . Now is the Time.