

Co-Chair Anna McGregor – Update on the landscape

Federal Impact

We are in an environment where federal policy changes are making a direct impact on many of our services and the people we serve. You will have heard that the federal government are extending the timelines for people to access the federal benefits.

- Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB) and the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit (CRCB) 12 weeks extending the maximum duration of the benefits to up to 38 weeks
- Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit (CRSB) through regulation to 4 weeks
- EI regular benefits available to a maximum of 50 weeks through legislation, for claims that are made between September 27, 2020 and September 25, 2021
- Vaccines are also heavily impacted by the federal side of things. The provinces and territories are getting their vaccines from the federally negotiated contracts.

Provincial Financial Assistance

As federal benefits are extended it will mean a longer period of time before households apply to Ontario Works. While we are on the topic of OW. The province have just announced the early stages of Social Assistance Transformation. In essence a reorganisation of what is done at a provincial level versus a municipal level. It will see the traditional role of municipalities evolve more into that of support and system navigators rather than caseworkers issuing cheques. It will take a few years and is just in the very early stages of development. All of this will be going on while the Province also reorganises how Employment Services are delivered in the Province. Which leads me to committee reports where these types of information are shared online for elected officials and the general community to view.

Provincial Communication

As you know we sometimes find out news on changes to our programming via the Provincial press conferences and news briefings. Then in the background, we all look to see how to make it happen. We do try, to share all the relevant details we get. We do have a presence on FaceBook and there are details posted almost daily to the County web site.

COVID Wins

Funding

We have seen an increase in funding which has allowed the County to financially support our local agencies more with costs related to COVID. It will be very interesting to see

how we at the operational level and the upper tiers of government move forward as we look to the sustainability of services and recovery.

Recognition of Human Services

One of the major 'wins' of this pandemic has been a higher profile of what we do in Human Services and as you all know, that all ties into overall health and wellbeing for the people we serve. We are as a community still working on our **Community Safety and Well-Being Plan** and it brings in those services and recognises some of the needs we see every day. We also have seen that our elected officials can see the work is really tied into health. We now have the Health and Human Services Committee. I recently heard a comment that the "province are not taking action" it did strike me..... "WE" are the ones taking action.

Joint Working and Collaboration

Another 'win' coming out of our COVID work is that we are working even more closely with our community partners. Many of us sitting here right now will have already been on a zoom this week. We often see each other more frequently, albeit virtually. It is different now because so many of us are working remotely, but we have adapted well.

Edelbrock Centre

The County have kept their COVID work model in place since early last year. It has meant far less fluctuation in work practices and allow staff to work from home and have time in the office when needed. The County are in the process of moving staff from other departments over to Edelbrock to ensure that all in-person services can be delivered at the one location. (I know that I don't need to tell this table why having one location clearly defined for IPAC/Health & Safety Measures etc. makes a lot of sense.)

Diversity and Inclusion

The County are taking D&I very seriously and there will be more training opportunities for all of our staff as we continue on that journey. It's not a one-time seminar or training event. It's about changing and constantly evolving. We also now as a community have a "Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Community Advisory Committee". Minutes of meetings are posted on our web site for everyone to see. Diversity and Inclusion also came up as an area where we need to do more work for the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. We recognise that DC MOVES and DCEC have a role in supporting this work.

Change Management

All of the above speaks very much to change. We are change masters whether we admit it or not. More change is to come. It will be an ongoing process to incorporate the lessons learned as we move forward. We will be building bridges as we walk on them..... we will use COVID as one heck of a learning experience!

Culture

Finally and by no means least, the work we do, the way we do it and our ability to continually deliver quality services to those we serve, speaks to our "Dufferin" culture. We have as human service organisations worked well in the past together and then we all took that up a notch in light of the pandemic. It's at the Dufferin level that the federal and provincial policies are operationalised..... in fact..... it's all very DCEC! THANK YOU

Group Exercise

Navigating the landscape - our 3 pathways for change to achieve the Vision:

Every resident of Dufferin County will have the opportunity to reach their full potential

1. ADVOCATING, INFORMING & BUILDING AWARENESS
2. MINIMIZING SERVICE BARRIERS
3. INNOVATING SOLUTIONS

TAILWINDS contextual factors/changing landscapes across the 3 pathways that have **facilitated efforts** for Housing and Homelessness, Employment and Health Equity

- Increased funding under all three pathways in all three areas
- Low rules environment
- Information was quick and detailed
- Virtual connection – save time in traveling
- Fewer absences from work environment
- Survey for Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan understanding awareness of and how we can address these issues
- Innovative solutions – pandemic has made the shift to going online and remote so quickly (transitions to go online went from years to months), both for service providers and clients
- Health Equity new and innovative – community access services (mental health services) creating immediate access for supports

- Political challenges around diversity – we have pushed into diving deeper into those areas. Tailwind has been created by tragedy but now a great question about recovery for all
- Given a chance to become contemplative about things around us
- Notion of Income inequality and all the different levels – transforming minds and services. We may see a guaranteed income come out of that. Visible disconnect that has become very visible. CERB – that’s what people needed to survive. So vastly different from OW/ODSP. Acknowledgement that more income is needed for people
- The government has now decided that the human service providers are valuable – undervalued before
- Increased funding
- Information is quick and detailed
- Lows rules environment
- Virtual connection saving time in travel for meetings
- Fewer absences

HEADWINDS contextual factors/changing landscapes across the 3 pathways that have **created resistance** for Housing and Homelessness, Employment and Health Equity

- Uncertainty – we don’t know when it will level out. We don’t know what the new reality will be. It’s a period of immense change and immense uncertainty. How do you even budget for next year?
- Funding – we have no idea what funding will look like this year and next year
- COVID – public health and safety in general
- Internet is not keeping up with all of us, lack of internet speed in Dufferin County
- Question of who’s in charge
- COVID complacency – as much as we have embraced the opportunity to communicate, engaged, have robust dialogue, the inability to physically connect with people, there are many in our society where there is no connectivity, people may go back to old habits or may just give up (i.e. education), as much as we are engaged there is a disconnect
- Increased funding disappearing when things settle down. When we don’t have this increase in funding, when that extra funding is gone have we artificially propped people up? We have created new programs and services; can we keep those when we lose funding
- Staff have taken on new responsibilities through the pandemic because they are working from home, as we return to office work /normal life, some of the extra work will be much more challenging to then accomplish. Will we need to change job descriptions to allow the work to continue? Will we need to reprioritize work?

- Virtual world excludes a whole bunch of our population (i.e. in person support groups, respite care) of mostly vulnerable populations, that don't have the supports that they used to have. How do we keep them informed and supported?
- Provincial Government - notion of the government not willing to fund more dollars into people's hands – still continues to be a hinderance. We need more fairness within our society. More dollars in more peoples' hands. More about austerity and looking out for business
- Explosion in housing market and mass exodus out of the city. Prices for housing is out of this world. Limiting opportunity for home ownership funding. Both ownership and rentals have gotten extreme
- Social assistance programs are contributing to homelessness/poverty, the cost to live far exceeds the benefit
- Mental Health – providers, clients, public (how can providers/front line workers keep themselves well to keep the general population well?)

HOW DO/CAN THE TAILWINDS SHAPE OUR WORK?

- Advocate/make the Ministries aware of all the good that we can do with the increased funding. Give us this funding all the time. Demonstrate the difference and the ripple effect of that difference. So we can show that it does make a difference to get this funding
- Funding – creating a cushion, setting money aside for next year because we don't know what is coming funding wise
- The government has now decided that the human service providers, NFP and charity orgs and agencies are valuable – undervalued before. How do we take advantage of this, band together and take advantage of this epiphany?
- Government offers for free PSW training, was there a large uptake, can we advocate for better wages, benefits, working conditions and respect for these and other critical roles to position them well now and for the future?

HOW DO/CAN THE HEADWINDS SHAPE OUR WORK?

- Government shutting down small businesses and causing people greater economic hardship. Number of low income persons who lost their jobs, the individuals who were making the bear minimum were the largest group to lose their jobs. Ability to recover is critical. What do we do with today?
- Some of the successes we've been able to create we might not be able to sustain
- How do you prepare for what is going to be the fallout? Is there something we can think about now – what do we need to keep laser focus on?
- Budget/Funding – no idea of what funding will be at the end of this year, the tsunami is yet to come with increasing numbers of people who need assistance. Looking at different ways of

incorporating funding - creating a cushion, setting money aside for next year because we don't know what is coming funding wise. Using a service review as the tool/ ammunition for planning. Planning for sustainability. We can't use 2020 to create a budget, don't know requirements going forward

- Set up programs to retrain people and get them set up for those people who have lost their jobs because of COVID (i.e. Province sent money to train more PSWs – but not everyone wants to move into this profession) recognizing the impact of the end of CERB
- Education as a stream of support – however not the panacea solution
- Mental health landscape – what will this look like, current waitlists for everything, impact to clients and service providers – sustainability to keep on top of care
- Highlighted inequalities – increases to top earners in a time of job loss and no income, wage subsidy to frontline workers meant that we knew that we were underpaying them – shouldn't be a temporary boost. The realization that we are underpaying these people (PSWs). Critical workers PSW and ECEs, ECEs were not recognized as frontline and didn't get wage subsidy, don't have benefits, devaluating
- Private verses publically funded inequities

Reflection on today's meeting, how are you feeling?

Validated

Hopefully in spite of headwinds – we are smart, collaborate well, and will figure out a way

Community connectedness – sharing updates

Appreciate getting together virtually but looking forward to in person

Inspired by what everyone is doing on a daily basis, good to look at what we have accomplished

Communicating outside partner orgs to community to let them know how we currently support them and will continue to support them – Community Wellness Council update (Heidi) repetition of messages is important. Our 2nd Annual DCEC Report to the Community will be launched soon and shared to the group

Optimistic – sun and brighter days ahead, even with challenges we will get through

DCEC great example of resiliency, continues to work hard thinking about next steps and continuing to think about our staff and community needs, our community is resilient, we are up for the task, continuing the conversations is important for supporting each other and new ways of doing things