

Downsview Community Legal Services (DCLS) Position on the Vision Report

Preamble:

1. We endorse the need for change and for a positive process moving forward;
2. We endorse building on the existing foundation rather than tearing down – this goes for clinic system and the Transformation Project process itself;
3. It would be detrimental to the needs of the Downsview community if the project were not to move forward in an open, positive and progressive way;
4. We need to understand each clinic and their community in order to properly determine what would be best for the system as a whole.

Whereas:

1. The residents of our Downsview community would continue to have a voice in these important conversations;
2. Transformation and adaptation are essential for modern legal clinics to continue delivering high quality and effective legal services;
3. Transformation means proceeding in a fair, realistic and positive way with a clear focus and mandate to ensure equal access and equal assistance for our clients.
4. Transformation means acknowledging existing weaknesses and taking calculated risks to ensure the mandate of the legal clinic is being fulfilled presently, and is responsive to future needs;
5. Accountability mechanisms are in place to continuously test and respond to the changing needs of our Torontonians communities;
6. There must be transparency in the processes used during transformation, and in the continued functioning of the clinics;

And whereas:

7. We are aware that the status quo, disillusionment, and fatigue could undermine the Transformation Project;
8. We recognize there is fear in changing established legal service delivery models in the absence of evidence;
9. We recognize a need to address the changing demographics which may disproportionately effect existing clinics;
10. We recognize in order to address the issues around access to justice all clinics must remain united and focused on the common goal of providing high quality legal services to as many qualified Ontarians, as efficiently as possible.

We resolve to:

1. Embrace the principles articulated in the Vision Report but acknowledge that the goal of consensus has not been achieved with the 3-clinic Toronto model and therefore we do not support the proposal in its entirety.
2. Continue as an active participant in the GTA Transformation Project;
3. Foster an open dialogue with all clinics in a positive manner;
4. Encourage a new culture of collaboration with our neighbouring clinics in a respectful, empathic and thoughtful manner without fear, anxiety, or contempt;
5. Help develop an informed, community driven process where the following non-exhaustive list of alternative solutions are considered:
 - a. Joint programming between clinics such as a shared service model to provide complementary services through the sharing of resources;
 - b. Centralized governance and human resources;
 - c. The amalgamation of administrative parts of clinics such as the merging of common internal services; and
 - d. Revisiting the hub model and seeing how the clinic system may benefit from the 'pilots' that have been started at DCLS and Rexdale Community Legal Services.