

Unison Board of Directors Motion for the GTA Legal Clinic Transformation Project report dated August 2014

Background

As many know, Unison Health and Community Services has a unique model of legal clinic service delivery. Unison operates as an integrated multiservice agency, and the legal clinic, along with all of the other services such as primary care, housing, social work, and counselling, all function under one umbrella. This has been the case since its inception in 1973. We believe that the service our clients presently receive, is multifaceted, and likely more holistic in nature than most standalone agencies are able to provide. Similarly, all back end administrative functions for all teams and services are performed centrally.

Unison is committed to the best client service delivery regardless of governance.

This multiservice integrated model of service delivery, and belief in the benefits, is integral to Unison and its approach. In fact, York Community Services (YCS merged with New Heights Community Health Centre in 2010 to form Unison) was founded in 1973 with integrated service as its *raison d'être*. It is through this lens that Unison looked at the Vision Report and Principles.

Decision

Unison has carefully considered the Vision Report and while Unison does support many of the principles espoused by the report, Unison cannot endorse the Report for the following reasons:

1. Unison supports the idea of larger clinics as they will, in principle, allow for specialized teams, resiliency in staffing etc., however, how Unison would fit into such a model is questionable. It would likely require the removal of the legal clinic from Unison. Even with the availability of an access point at Unison, this would still take away from, or limit the integrated multiservice approach that exists now. It is our belief that moving away from this model would negatively impact the level of client care and service that our clients receive now.
2. Who governs any new larger legal clinic is not an issue for Unison. We are only concerned with having clients receive the best service. Having said that, any outside governance, even with access points at Unison, also takes away from, or limits an integrated approach to service delivery. A good comparator for this is the Public Health Dental Clinic that operates at our Keele Rogers site, but which is an independent agency from Unison. While it is a fantastic service for our clients, we have no ability to better co-ordinate their work and ours.
3. If governance of a larger clinic were to be under Unison's umbrella, this would on one hand afford the benefits of being part of larger agency with all of the administrative functions taken care of already – the administrative functions are already built in, and absorbing 10 or 15 or even 20 new staff, would not require significantly more work from an administrative point of view. On the other hand however, governing a legal clinic catchment that is much larger than the current Unison catchment, poses the problem of having multiple services with multiple

catchments. This makes it more difficult to provide effective integrated service. This problem exists now within Unison, but to a smaller extent.

Moving Forward

Unison is still committed to transformation, and is interested in continuing to work with other GTA legal clinics, LAO, and community partners in exploring how to improve legal clinic client service delivery through various models, while still maintaining the benefits that Unison's clients now enjoy.