

**NEW**

April 25, 2008

# Directions

*The LHIN Liaison Branch (LLB) and the Financial Management Branch (FMB) became operational in early 2007. The two branches kicked off the ministry's transition to a functional model. As MOHLTC assumes the role of steward in Ontario's health care system, their work provides an important link between the ministry and the LHINs.*

*The directors of the LLB and FMB took time out of their busy schedules to reflect on the highlights, challenges and achievements these ground-breaking branches have encountered over the last year or so.*

## LHIN Liaison Branch

# Building relationships one step at a time

**A**lthough being part of something new can be scary, there is also a lot of excitement that comes with it, said Carrie Hayward, who became director of the LHIN Liaison Branch, Health System Accountability and Performance, in January 2007. Hayward said since the branch as well as the LHINs were new, both parties had an enormous amount of ground to cover during their first year of operation.

"LLB staff was going through their orientation process at around the same time the branch was holding knowledge transfer sessions to ensure the 14 LHINs had the information they required to do their jobs," said Hayward. "Initially, the branch had just a skeleton staff. A year later, we have engaged staff and strong relationships with the LHINs. None of this existed 12 months ago. The ministry and the LHINs have made huge strides."

The LLB plays a range of roles. It identifies, designs and implements new processes and structures that support the ministry's working relationship with the LHINs. This varies from helping a LHIN work through a challenging situation to being the communication link by which information flows between the LHINs and the ministry.

The branch also includes the French Language Health Services Office which ensures the needs of Francophones are met within Ontario's health care system. The office is working with the LHINs to improve

accessibility and better integrate services.

To make sure the LHINs were well served by the branch, Hayward explained that it was important for LLB staff to be generalists and have some understanding of the range of health care issues that the LHINs face. "Someone may have been used to working in a specialized area, now they have to know about hospital wait times and critical care and community supports — this scope is essential for everyone."

Teamwork is the focus of the LLB, Hayward noted, and staff works cross-functionally both within the branch and across other ministry divisions. To serve the various needs of the LHINs, the LLB often has to consult, advise and work with other areas of the ministry, including information management, financial management, capital, performance improvement and compliance areas, as well as communications.

"Part of our role is to help people elsewhere in the ministry understand our relationship with the LHINs and how we partner with them," Hayward said. "Similarly, our branch couldn't fulfill its responsibilities to the LHINs without the help and input from staff in many other areas of the ministry."

Foremost in Hayward's mind, when she reflects on the branch's first year of operation, is that it has been one of relationship building.

"Each LHINs has their unique local issues and concerns," Hayward said. "We work to build trust and credibility one day at a time — by

working with them, giving good advice and helping them find solutions."

She also commended the LHINs for all their hard work in assuming their responsibility in managing local health care systems. "Some of them weren't even fully staffed in January 2007. They've formed relationships with over 2,000 health care providers. They've done a fantastic job in the last year," Hayward said.

As for branch staff, she said they were outstanding in meeting the challenges they faced during the LLB's first year of operation. "They've done a wonderful job and they've taken on new projects and roles. There was a lot of ambiguity in the beginning with all of the organizational changes occurring within the ministry and a flurry of activities in the LHINs. Our staff stepped up to the plate when things were in flux and have had great success."

But, Hayward said, they're always looking ahead. "As a branch, we are always trying to improve our processes and make what we do better."

At the branch's recent first birthday party, staff was invited to send their wishes and shared memories. One said, "LLB, may you serve as a model of what can happen when creativity, innovation and perseverance come together to create a framework that supports the ministry's stewardship role. Happy birthday!"

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Colleagues celebrate the

*first  
birthday*

of the LHIN Liaison Branch



From left: Judeline Innocent, manager, North-East Unit; Kathryn Pagonis, director, Provincial Programs Branch and former manager, GTA Unit; John Babos, manager, GTA Unit; and Kathryn McCulloch, manager, West Unit.



From right: Allison Costello, senior program advisor, LHIN Relations and Co-ordination Unit; and Sydney Johnson, executive assistant, and Elizabeth Borres, administrative assistant of LLB director.

Staff photos

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## Financial Management Branch

# Focus on good customer service

The Financial Management Branch (FMB) also moved into high-gear more than a year ago to ensure it was up and running when the LHINs took on their full responsibilities on April 1, 2007.

The branch plays the pivotal role of providing financial support to the LHINs for programs under their management, as well as to Health System Accountability and Performance for ministry-retained programs. FMB takes payment direction from the LHINs in terms of the \$20 billion of health care funds that is dispersed to health service providers. In its supporting controllership role, the branch works in partnership with the LHINs to ensure that public funds are being used in an appropriate manner.

"Handling all these financial operations required the branch to build capacity very quickly and get the necessary processes and systems in place," said Pier Falotico, director of FMB, Corporate and Direct Services. "We had to ensure that the LHINs had a firm knowledge base and clearly understood the financial requirements on their end."

The LHINs and FMB, together, went through a major learning curve. The branch

held six training and educational sessions, going over the financial processes with the LHINs.

"One of the important tasks of our branch was to develop and implement standardized financial procedures with the LHINs and health service providers across the province," explained Falotico.

Working with the I & IT Cluster, the FMB also developed a software tool that allows the FMB to readily track and report on the processing of claims and payments on a daily basis.

Although the branch's primary focus is on financial management and support, to carry out this role effectively, FMB, like the LHIN Liaison Branch, has devoted a great deal of time to relationship building.

"We have taken a very strong customer service approach," said Falotico. "Establishing a sound working relationship with the 14 different LHINs, was essential. The positive feedback that we have received from a number of LHINs tells us that we are on the right track." FMB also works in close partnership with many other areas of the ministry, including the LHIN Liaison, Corporate Fiscal and Business Planning, and

Supply and Financial Services Branches.

As part of the role of steward, FMB's role is to provide input and advice so that the LHINs can concentrate on delivering effective local services. Falotico said he was impressed by the LHINs' commitment to understanding and serving their local communities. "We are here to facilitate the financial initiatives of the LHINs, but at the same time make sure that things are being done within the scope of established rules and policies."

To better assist the LHINs, the FMB structure is based on portfolio areas, for example hospitals, long-term care and community services. "This makes sure we understand how health service providers in the various portfolio areas operate. Rather than staff members just doing payments all the time, they carry out a range of functions for a given portfolio area," Falotico said.

He explained that about 60 per cent of the FMB staff is new to the ministry. "We've had a lot of building to do in the past year. Our staff has risen to the occasion."

"Although the branch is fully operational, I still think of it as being in development mode. We are still improving processes and looking for ways to better serve our customers." ■





Karen Levy photos

## A welcoming partnership

A group of ministry employees, who transferred to ServiceOntario on April 21, are welcomed by Jane Lee (photo right), director of Retail Offices in the Customer Care Division, Ministry of Government and Consumer Services, during an event held at the Sheppard Ave. OHIP offices in Toronto. Approximately 570 employees from Registration and Claims Branch and Supply and Financial Services Branch in Corporate and Direct Services moved to ServiceOntario. The transfer aligns with the ministry's stewardship role and supports the government's commitment to modernize services through ServiceOntario's single point of contact for the public. The two ministries will work as partners to ensure that Ontarians have access to the medical services they need.

At the party, Lee also greeted a group of ministry staff who remain with the ministry's Registration and Claims Branch. The branch will keep its policy development and strategic planning role as well as continue to provide physician payment and claims-related services to ensure the smooth and efficient operation of the province's health care system.

There were similar meet and greet events at locations across the province.



## Former colleagues will remain close at hand

Dale Wolfries (right), a customer service rep, has moved to ServiceOntario, while his former colleague Carlene Sinclair, a claims assessor, remains with the ministry's Registration and Claims Branch. The two will still be working in close proximity at their Sheppard Ave. offices. ServiceOntario is located on the 4th floor of the building, while the Registration and Claims Branch is situated on the 5th floor. ServiceOntario and Registration and Claims Branch offices are co-located in a number of sites across the province.

# Helping teams work

## successfully in a networked organization

*“The more managers across the ministry understand the dynamics and implications of working in cross-functional teams, the better they will be able to assist their staff to be successful.”*

Lorraine Deska, acting manager of organizational development and change strategies

The new stewardship structure integrates the ministry’s business and creates a more effective workplace. Teams will work on projects across units, divisions, sectors and with health care partners.

There are many advantages to working in teams in the ministry’s networked environment. Team members build on each others skills and knowledge to bring a broader perspective to the table. As well, working cross-functionally contributes greatly to a project’s success.

A few weeks ago, the Transition at Work Program launched to help address the challenges faced by staff in a networked workplace. The ministry is supporting this new way of working by providing supports and tools to help teams work effectively and achieve their objectives. Three approaches that provide support are outlined below.

### Coaching for Teams Program

One example of support that the ministry provides to teams is the **Coaching for Teams Program**. The program was created to support the recently announced 14 priority project teams. “It provides the teams with a change consultant who helps them focus on the practices, processes and behaviours to achieve the government’s two priority commitments — reducing wait times and improving access to family health care,” explained Lorraine Deska, acting manager of organizational development and change strategies.

The change consultant meets with a priority project team when they form, to make sure everyone understands the

project charter and to develop team-effectiveness protocols. The protocols provide a framework for working together throughout the life of the project. They include actions for effective communication and problem solving; guidelines for information sharing, managing disagreements and conflicts; roles and accountabilities; and participation requirements.

The change consultant provides the team lead with support throughout the phases of their project. This may include coaching support for the lead and guiding the team’s progress.

The program also supports the manger whom team members report to on a daily basis. Referred to as “vertical” managers or directors, they are given an opportunity to discuss the challenges they face in managing their own business priorities while at the same time supporting their staff who are on the priority teams.

“The more managers across the ministry understand the dynamics and implications of working in cross-functional teams, the better they will be able to assist their staff to be successful,” Deska said.

### Team Development Supports Program

For a broader audience, the **Team Development Supports Program** offers one or two-day specialized workshops to position all ministry teams for success. “With stewardship, all staff will increasingly find themselves assigned to teams,” Deska said.

These team development training workshops will help team leads build, manage and sustain their teams. The sessions will also train team members. They will learn how to create a shared vision, clarify their mandate, develop

operating principles and understand their strengths and work methods.

To set up a customized workshop for an intact team or for advice on team training, contact [viewpoint@moh.gov.on.ca](mailto:viewpoint@moh.gov.on.ca).

### General Tools and Tips for Teams

A new page has been added to the Transition at Work section on INFOweb: **General Tools and Tips for Teams**. These resources are available for use by all team and team leaders to help them understand:

- What it takes to develop a strong team
- How teams can work together successfully
- How each member’s strengths can contribute to team results.

New downloadable guidelines and assessment tools are:

- Team Effectiveness Protocols — a guideline for how to work together effectively
- Tool for the Self-Assessment of Individual Contributions — clarifies individual strengths
- Tool for the Assessment of Team Performance — measures team effectiveness.

These tools complement the **Project Management Tools for Teams**, a standardized project management toolkit, introduced in the **April 11, 2008 issue** of *NEW Directions*. ■

Learn more about the Team Development Supports Program and General Tools and Tips for Teams in the [Transition at Work](#) section.