

NEW

May 12, 2008

Directions

Survey

shows employees have increased understanding of ministry's transition

Ministry employees show greater awareness and understanding of the organization's transition to stewardship, based on the results of the 2007-2008 Transition Readiness Assessment. The survey results also indicated that employees believe the ministry will be strengthened by the transition.

"These findings are great news," said Debbie Fischer, Assistant Deputy Minister of Transition. "Through my many years of change management work, it was common to see the level of support diminish about halfway in a change this big. At the mid-point, as we are, employees are being asked to roll up their sleeves and do the work to implement the changes. This may lead to a dip in support and commitment. Instead, we've received positive results."

Fischer said that the survey provides information that is

very helpful. It will be used to develop additional supports that will help employees continue to understand the ministry's role as steward, through the next phases of the transition.

Ministry employees' impressions of the transition to stewardship were first measured by Ipsos Reid in the fall of 2006. The survey was conducted again in December 2007 to enable the ministry to monitor ongoing employee reaction to the changes. Focus groups were also held with employees in March 2008 to supplement the survey findings.

Fischer said that in the focus groups, it was clear that employees who had been more exposed to transition activities were more supportive. Feedback showed that staff in the divisions that have already undergone structural transition or are in the process of doing so, were more positive to the changes the ministry is experiencing versus staff in divisions that have not.

...continued on page 2

Transition Readiness Assessment 2007-2008 Highlights

Employees' understanding of the ministry's transition to stewardship were measured by Ipsos Reid in fall 2006 and December 2007.

Progress of stewardship goals and recognition of transition supports improved in several areas:

- Ministry seen to be significantly strengthened by the transition
- Increased awareness of learning and development options available
- More timely communication is being provided about the transition
- SMGs seen as more accountable for the transition results.

There are areas that need to be focused on for improvement:

- Explain more clearly to employees how the transition fits with the stewardship strategy of the ministry
- Make contacts that are available for support through the transition more accessible.

If you have ideas for improvements or any questions, please send them to anewdirection.moh@ontario.ca.

[Read survey results](#)

Survey

shows employees have increased understanding of ministry's transition

...continued from cover

"Generally, as people understand the transition process better, they are more comfortable and receptive to changes," said Fischer. "This shows us that we need to maintain our focus on communication and learning opportunities to ensure that a broad cross-section of staff — even those working in areas which have yet to undergo structural transition — have a solid understanding of the changes within the ministry," she said.

The results of the survey also highlighted a number of positive perceptions regarding how the Senior Management Group (SMG) is managing the transition process versus year ago:

- There was an increase in staff perception that SMGs hold themselves accountable for the transition
- There was an increase in staff perception that people in the ministry trust managers during a period of change.

"The dedicated work and consistent communication from SMGs helped employees gain a greater understanding of the benefits of the transition and of how everyone plays a role in the success of the process," Fischer said. "The accountability for managing the transition is being recognized by staff."

It is to be expected in a transition of this size and complexity that an assessment points out a few challenges. These are opportunities for improvement. For example, some ministry staff may be losing sight of the big picture of how the pieces of the transition fit together to achieve the ministry's overall stewardship goals.

"We saw a decline from last year in people's ability to link the changes back to stewardship," said Fischer. "Employees have become more focused on tactical issues such as organizational structures and matching of positions as opposed to the strategic objectives of the transition." Based on this input, Fischer said that there will be increased focus on communicating about the high-level stewardship goals and how they are connected to the transition and the new way of working in the ministry.

She said that the Readiness Assessment results confirmed that while perceptions and understanding of the transition have improved, more needs to be done to help employees feel comfortable working within a stewardship environment.

"I'd like to thank all ministry employees who participated in the survey for their valuable input. It has provided insightful information that we can immediately put to use in customizing and refining support plans to best meet the needs of staff," Fischer said. ■

An action plan has been developed to address the survey results and further strengthen staff understanding of the transition and stewardship.

■ Additional learning and development initiatives targeted to all employee levels, including:

- A program aimed at a broad cross-section of employees modeled on the Stewardship Leadership Program for SMGs
- Workshops to help raise awareness of stewardship and how to align work in a functional model
- A comprehensive program specifically for executive assistants and administrative assistants
- Continuing cross-functional team support tools and training
- Continuing the Schulich Leadership Program for SMGs
- **Transition at Work** tools and programs (posted in the A New Direction section of INFOweb).

■ Continuing the FYI Series and Deputy Minister tours with a focus on video simulcasts and web casts in order to reach more employees across the province.

■ Increased focus in *NEW Directions* on the transition process, including a recap of the progress to date and examples of working as stewards across the ministry. (This is particularly important for newer employees.)

■ Support for SMGs operating in a post-transition area — including human resources and change management support tailored to their needs.

■ Increased linkage between stewardship and recognition such as the ACE Awards program and individual learning plans

Deputy Minister applauds staff for a job well done

D*eputy Minister Ron Sapsford recently told staff that he was pleased with the ministry's progress on transition as well as with the way ministry employees were rising to the new challenges stewardship of the health care system brings with it. He made the remarks during his two-week spring tour which concluded in early May.*

"I'm proud of how successfully the entire ministry has worked together to best meet the healthcare needs of Ontarians while we were making these changes in the ministry."

"With all our deliverables — the government initiatives, the ministry's policy, legislation and financial commitments, as well as transition — we have been on-time and on-schedule. We've gotten the job done."

During his tour visits to ministry offices in Kingston and Toronto, and through video conferences in Hamilton, London, Thunder Bay and Sudbury, Sapsford noted that the ministry is now past the mid-point of its transition to stewardship.

The deputy minister said that the new stewardship structure will enable staff to work in a more strategic and effective way to achieve the government's commitments for health care over the next four years. The government's two priority areas are:

- Reducing wait times, with a focus on emergency departments
- Providing quality family health care for every Ontarian. (See the April 18 issue of [**NEW Directions**](#) for complete details of the government's priority health care commitments.)

"The 11 cross-functional project teams we've created to achieve the government commitments, are the new way that the ministry will work," said Sapsford. "This is stewardship. Project teams made up of staff from several divisions and several levels reporting to a team lead," he said.

In cross-functional teams, work is assigned based on the expertise and skill set that team members offer. "The team lead may be a staff with the content knowledge rather than the most senior member of a group," explained Sapsford.

He acknowledged that staff concerns and challenges being raised at this stage of the transition are to be expected. The deputy minister appreciates the candid feedback and assured that these issues will continue to be tackled as they arise.

The deputy minister discussed the challenges of balancing working on cross-functional project teams, as staff is now doing on a widespread basis, with balancing other job responsibilities. "People need credit for the time that they devote to these teams," Sapsford said. "Let me be clear — we've got to change the way we think about our work because the team work is our work. Participation in these kinds of project teams is part of the full-time work of the ministry and its staff."

He encouraged staff on project teams to use the [**Transition at Work**](#) tools and resources, available on INFOweb, to help them work effectively and achieve their goals.

The deputy minister said the move to stewardship has given the ministry an opportunity to help employees develop new ways of working. For example, he described the concept of "smart work organizations" that are "open, inquiring, and always working to find a better approach to achieving their goals."

...continued on page 4

Deputy Minister applauds staff for a job well done

.....

...continued from page 3

The deputy minister outlined the principles and practices of a smart workplace culture:

- Staff learn from their mistakes and, as a result, changes are made. “A fear of making mistakes often comes at the expense of dialogue, flexibility and innovation.”
- Ambiguity is part of day-to-day work. “Some rules are needed for accountability and orderliness, this can only go so far or the system will not be able to deliver services.”
- Responsibility is pushed to the right staff level while managers focus on managing the work of the organization. “No more work for the sake of doing work”.
- Look to the future. “It is not acceptable to say, that is the way it is done.”
- Ask questions in a way that leads to improvements rather than slows down progress. “When problems arise, look to innovative solutions. Don’t be bound by policy or guidelines.”

Sapsford said that he knew he could count on staff to rise to the challenge and help shift the ministry to a “smart-working environment” to help it meet its goals.

He concluded by thanking all ministry employees for their hard and often challenging work supporting the transition to stewardship. “The bottom line is simple . . . by doing this work now, we help to ensure that all Ontarians have access to the best possible health care,” he said. ■

Missed hearing the deputy minister on his tour?

A video of his tour presentation (including slides), a sampling of questions and answers from audience members and the full text of his speech are available at the [Deputy Minister Tour Archive page](#), in the A New Direction section on INFOweb.

A New *Direction* *Transition at Work*

NEW Directions will regularly highlight tools and resources from the Transition at Work Program that are available to help staff work effectively on project teams.

Focus on: Project Management Tools for Teams — Project Status Report

.....

In a project’s early stages, the project team establishes the timelines that the work must be completed by to achieve the project’s objectives. The status report gives a snapshot of whether the tasks within the project are going be completed according to the project plan.

Project status reports are used to regularly communicate the status of project activities to the project’s team lead, members, sponsors or other stakeholders. Where it appears that a work stream or task is at risk of not being completed on time, a project manager can then make the changes necessary to ensure these items get back on track for completion.

A status report gives an update on:

- Project scope, schedule, budget, and resources
- Major deliverables and milestones
- Key activities completed or decisions made in the current reporting period
- Key activities planned or decisions pending in future reporting periods
- Project issues and risks.

Learn more about how to use the project status tools successfully in the [Transition at Work — Project Management Tools for Teams](#) page on INFOweb.