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The Momentum of Stewardship Conference

Stewardship in Action Leadership Program

2009

Creating a space for stewardship to flourish

Ministry's transition progress lauded at leadership conference

Renowned change management guru Peter Block praised ministry staff for their significant achievements in transitioning to a stewardship organization. "Most change efforts are advanced lip service. I think what you're doing is phenomenal," he told an audience of senior managers gathered at the Momentum of Stewardship conference, held on May 25, 2009 in Toronto.

Block — who was connected via video conference — participated in a panel conversation with five senior ministry leaders to explore the changes and challenges, which have accompanied the ministry's transition. "The way people would know something has happened here is that the nature of the listening has changed — especially peer-to-peer listening with internal and outside partners," Block explained.

Among the important concepts embodied in Block's seminal book *Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest* is the premise that organizational change starts when staff collectively change their conversations and start asking "wicked questions" — ones that have the ability to shift predictable thinking and offer fresh ways of examining issues.

"The journey is also one of shifting language. I can hear that stewardship language flows naturally from your lips now," Block said.

The conference, attended by more than 200 senior managers (SMGs), was the third and final held as part of the comprehensive Stewardship in Action (SIA) Leadership Program, which was launched in March 2007 to support ministry leaders in understanding and championing stewardship.



"You have been enormously successful in figuring things out and asking the right questions. You have given people the chance to express their doubts and have created a space for all to co-create what you mean by stewardship." —Peter Block



Karen Levy photos

A ministry panel joins stewardship guru Peter Block (via video conference) and audience members in a candid discussion of the transition's challenges and triumphs, at the final Stewardship in Action leadership conference. From left: Panel moderator Brenda Zimmerman, director, Health Industry Management Program, Schulich School of Business; Sheree Davis, director, Health System Strategy Branch; Suzanne McGurn, director, Negotiations Branch; Allison Blair, director, Information Strategy and Policy Branch; Marilyn Elliott, acting director, eHealth Program Branch; Brian O'Riordan, executive co-ordinator, Health Professionals Regulatory Advisory Council.

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Panel member Allison Blair, director of the Information Strategy and Policy Branch, asked Block for advice on how the ministry can continue to build on the gains it has made. “How do we make sure that we engage in a dialogue that goes deeper into our commitment to stewardship? How do we make sure it’s not just a fad between 2007 and 2010?” Blair said.

Block responded: “I would say keep talking about what you’re doing well. You have to keep celebrating stories of what’s working.”

Cross-functional work part of the job

One audience member spoke to the challenge of juggling the demands of contributing to a collaborative team while carrying out core responsibilities. “I think part of finding the time is re-looking at what we are spending our time doing,” responded panel member Suzanne McGurn, director of the Negotiations Branch. “We need to ask, ‘Are the things I am doing really contributing value?’”

Block said he was pleased that a number of panel members had made the point that cross-functional teamwork is not an add-on; it is an essential part of the job working in a stewardship model. He also applauded their appreciation of how important it is to ensure teams consist of members from various levels of the organization and that expertise be recognized wherever it may reside.

Panel member Marilyn Elliott, director of the eHealth Program Branch, explained that often in creating cross-functional teams, contributions come from those that you don’t expect. “When you create teams, you want to make sure that they are diverse and that you create the environment where you will get everybody participating,” Elliott said.

“The role of leadership is a convening one,” Block added. “You are there to develop the leadership capacity in everybody. It’s about helping people discover expertise they didn’t know they had. Expertise



“You are there to develop the leadership capacity in everybody. It’s about helping people discover expertise they didn’t know they had. Expertise is much broader than technical knowledge.” —Peter Block

is much broader than technical knowledge.”

Sheree Davis, director of the Health System Strategy Branch, explained that it was essential not to narrowly define expertise within the ministry and to appreciate that a broad range of individuals at all levels are able to contribute and add valuable insight to a project.

An audience member asked Block what the end-state of stewardship at the ministry will look like. At this point, Block turned to the ministry panel members to take the lead in the discussions. “I think we’ve got to figure it out together,” Blair responded. “It’s not really about giving direction anymore. It’s okay that not everybody defines stewardship the same way. The vision, yes, we can share. But the real answer is what does it mean to you.”

Stewardship an ongoing process

Panel member Brian O’Riordan, executive co-ordinator of the Health Professionals Regulatory Advisory

Council continued: “I think your question presupposes that there is an end point to stewardship.”

“What we’re talking about in terms of stewardship is that it is an ongoing process and we will continue to shape it,” he said.

Block, who led the first Stewardship in Action leadership conference two years ago to initiate senior managers’ understanding of the principles behind the concept, said he was impressed by how staff discussions had deepened and evolved over the period. “You have been enormously successful in figuring things out and asking the right questions. You have given people the chance to express their doubts and have created a space for all to co-create what you mean by stewardship.” ■

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Graduating with stewardship honours

The foundation has been successfully laid and its time to live the stewardship commitment, Deputy Minister tells audience.

Deputy Minister Ron Sapsford told the ministry's senior leaders they are graduating from their stewardship training and that their careers as health system stewards are just beginning.

"An education is merely the foundation. Our job, going forward, is to be the stewards of the health system. And that's going to be the greatest challenge of all: Not merely calling ourselves stewards, but thinking and acting like stewards," Sapsford said in his opening remarks at the Momentum of Stewardship leadership conference held recently.

Transition challenges met

Sapsford pointed out that the transition process since then has been intensive and complex. "Our stewardship journey has not been an easy one," he noted. "It has required a great deal of disruption and change — both personal and professional. When we first started this process, I had high expectations of all of you. Not only have you met them, you have surpassed them," Sapsford said.

The Deputy Minister commended staff for the continuous contribution and commitment to the transition. "I want to thank each and every one of you for continuing to carry out the ministry's business successfully during transition, and for meeting the challenges of transition to date. Everyone here in this room has been crucial to our transition and without your support, it would not



Our job, going forward, is to be the stewards of the health system, Deputy Minister Ron Sapsford tells senior managers gathered for the final Stewardship in Action (SIA) leadership conference. Sapsford noted that the greatest challenge awaits: "Not merely calling ourselves stewards, but thinking and acting like stewards." He thanked staff for their hard work and commitment to-date. Brenda Zimmerman of the Schulich School of Business — the ministry's partner in the SIA Leadership Program and the day's facilitator — looks on.

have been possible."

"Today most of the ministry has been transitioned to our new structure. This was huge — no other provincial ministry has done anything like this. Remember, when we started on this course, the ministry was organized on a program model. Today, most of the ministry is oriented toward a functional approach," Sapsford explained. "Staff no longer work within a specified program, but

rather interact with colleagues from across the ministry and with external partners from a system-wide perspective using evidence-based approaches."

Sapsford noted that only two divisions remain in transition mode, Corporate and Direct Services and the Ontario Public Drugs Program and both these areas will be completed by the end of the year.

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"We've set in place the foundation for stewardship. And in keeping with our graduation analogy, we've nearly completed the course work. That means that going forward, we will continue to implement and build a culture of stewardship. Learning how to be stewards of the health care system is perhaps the most important job we'll all have to do." —Deputy Minister Ron Sapsford



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Ministry's government partners see positive impact of stewardship transition

The ministry's relationships with its partners within government and the health system have been positively impacted by its stewardship approach to doing business, senior managers were told at the Momentum of Stewardship leadership conference. "In talking to people in the health care system, they tell me they have noticed the difference," Minister of Health and Long-Term Care David Caplan, told participants gathered at the one-day conference. "A lot of effort and a lot of very strong relationships were made outside of government to engage people early to get to a buy in. People in the sector said to me: 'You people are really interested in what we have to say and that's different. We really like operating in a way that engages us in a genuine manner'," Caplan said.

Caplan participated in an afternoon panel that included representatives from partner central agencies and key ministries. The panel's conversation focused on MOHLTC's new role as steward of the health care system and how they can continue to work together effectively in the context of the broader government.

David Caplan

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

The process of developing new regulations in the long-term care sector and the Aging at Home Strategy provides two good examples of the ministry's stewardship principles at work, Caplan said. "The ability to say to our partners that we believe you can make good decisions within the construct of a larger corporate



Canvassing our partners on stewardship: Deputy Minister Ron Sapsford leads a question and answer period with Minister of Health and Long-Term Care David Caplan and representatives from the central agencies and key ministries on the MOHLTC's role of steward within the broader context of government. Seated from left: David Caplan, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care; Ron McKerlie, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Government Services; Bruce Bennett, Assistant Deputy Minister and Provincial Controller, Ministry of Finance; Lynn Betzner, Deputy Minister of Communications, Cabinet Office.

direction that we provide, is truly an example of stewardship in action. It's a change in culture and a change for the better in the way the ministry works with its partners," Caplan explained.

He told the audience that the ministry is prepared to meet its stewardship challenges ahead. "We are well positioned to work with hospitals, physicians and other partners to steer the health system in the most effective way," Caplan said.

Ron McKerlie

Deputy Minister, Ministry of Government Services

McKerlie praised MOHLTC for the manner in which the stewardship organizational structure was rolled out. "You had a plan. You were clear on what the plan was and you stuck to the plan. I give you high marks for the

process," McKerlie said. "It's been easy to support you because it's been clear where you were going."

Lynn Betzner

Deputy Minister of Communications, Cabinet Office

Betzner praised the ministry for its stewardship leadership surrounding the H1N1 virus response. Betzner pointed out that the ministry adeptly co-ordinated with Ontario's local public health units, the provincial public health laboratories — now part of the Ontario Agency of Health Protection and Promotion — and many other stakeholders. This gave Cabinet Office confidence in the management and shared accountability in the outbreak. "We felt that the situation

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“We’ve set in place the foundation for stewardship. And in keeping with our graduation analogy, we’ve nearly completed the course work. That means that going forward, we will continue to implement and build a culture of stewardship. Learning how to be stewards of the health care system is perhaps the most important job we’ll all have to do.”

He explained that the Ministry Mangement Committee (MMC) has selected three key stewardship competencies for the ministry to focus on and to be built into the performance management process for all SMG and MCP managers in the coming year:

1. Collaboration — working together with colleagues and partners to achieve common goals
2. Team leadership — supporting staff to obtain the skills and tools to build teams to achieve success
3. Systems thinking — looking at the big picture; understanding connections, dependencies and interactions and the overall impact of decisions and actions on the system.

Stewardship in Action Leadership Conferences

C H R O N O L O G Y

- Conference #1 held March 7, 2007, focused on creating a new stewardship culture. Stewardship expert and award-winning author Peter Block and his team, along with the ministry’s transition change team, led senior managers through the six key stewardship and individual accountability conversations.
- Conference #2 held February 14, 2008, focused on engaging the ministry community using networking.
- Conference #3 held May 25, 2009, explored opportunities as the ministry’s role as steward of the health care system takes hold.

MMC is committed to lead by example and embrace the stewardship principles in its work overseeing the ministry’s business, Sapsford said. “We as a group have agreed that we will set the tone for the ministry as the leading cross-functional team,” he said.

Sapsford said that stewardship is a very different type of leadership. Stewards focus on what has to happen far into the future — not just for the

next two to three years. Stewards focus on outcomes.

“Stewards are partners and influencers — they persuade and convince people rather than tell them what to do from the top down. This means developing new ways of approaching our colleagues, our partners and our public,” Sapsford said. ■

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was managed seamlessly and effectively implemented. It looks like a system and it acted like a system. It was a perfect stewardship situation,” Betzner said.

Bruce Bennett

**Assistant Deputy Minister
and Provincial Controller,
Ministry of Finance**

Bennett told the audience that MOHLTC’s transition has fostered a stronger trust relationship between the two ministries. “Certainly over this period of time change has occurred and the organizational change in itself has provided an opportunity for new ways of looking at things. I can think of a myriad of instances that have occurred over the last couple of years that reflect

quite a different culture than I would have seen five years ago,” Bennett explained.

Focus on managing risk

Deputy Minister Ron Sapsford pointed out that some of the ministry’s most important stewardship relationships are in its partnerships with other areas of government — particularly the central agencies — and these bonds must be built and maintained on the basis of trust, shared accountability and responsibilities. “The relationship between Health and Finance can’t function without absolute honesty,” Sapsford said. “This ministry, and I know Finance, has worked very hard in making sure our communication is

honest, transparent and open. For me this is a key stewardship relationship in the broader government,” he said.

A member of the audience asked the panel whether they thought the stewardship model could be applied to other areas of government. “I think the basic principles of the stewardship model are very sound for government. I think it is the right direction,” Bennett said.

Going forward, Bennett said the ministry would need to focus more on shared accountability and managing risk as it plays more of a strategic role, while health sector players deliver services. “In the longer term you have to understand and manage risk in a much more complex environment.” ■



The stewardship conversations continue

In large and small groups senior managers discuss deepening the ministry's commitment to stewardship.

As in past stewardship conferences, the day was organized around opportunities for managers to engage in conversations with their colleagues. Members of the Ministry Management Committee (MMC) hosted group discussions where participants explored questions such as:

- What have you learned about the journey of stewardship?
- What are the implications of leading change and building momentum?

Following the discussions, MMC shared some of the insights they learned from their individual groups with the broader conference audience.

John McKinley, ADM, Health System Information Management and Investment, recounted one of the most striking comments he had heard from his group. "A manager said: 'I can finally relax because I don't always have to have all the answers'," McKinley said. The comment was in response to an earlier panel discussion where it was explained that staff would collectively continue to evolve the ministry's stewardship identity through ongoing conversations.

Helen Stevenson, ADM, Ontario Public Drugs Program, said that someone in the group she led raised concern as to whether people participating in cross-functional meetings with the Minister or Deputy Minister were fully trusted to be a representative voice. Stevenson said there was a strong sense among participants in her group that people who are sent to meetings must be respected as the right people to assume the task. "The right people don't always have to be at the same levels. It doesn't have to be at the ADM level, or director or manager level," she said.

Dawn Ogram, ADM, Corporate and Direct Services, said she was impressed by how the discussions around stewardship had deepened and evolved since the first stewardship conference was held in 2007. "I found the maturity of the conversations really striking versus two years ago. It is fantastic," Ogram said. ■

