



Ontario Peer Development Initiative

Dear Members,

It is with mixed feelings that I am informing you today that our Executive Director, Laura Pearson is leaving OPDI June 22, 2022 for an exciting new adventure.

Laura joined the OPDI team over three years ago, with twenty years of experience in the Mental Health and Addiction System, including providing direct service in shelters and supportive housing. Her work history includes serving as the Executive Director of a small community-based drop-in organization during a time of rapid transition. Laura is now taking her career back to the frontline, community-level, like many of you!

Since the Spring of 2019, Laura has been a valuable leader for our organization, and a strong advocate for the great peer support work that each of you & your organizations deliver everyday in local communities across Ontario. Her vision has allowed OPDI to make great strides in furthering development of the Core Essentials program, solidifying OPDI's relevance by creating a program to widen membership opportunities and, improving reputation and brand recognition at government and stakeholder tables, by raising the awareness of the work that our sector does with government officials and sector partners.

The Board is especially appreciative of her insight and optimistic approach through these interesting (and challenging) times. Laura's guidance was instrumental for our Directors to be able to continue to raise the bar in their governance work, even through the pandemic challenges and Board transitions.

It was under Laura's leadership that the OPDI embarked on a pivotal rebranding effort that will properly reflect our members' history as well as the relevance and progress within our healthcare framework's current context. We look forward to sharing our 'new' brand with you in the Fall!

Laura ensured a successful strategic planning process, as we developed and kicked off OPDI's 2020-2023 Strategic Direction. Through the course of her tenure, she has ensured that OPDI was able to amplify our collective peer support voice with our government and sector partners, and to complement the vital standards work and essential data framework needed for our segment of the healthcare sector.

We're also very thankful that under Laura's direction, we collectively found new ways to bring our membership together to share knowledge, and strengthen the CSI/Peer Support movement. As we all wish Laura well in her next role, as Executive Director of Street Health, we assure you that our service to you as your provincial voice and education source, as well as the vital work in pursuit of our 2020-2023 Strategic Direction, will continue. The Board will share more information on OPDI's transition plan, in the coming days.

Laura will be greatly missed. We know that she will continue to be an advocate for OPDI's work to amplify the Peer Support/Lived Experience voice throughout our healthcare system, in her new role back in the frontlines of our sector. Our Board of Directors looks forward to new challenges, a variety of opportunities, and the smooth continuity as we forge ahead with our provincial work in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. Schaefer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

Andrea Schaefer
OPDI President/Chair of the Board of Directors

