

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI) and Krasman Centre Recognize National Disability Employment Awareness Month

OPDI and Krasman Centre Highlight the Role that Peer Support Plays in Transitioning People with Lived Experience of Mental Health Challenges to Meaningful Employment

RICHMOND HILL – Today the Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI), an association representing over 50 community-based peer and family support organizations across Ontario and a number of social enterprises that have evolved directly from those organizations, recognized National Disability Employment Awareness Month by hosting MPP Daisy Wai, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Seniors and Accessibility and the Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) for Richmond Hill at Krasman Centre.

“OPDI is pleased to recognize National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Employment plays a huge role in peer support’s core principles of recovery, hope, and individual empowerment. We are proud to represent many community-based organizations that hire directly from the pool of capable and inspiring people they serve. We are also proud of the many social enterprises that have evolved directly out of our local community-based peer support organizations.” said Laura Pearson, Executive Director of the OPDI. “When people have a job, they feel they are a valued member of society. Peer support provides a hand up, not a handout.”

“The Krasman Centre has been proud to serve the community of Richmond Hill since 1998. The centre was started by a small group of community members with lived experience of mental health challenges who collectively envisioned a ‘soft place to land’ where people were ‘label free.’” said Susan Dobson, Executive Director, Krasman Centre. “Our organization continues to be fully led and run by people with lived experience, offering not only critical mental health services, but opportunities for employment and career advancement.”

“The Krasman Centre is a wonderful asset to the City of Richmond Hill, and a shining example of the importance that peer support plays in transitioning those with mental health issues back into the workforce. I am honoured to recognize the work of the OPDI, the Krasman Centre and peer support organizations across the province that aren’t only providing a safe environment for those with mental health afflictions, but also a valuable resource for empowerment through employment,” said MPP Daisy Wai.

“It is a pleasure to acknowledge the work of the Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI), and their members like the Krasman Centre that complement our government’s dedication to helping create a more inclusive society for everyone,” said Hon. Raymond Cho. “We look forward to working with these wonderful organizations as we implement our framework [Advancing Accessibility in Ontario](#) and as we collectively work to break down barriers for those seeking empowerment through greater access to employment.”

About Ontario Peer Development Initiative

OPDI has been the voice of lived experience and community-based peer and family support for over 30 years. The association supports over 50 local Consumer-Survivor Initiatives (CSIs), Peer Support Organizations (PSOs), and other programs across Ontario by highlighting the achievements and challenges of the many individuals who use these resources. The programs and services are found in independent community organizations, Community Mental Health Agencies, Hospitals, Universities and Colleges, Police Departments and through First Responders, as well as Legal Associations. OPDI represents their interests at the provincial mental health and addiction policy planning and strategy implementation tables.

OPDI's mission is to acquire, understand, and amplify the unique and distinct voice of Consumer-Survivor organizations across Ontario. The experiential expertise of our peers will shape the mental health system to achieve a valued, recovery-oriented, community-based approach to support.

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