

Local input vital to helping Ontario's unemployed, say provincial social service leaders

TORONTO, May 22, 2014 /CNW/ - As job creation and the economy take centre stage in the provincial election, municipal and First Nation groups want to meet with parties to discuss how to best help Ontario's unemployed.

The Ontario Native Welfare Administrators Association (ONWAA), the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and the Northern Ontario Social Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA) all play a key role in helping Ontarians find jobs. They all agree: local decision makers must have a say in who will manage and deliver employment services to Ontario's communities – because challenges and opportunities are different in different communities.

Local governments and First Nations help connect people with the services they need to find work. Past government decisions have left the future of local decision-making unclear. Provincial plans and policy changes must address local realities, and consider the impact that changes would have on local communities, employers and unemployed people.

"We are pleased to see that this election is focused on job creation and economic growth," says Kira Heineck, OMSSA's Executive Director. "Those discussions must include a clear sense of how we meet the immediate and legitimate needs of people and families who are struggling with unemployment."

"Is it reasonable to assume that people in Toronto know how to find jobs for unemployed people in Windsor, Cornwall or Kenora? These local economies are all very different. Local expertise is needed to connect local people with local employment opportunities."

Guy Dumas, Executive Director of ONWAA, agrees. "Local community leaders must be the key decision makers when it comes to employment services. We know our communities. We know how to work *for* people and *with* people to help them find and keep work," said Dumas.

Central planning in the name of 'efficiency' and 'savings' may sound tempting, but the road to ruin is paved with good intentions. Employment is the goal and we need to be realistic about what works. "Northerners have always maintained that the people in the north know what our communities need and our Association supports this position," explained Gary Scripnick, Chair of NOSDA.

All three Association leaders emphasized the valuable role of local governments and community leaders in employment and economic development, and that working as partners with the provincial government is the key to a strong Ontario.

SOURCE: The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA); The Northern Ontario Social Service Deliverers Association (NOSDA); The Ontario Native Welfare Administrators Association (ONWAA)

SOURCE The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA)

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