Climbing the ladder of self-sufficiency:
How Ontario can use local workforce development to transform social assistance, provide economic security, and create community prosperity

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◑MSSA

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Executive Summary

An Ontario in which local labour market and workforce development strategies are the source for creating prosperity for communities and the individuals within those communities must be the goal for any economic security system within the province. Specifically, this economic prosperity orientation must occur both at the macro-institutional level in terms of broad community labour market development strategies and at the micro-individual level in terms of workforce readiness strategies. Leading both the macro- and micro-level efforts should be Ontario's municipal human services managers, who bring an unparalleled sense of community stewardship that is directly responsive to the health, success, and well-being of the local community.

The ideas presented here have evolved from a body of human service policy research built up by the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) over the past several years that has examined the ways that local workforce development can be harnessed to promote economic security and community prosperity, and, in the process, to move Ontario's social assistance system from a program of dependence to one of independence. We also draw on the range of labor market and workforce development activities that is taking place in communities across Ontario, through the help of provincial ministries and local collaborations.

We note at the outset that our discussion must be seen within the larger national context of Canada's economic security system. Ontario's income support and employment services system are only one piece of the economic security supports provided by the federal, provincial, and municipal orders of government. Although the conversation regarding economic security should include these multiple levels of government, there is a jurisdictional complexity that makes such a conversation challenging. As a first step to a broader conversation, we focus our discussion on the more narrow issue of transforming Ontario's employment and income support system, even as we recognize that there are many other policies, programs, and players involved in the system.

As well, we note that within Ontario, there are already many initiatives engaging the question of how best to provide a level of economic self-sufficiency among Ontarians. These include the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review (2008), the Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008), and the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council (2010), all

of which focused in one way or another on restructuring social assistance and the human service delivery system to produce better outcomes for individuals and communities.

This report builds on the policy foundations laid by these initiatives and adds three dimensions to the discussion.

1. We introduce the idea that a local labor market and workforce development strategy must simultaneously occur at the broad macro scale of the community and the micro scale of the individual.

2. There are those whose physical and other disabilities or other circumstantial barriers (poverty, education, literacy, transportation) are an obstacle to long-term employment. As much as possible, a successful labour market and workforce development strategy will include efforts to help these individuals overcome their barriers. Where this is not possible, public income supports must be provided to allow a standard of living that supports the dignity of the individual and their family and allows for active participation within the community in which they live.

3. The municipal human service manager must play a central role in leading all of these community development activities. As service system managers for social housing, homelessness prevention, and early learning and child care, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) have a role as "community steward" that is unreplicated at any other level of government or by any other non-governmental agency. They play an important role in providing affordable housing, employment supports, quality child care, services for seniors and newcomers, public health, and so forth—because these are all part of what creates a healthy and prosperous community. By linking the human services in an integrated approach, CMSMs and DSSABs help people to achieve their maximum potential and enhance their quality of life. They also promote community prosperity, through the expanded tax base that results when more citizens keep sustainable employment because of those services and supports provided by the CMSM and DSSAB.

> *We must make every opportunity available for sustainable workforce attachment, and provide sustainable income supports to allow people to live with dignity where such attachment is not possible*

In the end, community prosperity is inseparable from the economic success of the individuals who live in those communities. By creating an active workforce development-oriented system that addresses the needs of all Ontarians—including those who receive social assistance and those who do not—we can produce positive outcomes for both community prosperity and individual economic security. By increasing people's economic self-sufficiency through workforce attachment, we can reduce social assistance levels, increase local spending, and expand community tax bases. Most important, we can transform the lives of individuals who, in a new state of economic self-sufficiency, are seen to be contributing members of their community.

The development of this paper

The ideas put forth in this paper were developed through an extensive review process within OMSSA. An Employment and Income Issues Task Force began work in Spring 2009 and met regularly during 2009 and into 2010. OMSSA's Policy and Advocacy Committee commented on the paper in May 2010, and the OMSSA Board of Directors approved a discussion draft that was presented at OMSSA's 60th Anniversary Conference in June 2010. That presentation included table-top discussions among over 60 participants from every human services sector to refine the themes and messages of the paper. The written comments from participants at that conference session informed a new draft, which was once again reviewed by the Task Force in August 2010. The OMSSA Board of Directors commented on a final version of the paper in October 2010, and the OMSSA Executive Board provided final approval in November.

The following are the recommendations for action that emerge from this paper.

Provincial recommendations. As the province proceeds with its various provincial initiatives to rethink social assistance and employment services, OMSSA recommends that government:

1. Develop a *common vision* for social assistance and workforce development, with input and participation from the municipal human service managers and the range of provincial ministries involved in human services.
2. Work with CMSMs and DSSABs to jointly develop an accountability framework that *gives service managers the authority, flexibility, and resources* to work with their local and regional partners in creating local workforce development programs.
3. Develop an *outcome-based orientation* to employment services with a range of "successful outcomes" that include part-time and volunteer attachment. This outcome-based perspective must encompass all employment services programs, whether through more universal programs of Employment Ontario or the targeted social assistance programs of Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program.
4. Develop a *multi-tiered approach* to social assistance that combines *intensive short-term supports* to bridge temporary employment gaps with *medium-term pension-style supports* for those who are unable to be sustainably attached to the workforce.
5. Use the recommendations of the Social Assistance Review Advisory Committee as a *starting point for transforming social assistance* and creating an economic security system.

CMSM/DSSAB recommendations. Ontario's CMSMs and DSSABs must take a leadership role in promoting a workforce development strategy that focuses on the macro and micro scales.

Local macro-scale activities:
1. Convene a "systems table" of community leaders to develop a *common local vision* for workforce development.
2. Identify who does what for the workforce development system, with an eye towards limiting "turf-protection" and *expanding local collaboration and information sharing*.
3. Cultivate an *inclusive approach* to local workforce development programs with participation from multiple sectors and employers of all sizes.
4. Establish a *more relevant data and labour market information system* to identify broad trends and local issues.

Local micro-scale activities:
1. Strengthen the *internal human services integration focus* to ensure that clients in need of employment supports can be supported with other services.
2. Work with community partners to *strengthen the ancillary support process*.
3. Develop *local training opportunities* that match labour market forecasts.

1. Introduction: The ladder of self-sufficiency

1.1 Wisdom from the past

The 12th-century philosopher, Moses Maimonides, was a busy man.[1] By day he worked as the physician to the Sultan in Alexandria, Egypt, ministering to the medical needs of the court. By night he served as head of the city's Jewish community, ministering to the needs of his co-religionists. In the early morning hours he wrote—volumes on Jewish law, Aristotelian philosophy, science, and medicine.

Among Maimonides' writings was a small tract on charity. His dual vantage point as civil servant and community leader gave him a unique perspective on how best to meet the needs of those most vulnerable in the community. For Maimonides, there were eight levels of charitable giving, each level more preferable than the one below, moving from the lowest—"to give begrudgingly"—to the highest—"to provide a person with the resources to become self-sufficient."[2]

The highest form of giving is to provide a person with resources to become self-sufficient.

In many ways, this highest level—ensuring a person's self-sufficiency—echoes the popular saying, "Give a man a fish and he's fed for a day; teach a man to fish and he's fed for a lifetime."   Maimonides added to this wisdom in two ways. First, he recognized that not everyone approaches the responsibility of assisting those most in need in the same way—some people give only grudgingly, while others embrace the opportunity to help. Second, by articulating a hierarchy of assistance, Maimonides clearly suggested that a progression in values is possible and that we as

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1. Pronounced "My-mon-ih-dees."

2. In descending order, the eight levels of giving are:
    1. Providing a person with the resources to become self-sufficient.
    2. Giving without knowing the recipient and without allowing the recipient to know you.
    3. Giving with knowing the recipient but without allowing the recipient to know you.
    4. Giving without knowing of the recipient but allowing the recipient to know you.
    5. Giving before being asked.
    6. Giving after being asked.
    7. Giving happily but less than appropriate.
    8. Giving begrudgingly.

   As a prooftext for the highest level of charity, Maimonides refers to Leviticus 25:35, which states, "You shall strengthen the stranger and the dweller in your midst and live with him." He interprets this to means that you "strengthen him until he needs no longer fall [upon the mercy of the community] or be in need." For the original reference, see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Gifts of [*that belong to*] the Poor: 10:7-14.

individuals and as a society should embark on a journey, with the collective destination being that all members of our community have the resources to become self-sufficient.[3]

1.2 Present-day activities

The province of Ontario is in the midst of such a journey, with a number of recent initiatives—public and other—reengaging the question of how best to help Ontarians to achieve a level of economic self-sufficiency (Figure 1).

Together, these activities represent a public effort to move Ontario

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Figure 1: Recent provincial initiatives focused on social assistance and human services

The Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review (2008). Among the many recommendations in this report jointly produced by the provincial and municipal governments was closer alignment of income assistance and employment support programs. Such alignment was necessitated because the multiple provincial programs for income and employment support are "not well integrated and, for the individual looking for help, can be hard to access and confusing. Better integration can lead to improved employment outcomes for clients."

The Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008). This strategy spoke directly to the role of sustainable employment in moving people out of poverty. Among the initiatives introduced in the Strategy were proposals to create "more sustainable and less precarious employment situations for workers," and the expansion of the Ontario Child Benefit to help "parents receiving social assistance make the transition to work because they continue to receive children's benefits after beginning employment."

Employment Ontario transformation (2009-10). Beginning in 2009, the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities embarked on a transformation of its employment support programs. The goal of the transformation was to "increase access to training and employment services" to make them more responsive and supportive of those looking to find sustainable employment.

Human services implementation steering committee (2009-2010). This joint provincial-municipal initiative is charged with implementing the human services recommendations from the PMFSDR, and includes a housing and homelessness consolidation working group, an OW Cost of Administration Working Group, and an Employment Working Group.

Social Assistance Review (2010). Established by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council brought together leading policy thinkers and social advocates to craft a vision for removing barriers and increasing opportunity for those who require assistance, with a particular focus on "people making the transition from social assistance to employment."

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3. The genesis of the connection between Maimonides' writings and Ontario's social assistance system lies in a small but insightful book on charitable giving by Julie Salamon, *Rambam's Ladder: A Meditation on Generosity and*

along that Maimonidean continuum, from giving social assistance in a begrudging and unsustainable manner to providing a level of economic security that is sustainable and sufficient—and empowering. They have begun to transform the system away from entrenching individuals in a cycle of life-long welfare assistance and towards allowing people to realize their potential.
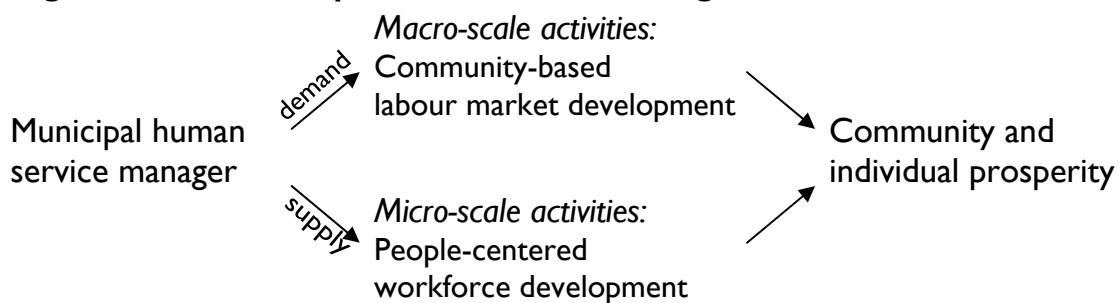
This is an exciting effort that holds much promise for the people of Ontario. Ontario is poised to transform the public conversation from "social assistance and income security" to "economic security and community prosperity." Given the right leadership, vision, and resources, this transformation can happen. We must ask ourselves, then, at this moment of change, how far are we willing to go? What steps must we take to enable all Ontarians to move into positions of economic self-sufficiency?

1.3 What we say

This paper begins to answer these questions by presenting a vision for Ontario in which local labour market and workforce development strategies give rise to prosperity for communities and the individuals in those communities.

As we explain in the pages that follow, Ontario's municipal human services managers must lead a process that simultaneously engages in macro-level community labour market development strategies and micro-level individual workforce development strategies. (Figure 2.)

Figure 2: The municipal human service manager's role

Macro-scale activities:
Community-based
labour market development

demand

Municipal human
service manager

supply

Micro-scale activities:
People-centered
workforce development

Community and
individual prosperity

Municipal human services managers are ideally positioned to lead these efforts, because of their role as community stewards and their ability to bridge the divide between community economic

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Why It Is Necessary to Give (New York: Workman Publishing Company, 2003). In Hebrew, Maimonides is referred to as "Rambam," which is an acronym for Rabbi Moses ben [son of] Maimon.

development and individual social welfare programming. Through a concurrent effort to create workforce development opportunities on the demand (employer) and supply (employee) sides, municipal human services managers can create opportunities for community and individual prosperity.

More than any other tool in the economic security system toolbox, the development of the labour force most directly contributes to the Maimonidean concept of self-sufficiency. After all, "employment is a fundamental component of our daily lives. It is often how we define ourselves and it provides us with the resources to help us become self-sufficient, and ideally, economically independent. It gives us a sense of purpose and allows us to use our talents to contribute to our community."[4]

To be sure, there are those for whom long-term attachment to the workforce is challenging, if not impossible. Physical and other disabilities can impede a person's development. Other barriers, such as poverty, lack of education, language and literacy difficulties, transportation, or availability of services can also present obstacles. But regardless of a person's circumstances, it is imperative that we do our collective best to make every opportunity available for sustainable workforce attachment—and where attachment is not possible, to provide sustainable income supports to allow people to live with dignity.

> *We must make every opportunity available for sustainable workforce attachment, and provide sustainable income supports to allow people to live with dignity where such attachment is not possible*

1.4 The broad context

Our geographic focus on Ontario, and our content focus on the links between workforce development and economic self-sufficiency, should not obscure the larger national context of Canada's economic security system. Ontario's income and employment supports represent only a small piece of the many supports and services provided by federal, provincial, and municipal orders of governments to help Canadians. Some of these are universal programs, others are targeted to particular demographic or social slices of the population. Even within Ontario, social assistance represents only 12 percent of the approximately $49

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4. *Developing Community Employment Pathways For Homeless Job Seekers in King County & Washington State: A Report of the Taking Health Care Home Initiative* (Seattle: 2007), 1.

billion spent annually on income security programs. Those receiving Ontario Works represent only 4 percent of all who receive some form of income security payments.[5]

Ideally, the conversation regarding the transformation of economic security would be conducted across multiple levels of government and with all relevant parties. Having such a broad-based discussion could help to align federal, provincial, municipal, and private efforts to bring economic stability and sustainability to the residents of Canada.

> *A broad-based discussion is needed to align federal, provincial, municipal, and private efforts to bring economic stability and sustainability to all Canadians.*

The reality is far from the ideal, however, and the span of control is far more limited. The fragmentation of the economic security system into multiple jurisdictional responsibilities makes a comprehensive "transformation" challenging. Ontario's provincial and municipal governments can have extensive discussions about raising the minimum wage or expanding the Ontario Child Benefit, for example, but they must also recognize that other forces (federal government policies and programs, labour market contexts, and so forth) also impact any policy decision.

Even within Ontario, responsibilities for economic security are siloed within multiple ministries and programs, each with its own rules, regulations, funding and reporting requirements, and time-limited parameters that can create contradictions across programs. For example, workforce development issues are primarily dealt with by Employment Ontario, within the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU), except for employment issues related to individuals on social assistance, which is the responsibility of the Ontario Works Branch in the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS). Income supports are the purview of MCSS, except for housing subsidy and rent supplement programs that emanate from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH). Affordable and social housing issues are MMAH's responsibility, but

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5. Statistics are taken from John Stapleton, "60 Years of Income Security & Work: What the 'Big Picture' & 'Long Files' Reveal," presentation to OMSSA's 60th Anniversary Conference, Blue Mountain, Ontario, June 8, 2010. For every one of these programs, one can likely find a vigorous public policy debate over the merits and disadvantages of how the benefits are structured, whether they are too generous or not generous enough, or whether they are achieving what they were designed to achieve. Rather than enter these debates, it will suffice to note that their presence signals a public policy complexity to the point that it is somewhat optimistic to talk about a social assistance "system," since "system" implies a degree of coherence and coordination.

homelessness programs have long resided within MCSS and other shelter programs can be found in the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care.[6] By recognizing the complexity of the system and by recognizing who is responsible for what, there can emerge an understanding of what is possible to change and what is not.

1.5 A word about definitions.

The complexity of responsibilities also leads to confusion over what exactly is meant by "economic security," "income security," "social assistance," and so forth. People often use the terms interchangeably, and think little about the nuanced distinctions.

In this paper, we use "economic security" as an all-encompassing term that suggests an individual living without risk of descending into poverty. Economic security typically comes with sustainable income (through work or other supports), appropriate, affordable, and quality housing, proper health, and an overall quality of life in which the person need not live in constant worry about where the next meal will come from. Economic security is a universal term that should be available to all people in all situations.

"Income security" refers to a reliable and sustainable level of income that leads to and supports economic security (but it is not the same thing). Income security programs can be universal or targeted programs.

"Social assistance" is the common term relating to publicly funded programs of income security for the most vulnerable residents in Ontario. Ontario Works is Ontario's brand name for social assistance, and includes income supports and employment services. Social assistance is a targeted term relevant to a slice of the population.

In this paper, we will most broadly speak about economic security and an economic security "system" that includes the entire range of supports and services available to foster individual prosperity. When we speak of income security and social assistance, we will be referring

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6. To their credit, the provincial government has begun to recognize the need to untangle its spaghetti web of program and policy. The Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review and the subsequent Human Services Implementation Steering Committee have worked hard to identify areas for simplification.

more narrowly to those programs within Ontario targeted to a vulnerable population.

From a practical policy perspective, these definitions have two, somewhat opposite implications. First, by broadly defining the issue, we are saying that economic security is relevant to all levels of government and community institutions (business and non-business). Workforce development and economic security is a universal issue, as people from all economic strata and institutions of all sectors will benefit from a stronger, more competitive workforce. Therefore, our paper speaks to the need greater horizontal policy coordination across provincial ministries, and greater vertical collaboration between all levels of government (federal, provincial and municipalities), and local labour market partners.

At the same time, we also understand that economic security is especially relevant to vulnerable populations, who often have a greater range of needs that impact their levels of workforce attachment. Thus, there is direct policy relevance to the specific question of social assistance reform, which we believe must be oriented towards moving more intentionally towards a program that focuses on workforce development.

In sum, this paper represents an important first step towards this broader conversation, with the hope that the ideas put forth can stimulate further discussions with others in and out of government about how best to ensure economic security for all Canadians.[7]

The role of Ontario's municipal human service managers in overseeing local workforce development programs—and by extension, in helping to provide this level of self-sufficiency to our province's most vulnerable citizens—is an important story to be told. While other jurisdictions in Canada and beyond situate their social welfare supports in non-municipal settings (provincial governments elsewhere in Canada, for example), the municipal involvement in Ontario's human service delivery provides a level of local stewardship that is directly responsive to the health and well-being of the local community.

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7. In other words, we freely admit that there is a larger discussion to be had about solving Canada's income security challenges. This paper, however, with a more targeted focus on how the role of local workforce development within Ontario's social assistance program, is not the place for that discussion.

In exploring the story of local workforce development and the role of municipal service system managers in overseeing these programs, this paper presents itself to those provincial and municipal audiences who have direct influence over how economic security and social assistance is funded, managed, and delivered in Ontario. But there is an important readership beyond these government audiences. For anyone with an interest in poverty, social welfare, and the paths to community prosperity, this paper provides an important glimpse into the crucial local role that Ontario's municipal human service managers play in helping their communities—and the people who live within them—succeed.

2. Developing a compelling common vision

" *W* elfare will never be satisfactory. It cannot escape the contradictions between its goals—deterrence, compassion, discipline, and control—or resolve the tension between entitlements and the market."[8]

How can we collectively create a better economic security system to assist people if we each bring different visions of what that system should look like? The inescapable contradictions within welfare can only be overcome if those involved begin to speak a common language about what economic self-sufficiency means.

OMSSA, through our work on human services integration, has long championed the importance of developing a common vision, language, and definitions, for any group that is undertaking human service planning. A common vision is necessary to develop clear, measurable outcomes, for it is only when people agree upon the goals to be achieved that they can agree on how to measure the achievement of those goals.[9]

> **Provincial recommendation:**
> ➔ Develop a *common vision* for social assistance and workforce development, with input and participation from the municipal human service managers and the range of provincial ministries involved in human services.

Think about the changing meaning of social assistance since the mid-twentieth-century. What social assistance means and what it should accomplish has evolved considerably. Is it simple income support for the most indigent? Is it a mechanism for employment training? Is it supportive? Punitive? Restrictive? Permissive? Even the labels we apply to those receiving social assistance impute meaning. Do we call them social assistance "recipients" (a passive term) or "clients" (implying more active participation in the program)?

2.1 The need for an accountability framework

While we prefer definitions that emphasize the human over the bureaucracy, we are not recommending one specific set of labels over

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8. Michael Katz, *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse: A Social History of Welfare in America* (New York, 1986), 290.

9. Commonality of vision, language, and definition, is a key principle in both OMSSA's 2007 report on human services integration and the 2010 paper on human services planning. See Human Services Integration Steering Committee, *A Guide to Human Services Integration* (2007) and *Moving Forward: Community Human Services Planning* (2010).

another. We are recommending, however, that a concerted public conversation occur to arrive at a set of definitions. More specifically, we recommend that this conversation occur within the context of the development of an accountability framework between the provincial government and municipal human service managers.

The Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review already established that a new framework is needed for Ontario's human service delivery system, with clearly defined role and responsibilities for the different orders of government. It is natural, therefore, to use the discussions about a framework as a setting to develop a common understanding about the interplay between economic security, public assistance, and workforce development.

We note that these discussions have begun to occur. Within the Human Services Implementation Steering Committee and its sub-committee, the Employment Working Group, provincial and municipal leaders have sought to identify key common issues. These are important steps that can lead to more intentional and focused discussions on common vision, language, and definitions.

There is more to be done, however. For example, the Employment Ontario transformation within the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities has been implemented with little regard for the municipal service manager role and with little reference to potential changes within social assistance. It would make sense for these kinds of workforce development initiatives emanating from one ministry to be linked—in vision, language, and policy—to similar initiatives in a sister ministry.

> *A common vision*
> - *Public policies must encourage independence and not create dependence*
> - *We must provide for those who cannot become sustainably attached to the workforce*

Therefore, as these provincial-municipal conversations proceed, two points must be kept at the forefront.

1. Public policies must encourage independence and not create dependence
2. Sustainable work is an outcome for some, but not all, individuals

2.2 Public policies must encourage independence and not create dependence

A common vision should include a basic understanding and agreement on the role of governments as investors in people and providers of social safety nets. Those investments must be made to

ensure that individuals and families do not descend into poverty and to help those in poverty to emerge successfully and permanently.

Yet as numerous studies have demonstrated over the past decade, Ontario's current economic security system does not encourage or reward efforts for people to move from public assistance to self-sufficiency. A complex web of regulations—what some have called "the stupid rules of assistance"—force individuals to strip their assets before receiving public assistance and punish those who take the initiative to improve themselves economically.[10] They also create an environment whereby assistance becomes a long-term, rather than a temporary, support.

Public policies that encourage and reward self-sufficiency—and that do not punish individuals in their efforts to become economically self-sufficient—ultimately benefit governments even if they involve upfront investments. Supporting people with temporary income assistance as they undertake job skills training, for example, helps them to find sustainable work, pay taxes, and spend money in local economies. Research has shown that small, short-term, up-front investments in people will ultimately mitigate against having to provide larger, longer-term supports later. This is the theory behind programs like Employment Ontario, which seeks to ensure that people who lose their jobs are linked to the employment support system as soon as their unemployment situation begins rather than only after a year of Employment Insurance has run out and their labour market attachment has weakened.

> *Public policies that encourage and reward self-sufficiency will benefit governments even if they involve upfront investments.*

Additionally, a system weighted to economic independence rather than dependence, to employment assistance rather than income assistance, is likely to garner much wider public support than would a system that is seen as emphasizing income assistance alone. Employment supports are much more client empowering and community contributing than are income supports; labor force attachment means increased tax revenues and more local spending. It means creating an environment where more people are contributing to the common wealth, rather than drawing from it.

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10. Among the key reports which stress this theme are: St. Christopher House and Toronto City Summit Alliance, *Time for a fair deal: Report of the task force on modernizing income security for working-age adults* (May 2006); Ken Battle, Michael Mendelson, and Sherri Torjman, *Towards a new architecture for Canada's adult benefits* (Caledon Institute for Social Policy June 2006).

Just as important are the personal and psychological benefits accrued to someone who is attached to the workforce. In 1988, Ontario's Social Assistance Review Committee articulated in its landmark report, *Transitions*, that "employment represents the most effective means of establishing self-esteem, self-sufficiency, and integration into society." Twenty years later, the Service Delivery Accountability Table, a group of provincial and municipal human service staff who informed Ontario's Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery, described labour force attachment as "an important avenue to community engagement" that also contributes "to an individual's sense of dignity and self-worth."[11]

2.3 Sustainable work is an outcome for some, but not all, individuals

Although the goal of an economic security system should be to help people to increase their employability and obtain economic independence, there will always be people who do not and realistically will never have the capacity to become employed or economically self-sufficient—despite all their best efforts and the efforts of program support staff. An emphasis on local workforce development, notwithstanding, it would be wrong to assume that the only solution for every person on assistance is work. Those people who cannot become attached to the labour force must also be part of an income security system through programs that provide sustainable supports and that allow them to focus on quality of life and community connectedness even in the absence of formal workforce attachment.

These two points—emphasizing the role of government to invest in people's self-sufficiency, and acknowledging that sustainable work is an outcome for some, but not all, individuals—are intended to underscore the necessity of developing common vision and language to solving the economic security challenge.

By having honest and open conversations about the meaning of economic security, the role of government, and the attitudes and assumptions that are brought to the table, Ontario's municipal and provincial partners can begin to build a new economic security system using the framework of local workforce development.

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11. The first quotation is from *Transitions: Report of the Social Assistance Review Committee*, (Toronto: Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1988), 15. The second quotation is from *Service Delivery Accountability Table Working Paper* (Toronto: 2008).

3. Beginning the conversation: Local workforce development

3.1 Self-sufficiency and work

Where should this conversation begin? Returning to the philosopher Maimonides and his ladder of charitable giving, it is interesting to examine his language for describing the highest form of charity. We are to give "a gift or a loan or become a partner or find him work, so as to strengthen him until he no longer needs to ask." Let's consider this sentence closely.

Putting aside the first half of the sentence for the time being, Maimonides appears to say that sustainable work is a clear means to achieving self-sufficiency, and that our responsibility is to help a person find that work. Individually, we are rarely in a position to hire people in poverty to work directly for us. On a societal level, however, we can understand this to mean that we must develop work-based social assistance policies and programs that lead people to self-sufficiency.

The belief that employment is a key tool for building economic self-sufficiency is not new to Ontario's income assistance and employment services system.[12] The very name of the current program—Ontario *Works*—connotes that work should be the central focus of a public assistance program. The problem, however, lies in the divide between the system's philosophy and its implementation and delivery.

Maimonides did not write, after all, that any kind of work is the solution. He did not say that a person should take the shortest path to employment, regardless of what it pays or whether the person is appropriately trained for that job. He did not say that we give a person work for work's sake. Rather, the work must be appropriate so that a person "no longer needs to ask." The work must

> *Work must be appropriate for a person to move out and stay out of poverty.*

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12. For example, in 1994, Social Research and Demonstration Corporation in Vancouver undertook the rather directly named Self-Sufficiency Project in British Columbia and New Brunswick "to determine whether a temporary earnings supplement that makes work pay more than welfare will assist long-term single-parent Income Assistance recipients to achieve economic self-sufficiency." See Susanna Lui-Gurr, Sheila Currie Vernon, and Tod Mijanovich, *Making work pay better than welfare: An early look at the Self-Sufficiency Project* (Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, October 1994). See also Charles Michalopolous, David Card, Lisa A. Gennetian, Kristen Harknett, and Philip K. Robins, *The Self-Sufficiency Project at 36 months: Effects of a financial work incentive on employment and income* (Social Research and Demonstration Corporation, June 2000).

be enough to actually lift the person out of poverty. (For those individuals who are unable to work at sustainable levels, we must provide income support to supplement and sustain them. This issue is discussed in more detail later in this paper.)

By arguing for the sufficiency of wages so that a person no longer needs to ask for help, Maimonides advocated not for a minimum wage, but for a living wage that allows people to survive on their own. We can extend this to consider that a person should not be penalized for trying to work to achieve financial independence, and that assistance should push people up the ladder rather than pull them back down.

Reinterpreting Maimonides, we see that assistance means to create a social context in which people can find and retain sustainable employment. To do that means creating an environment that allows people to become attached to the workforce and no longer need to ask for help. In other words, it means working as a community to develop the local workforce.

> *Social assistance should push people up the ladder rather than pull them back down.*

3.2 OMSSA's policy work

For the past several years, OMSSA has worked hard to lay the policy groundwork for transforming Ontario's social assistance system into a local workforce development system. In particular, three key references collectively set the foundation for this discussion:

1. A proposal, "Transitioning Ontario Works to a Labour Force Development Strategy" (2005)
2. A Labour Force Development Matrix (2007)
3. Local Workforce Development Demonstration Projects (2009).

3.3 Transitioning OW (2005)

OMSSA's proposal for "Transitioning Ontario Works to a Labour Force Development Strategy" unwittingly drew on Maimonides by envisioning "an active labour market program that would require the full involvement and participation of the individual in a range of employment-focused activities to help people prepare for, obtain, and keep paid work *that will enable them to become financially self-sufficient*." (Emphasis added.)

The paper proposed a number of changes to Ontario Works that would "enable it to become a true labour force development program which will promote and
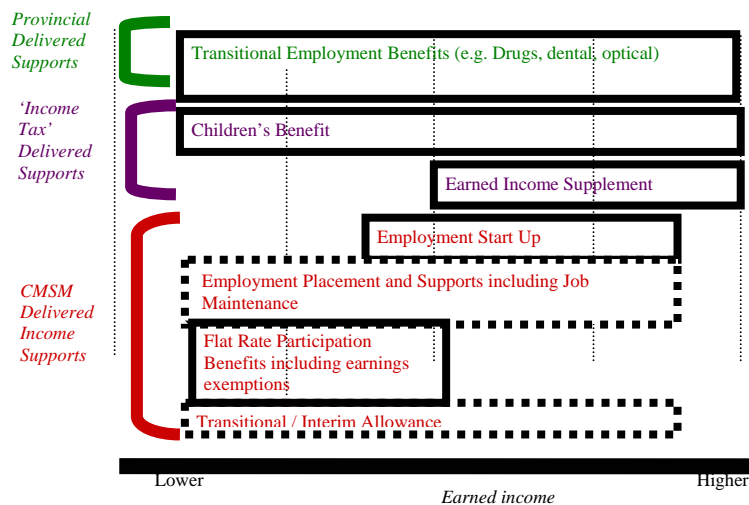
sustain labour force attachment wherever possible." Among the recommendations were proposals to strengthen the employment focus of the program, meet the labour force needs of employers, and simplify and streamline the benefits structures.[13]

That report also graphically depicted the interplay between income supports delivered by the provincial government and those delivered by municipal service managers. (Figure 3.) Shifting certain benefits (drug, dental, children's benefit) from the social assistance system into the income tax system would ensure that income supports for basic human needs would not be tied to a person's employment (or unemployment) status. Such benefits would continue even as a person's workforce attachment increased (as opposed to the direct

Figure 3: Types of income supports

Source: OMSSA, "Transitioning Ontario Works to a Labour Force Development Strategy" (2005).

employment-related income supports; once a person became attached, those benefits would disappear since they would no longer be needed.)

3.5 Labour force development matrix

These ideas were further refined in 2007 through OMSSA's Labour Force Development Matrix, which detailed the many services and supports that comprise a local workforce development strategy led by the municipal service manager. Of particular note is the introduction of the employer perspective into the discussion. Whereas the initial OMSSA proposal began with services and programs directed to individuals, this matrix articulated the need for a viable employer base. (Figure 4.)

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13. In 2008, the Ontario government introduced the Ontario Child Benefit as an income-tax-based benefit to replace the child benefits delivered through Ontario Works. This was an important policy improvement in that it removed children's benefits from the social assistance context and made the benefit available to a wider low-income population.

Figure 4: Labour Force Development Matrix

	LEAST	← LEVEL OF LABOUR FORCE ATTACHMENT →		MOST
	Readiness and Community Resources	**Increased Employability and Job Skills**	**Increased Access to the Labour Market**	**Improved Employment Situation**
INDIVIDUALS	• Income support • Family counseling • Homelessness/housing • Assessment • Addictions • Transportation • Child care • Mental health • Basic health • School to work resources and services for youth and students • Newcomer / settlement services • Life skills • Literacy • ESL	• Employment skills development (soft/basic) • Educational upgrading • Psychometric testing • Pre employment services (resume, job search) • Job specific skills training • Work experience programs	• Apprenticeship • Employment placing with incentives • Job subsidies • Transitional jobs • Mentorship • Job coaching • Self employment • Labour market information • People with disabilities : accommodations • Data collection • Marketing / outreach to employers	• Job retention • Career advancement • Resource centres • On the job training • Labour market information • Adjustment committees
EMPLOYERS	• Supporting employers • HR support • Job retention • Job coaching • Case management • Crisis intervention • Financial support • Employer education • Co-ops apprenticeship • Career orientation • Skills training • Recruitment activities • Labour market information	• Work based skills training • Workplace based language training • On site soft skills training • Job subsidies and work experience programs • Job retention / ongoing HR supports	• Job subsidies and work experience programs • Mentoring • Recruitment (including summer jobs) • Apprenticeship • Work place trouble shooting • Job loss prevention • Accommodation for disabilities • Matching / recruitment	• Work force mitigation • Economic development • Labour force development

Left-side label (vertical): SERVICES/RESOURCES NEEDED

As well, the Matrix expanded the idea of a continuum of attachability—and provided a corresponding set of services and programs for people at different points of that continuum. For those with the least amount of attachment (on the left side of the matrix), there are direct income support programs along with a variety of services to address particular challenges. By contrast, services for the most attachable individuals (on the right side) are strictly labour development-focused. This continuum reinforces the point that, while sustainable employment remains the primary goal for social assistance, those for whom work sustainability is less likely are still provided for.

3.6 Local Workforce Development Reference Group

Out of that work, in 2008 and 2009, OMSSA joined with the ministries of Community and Social Services, Citizenship and Immigration, and Training, Colleges, and Universities to create the Local Workforce Development Reference Group. This group oversaw a series of demonstration projects to understand the challenges involved in developing local workforces. Eleven communities across Ontario received funding to create local projects that spoke to a part of the workforce development question (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Local Workforce Development Reference Group Demonstration Projects

Community	Project description
City of Brantford	Streamline the connection between local employers and workplace solutions using an online single point of access for workforce information
Municipality of Chatham-Kent	Engage a third-party consultant to map services and develop an integrated approach to local employment services.
Regional Municipality of Halton	Establish the Employment and Learning Resource Integration Group (ELRIG) and engage a third-party consultant to meet with local stakeholders.
City of Hamilton	Map existing employment services and develop an online technology platform to gather and distribute information to service providers and service users
District of Muskoka	Establish a steering committee to interview employer organizations and health care employees with a view to increase the local supply of health care workers
Regional Municipality of Niagara	Create three separate projects to increase the visibility of careers in trades, showcase educational collaboration in areas of future economic growth, and pilot integrated local planning between Community Services Department and a local service delivery organization
City of Ottawa	Identify best practices for client service using a combination of research, analysis, and consultation.
City of Peterborough	Create an Integrated Local Labour Market Planning Committee to develop a strategic 'evidence-based' plan in concert with the Local Labour Market Planning (LLMP) project.
City of Greater Sudbury	Develop processes to identify and share labour market information, client needs and connect Employment Ontario with Ontario Works.
City of Toronto	Develop a one-stop source for labour market information through a website portal prototype
County of Wellington	Map existing service usage and identify gaps through focus groups and interviews with clients, employers and local agencies.

The projects fell into two types—supply side with worker-oriented projects, and demand side with employer-oriented projects. The supply-side, worker-oriented projects tended to be some variation on web-based employment search tools that provide job seekers with up-to-date information about what employment opportunities are available in which sectors. Demand-side, employer-oriented projects tended to focus on ways to provide employers better information about labour market trends and human resources tools.

3.7 Service Delivery Accountability Table

Simultaneous with the workforce development projects emerging from the Local Workforce Development Reference Group, ideas were emerging from the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review (PMFSDR) about the transformation of social assistance into a more streamlined workforce-oriented program. The Service Delivery Accountability Table, a subgroup of the PMFSDR charged with

Figure 6: Shifting emphases of social assistance

addressing challenges in the human services sector, conceptualized a new system that shifted the emphasis of social assistance away from income support and towards employment supports. (Figure 6.) In the words of the Table's final report, "a simpler and more modernized income support system will allow for resources to be focused on employment outcomes." In other words, the goal should be the development of people's workforce readiness and self-sufficiency and a concurrent reduction in on-going public income dependence.

These resources—the original 2005 report from OMSSA, the 2007 Matrix, and the Demonstration Projects of 2009—provide clear guideposts for

Ontario's Maimonidean journey to promoting economic self-sufficiency and security by developing the local workforce. They point the way to understanding the importance of creating a workforce development strategy that speaks to both the broad regional or macro scale and the narrower individual or micro scale.

These three resources also make clear that the macro and micro scales of workforce development are inseparable. The key elements that make a workforce development system cohere at the broad metropolitan or regional level are the same elements that make the system cohere at the individual level. The following sections explore the macro and micro scales of local workforce development and the points where the two intersect.

4. The macro scale of local workforce development— Demand-side strategies

We begin with the macro scale of workforce development—the ways that workforce systems operate at the metropolitan or regional level. At this macro level, a local workforce system encompasses the major economic, political, and social institutions of a region working with some degree of interconnectedness to create a positive economic environment for a community. It means local governments, private businesses, educational institutions, and other groups working together to identify the major workforce trends in a community and to develop coherent policies that allow local economies to flourish.

> **CMSM/DSSAB recommendation:**
> ➔ Convene a "systems table" of community leaders to develop a *common local vision* for workforce development.

Developing a macro-scale strategy for local workforce development is not unlike an economic development strategy, since any economic growth will require an appropriate workforce to nurture that growth. In what direction is the local economy headed? What industries will see growth in the next ten to fifteen to twenty years? What industries are expected to decline? Where will there be a need for workers? These are the questions that a broad workforce development strategy must ask and answer.

There is, to be sure, an historical tendency for economic development and workforce development to be separated. The separation stems not only from different geographical boundaries and service areas of local workforce development agencies and economic development organizations, but also from the differences in the goals and approaches of workforce and economic development activities. "While economic development has traditionally focused on creating jobs and increasing economic activity, workforce development has focused on placing people in jobs," one study noted in 2008.[14] But drawing on the earlier point about common vision and definitions, the divide between economic development and workforce development

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14. Elsie Harper-Anderson, *Coming Together in Tough Economic Times: Workforce Development and Economic Development Move Closer Together in Michigan.* Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy, University of Michigan Policy Report 10 (January 2008).

can be bridged by engaging in discussions about common vision and purpose.[15]

4.1 Macro scale activities in the context of systemic employment changes.
One reason that there needs to be a more intentional macro-level effort to develop local workforces is that the economic framework for employment has changed considerably over the past few decades. Much has been written about the shift from manufacturing to service industries and the rise of the "creative class" in cities.[16] Other trends associated with these changes include the changing expectations for an educated workforce, the globalization of manufacturing, and the shift in work patterns.[17]

These changes mean that employers in the 21st century are operating within an entirely different context with an entirely different set of expectations. No longer do employers expect to hire a worker for life, beginning at an entry-level job and working his way up the corporate hierarchy. Those entry-level jobs are more than likely to be contracted out to a secondary firm, and the higher level positions in the hierarchy are likely to be filled by workers from other companies (or, in the case of international companies, from someone transferred from halfway across the world.)[18]

No longer do employers expect to hire a worker for life, beginning at an entry-level job and working his way up the corporate hierarchy.

In the best situation, the globalization of work and of workforces can become a catalyst for local cooperation. Rather than have employers competing with one another for local workers, they can see themselves as collectively competing with employers in other geographies (elsewhere in the province, across Canada, in the United States, or beyond). This can serve as an incentive for local cooperation to identify ways to develop the local workforce for the betterment of all

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15. For a more detailed discussion of human service systems, see OMSSA's *A Guide to Human Services Integration* (2007) and *Community Human Services Planning: Moving Forward* (2010).

16. The primary proponent of the creative-class discussion has been Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2003)

17. See Sebastien LaRochelle-Cote and Claude Dionne, "Family work patterns," *Statistics Canada Perspectives* (August 2009, Catalogue no., 75-001-X).

18. The ideas in this paragraph were shaped by a presentation by Tom Zizys, a consultant on workforce development, in a presentation at the OMSSA 60th Anniversary conference on June 9, 2010. Copies of the presentation can be found on the conference page at www.omssa.com.

employers in any given area, since the economic viability of one employer can attract other (or even similar) support firms.

4.2 Macro-scale activities underway

In most communities across Ontario, some forms of macro-scale workforce development activities are already in place. Beginning in the 1994, Local Training and Adjustment Boards (LTABs) were set up to "conduct grassroots research and actively engage organizations and community partners in local labour market development."[19] Many of these Boards have evolved into more comprehensive labour market programs. Individual municipal and regional governments also have their own programs that conduct research and engage employers to cultivate the demand-side of the workforce development issue. For example, in 2010 the Regional Municipality of Halton's Labour Market Partnership Project surveyed over 430 employers about their current employment practices and their forecasted needs over the next 15 years. The information will be fed back into the project to help to identify relevant skill development programs for the region.

4.3 Keys to successful local strategies.

The shape of local workforce development strategies varies by community, depending on the particular economic, political, and demographic context. Still, the 2009 local workforce demonstration projects identified several characteristics that contribute to a successful workforce system, regardless of the specific strategy:

1. **Collaborative relationships.** Perhaps the most important lesson learned from the projects was the importance of collaboration. Such collaboration emerged from positive and cooperative relationships between local stakeholders, which themselves helped the different parties to understand what the others were doing and were responsible for in the workforce development system.

> **CMSM/DSSAB recommendation:**
> ➔ Identify who does what for the workforce development system, with an eye towards limiting "turf-protection" and expanding local collaboration and information sharing.

2. **Leadership.** A second theme was the importance of strong leadership in achieving successful

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19. Quotation from the Local Boards Network website < http://www.localboards.on.ca/english>.

outcomes in the integration of employment services. Even though the many participants in a system brought their own commitments and responsibilities, strong leadership for collaboration and integration provided the impetus for identifying common goals. The absence of such leadership can stall the work, as participants become sidetracked in important, but narrowly focused, activities.[20]

3. **Structural foundation.** At the same time, longer-term collaboration cannot be built solely on relationships and leadership, but must have structural foundations that remain even when individuals change. Too often, communities that have galvanized around a particular issue (say, local workforce development) have done so because of the charismatic leadership of a particular businessman or politician. Groups might become involved because of their relationship to the leader. Over time, however, new opportunities beckon and leaders move on, leaving a leadership vacuum and a need to get to know new personalities. By creating a more permanent structural foundation for working together, communities can ensure a degree of continuity.

4. **Information.** Whatever the particular orientation of a local labour market and workforce system, there must be consistent and reliable information for the decision makers to draw upon. Unfortunately, Ontario's local labour markets lack this kind of consistent and reliable information, especially in job vacancy and local level data. The result is that much remains unknown about urban labour markets. Information that does exist tends to be at too broad a geographical scale. For example, Statistics Canada reports on unemployment data at the EI Regional level, but such statistics encompass multiple municipalities and cut across different jurisdictions. Were such data to be available more readily, local decision makers could tailor their decisions in relevant ways.

> **CMSM/DSSAB recommendation:**
> ➜ Establish a *more relevant data and labour market information system* to identify broad trends and local issues.

5. **Flexibility.** The need for relevant local information is intimately linked to the need for flexibility when designing locally appropriate

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20. There is also the need for political leadership at the local level. The active support of local elected officials increases the credibility and visibility of the group. See Allison Bramwell, "Networks are not enough: Urban governance and workforce development in three Ontario cities," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Toronto, 2010.

solutions to workforce problems. Though provincial policies are typically rooted in a "provincial" understanding of an issue, the wide variations across Ontario often render these generic solutions irrelevant for local application. Particularly in the realm of local workforce development, the economic circumstances differ greatly from big city to small town, from the urban south to the remote north.

Using the example of unemployment, in May 2010 the unemployment rate ranged from a low of 5.3 percent in Kingston and 6 percent in Ottawa to a high of 12.1 percent in northern Ontario and 12 percent in Windsor. Combine this with the fact that the labour markets in Ottawa and Kingston tend towards institutional and government employment, while Windsor's is oriented to manufacturing, northern Ontario focuses on natural resources, and one quickly discovers that a single provincial workforce development strategy is less than practical. The solution, instead, is a degree of flexibility for communities to build local workforce systems that are appropriate for the local context.

Figure 7: Unemployment rate by EI Region, Ontario, April 2010

EI Region	Unemployment Rate %
Northern Ontario	12.1
Windsor	12
Niagara	11.3
Sudbury	11
Oshawa	10.4
Huron	10
Kitchener	9.5
Central Ontario	9.4
Toronto	9.1
Eastern Ontario	8.7
St. Catharines	8.7
London	8.1
South Central Ontario	8
Hamilton	7.9
Thunder Bay	7
Ottawa	6.2
Kingston	5.3

Source: Statistics Canada, Labour Statistics Division, *Employment Insurance Statistics* (June 2010).

4.4 The need for inclusiveness

The macro level of the local workforce system should be expansive and bring in many institutions not typically associated with workforce development. For example, while colleges and universities are usually linked into a workforce development system, elementary and secondary school boards are less so. Yet, the successful integration of workers is predicated on their graduating high school with a set of skills that can be applied in the workforce.

> **CMSM/DSSAB recommendation:**
> ➔ Cultivate an *inclusive approach* to local workforce development programs with participation from multiple sectors and employers of all sizes.

The seeds of this success are not planted in secondary school either, but in the youngest years of elementary school and even preschool. Consider the rhetoric surrounding Ontario's full-day early learning program, introduced in 2010. In the words of the provincial government, this program for 4- and 5-year-old children will not only help more students achieve success at school, but ultimately will build "a well-educated workforce" that will help to "create a stronger economy for the future."[21]

It is incumbent upon municipal service managers, therefore, to build bridges to their local school boards when constructing the local workforce development system. The risk in not drawing in schools is already evident in the current social assistance system. Students who graduate high school without the requisite skills necessary to attach to the workforce find it challenging to find jobs that provide sufficient income to support themselves and their families. They turn to the municipal service managers for help, enter the world of social assistance, and move further and further away from self-sufficiency.

> *Students who receive proper supports within the school system will have a greater chance to graduate—thus being readier to join the workforce and less likely to get caught in the cycle of poverty and welfare.*

Closer partnerships among school boards, CMSMs and DSSABs, and local employers can emphasize long-term skills development necessary for employment success. By adopting a workforce development perspective to these school-employer relationships, students can receive relevant supports within the school system, can graduate better equipped to join the workforce, and can be less likely to get caught in the cycle of poverty and welfare.

Niagara Region offers an excellent example of these school-based linkages. The Trades Awareness Project responded to a recommendation that Niagara needed to elevate the status of trades in the Niagara Region. This partnership between the Job Gym, District School Board of Niagara, Niagara Catholic District School Board, the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities' Apprenticeship Board, and a variety of local tradespeople was geared to Grade 7 and 8 students and their parents in two local school boards. The goal was to

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21. Ministry of Education, "Full-Day Learning for Four- and Five-Year-Olds," <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/earlylearning/> Accessed May 24, 2010.

expose students to skilled trades prior to selecting their high school courses for the following school year. The initiative tracked the number of transitioning students who identified a trade-related educational pathway at the high-school level. Through the project, 1,334 students from 34 schools in the Niagara Region attended the Trade Awareness Program, and 72 percent felt differently about trades after attending the Trade Awareness Program.

Niagara's Trades Awareness Project is but one example of the need to understand the preventative benefits of a strong labour market development strategy. By creating an economic environment that offers opportunities for workers, and by developing workers with the necessary skills that match those opportunities, communities can be proactive rather than reactive. In this way, social assistance can be transformed from being a program of last resort that keeps people from falling further behind to being a proactive program that helps people move ahead.

A well-developed local and regional employment system connects employers to each other and to workers, local governments to the business community, and economic development plans to human services. When a community has a vibrant demand-oriented approach to workforce development, with high levels of collaboration, leadership, and inclusiveness, there are greater opportunities for economic security and community prosperity. Employed citizens pay income taxes, contribute to the property tax base, and use their purchasing power by buying goods and services locally. This in turn creates communities that are seen as desirable places to live with a comprehensive system of supports and services that foster a high quality of life.

5. The micro scale of local workforce development—Supply-side strategies

Having a robust macro-scale strategy for developing a local economy and knowing the labour force needs for the next decade or two are meaningless without a simultaneous effort to ensure that there are appropriate people to step in and make that economy run. The financial and organizational investments by businesses and government in creating a local workforce development program are insufficient without parallel efforts to invest directly in the people of a community.

This is where the micro scale of local workforce development operates, with a supply-side orientation that helps individuals gain the capacity to become attached to the labour force on an on-going basis.

When we speak of a workforce development strategy at the individual level, we refer both to employment supports that help people become sustainably attached to the work *and* to the income supports that provide a level of economic security while moving toward employment.

Employment supports within micro-scale workforce development fall into two categories:

Local workforce development at the micro scale means ensuring that individuals can become sustainably attached to the labour force.

This happens through programs directly related to employment and through ancillary support services addressing a person's other social and economic needs.

- those directly related to employment,
- and those ancillary support services addressing a person's other social and economic needs.

5.1 Direct employment supports

Those services directly related to individual employment readiness are natural micro-scale activities for local workforce development.

Most prominent among these activities are the various province-wide services available through Employment Ontario (EO). For example, through EO, clients can have access to resume writing workshops and interview skills development. There are career counsellors and self-service job listings, as well as referrals to training programs and other educational opportunities. For experienced workers hit hard by the

recession of 2008-09, the provincial Second Career program provided laid-off workers with up to $28,000 to support skills training in a new field. The Targeted Initiative for Older Workers, jointly funded by the federal and provincial governments, was intended to unemployed older workers (ages 55 to 64) increase their ability to find and keep a job amidst a changing labour market.

- In addition to these province-wide programs, there are often local and regional initiatives to develop micro-scale programs that address unique local circumstances. Thus, a new bottling plant might be opening, so the local employment training centres will prepare people to work within a factory-assembly line setting. A region might decide, through its economic development plan, to develop its tourism and hospitality industry. In response, the local college then creates a hospitality training program. These programs to improve the supply of workers directly feed off of the macro-scale economic development activities discussed in the previous section. Those regional perspectives on the direction of a local economy help employment services staff to direct individuals into particular training or career paths.

> **CMSM/DSSAB recommendation:**
> ➔ Develop *local training opportunities* that match labour market forecasts.

These direct supply-side readiness activities of local workforce development make the most sense for those individuals who have a high degree of attachability. Perhaps these are experienced workers who have been laid off. Perhaps they are women looking to return to the workforce. For these populations, the primary need is a service need—direct employment services that can lead to sustainable work. If there are income support needs, they are usually short-term and time-limited in nature, resulting from temporary detachment from the workforce. (See section 5.6.)

5.2 Ancillary employment supports.

Not all potential workers are ready to be attached to the workforce, however. There are individuals for whom workforce attachment remains several steps away. It is here—at the micro level of a workforce development system—where the ancillary support services come into play.

> **CMSM/DSSAB recommendation:**
> ➔ Work with internally and with community partners to *strengthen the ancillary support process*.

Ancillary support services refer to that broad range of human services and programs that support and stabilize people. Although not always directly related to employment, they are often those services that can mean the difference between successive employment failures or sustainable labour force attachments—the difference between economic dependence and economic self-sufficiency. (Figure 8) In fact, for many municipal service managers, the primary function of employment services is to help people to access the other human services they need, rather than to directly help with employment readiness. Sometimes, for example, all a person needs is access to child care to make their employment situation workable.

> *Ancillary support services can mean the difference between successive employment failures or sustainable labour force attachments.*

Figure 8: Selected municipally funded and delivered ancillary services

Barrier	Ancillary service
Homelessness	Shelter-to-homes programs to move people from homelessness into stable housing
Language barriers faced by newcomers to Canada	English-as-second-language classes
Literacy barriers, whether in English or in a person's native tongue	Adult literacy classes
Concurrent disorders faced by individuals with co-occurring addictions and mental health challenges	Individual and group counseling
Energy poverty	Energy security programs
Food insecurity	Food security programs
Multigenerational dependency faced by families with an extended history of social welfare dependence	Intensive case-management

One such example is mental health supports. Though not a direct employment service—mental health counseling is clearly different from learning how to interview—the provision of mental health services helps "people's sense of competence and control," which translates into the stability necessary for sustainable employment. The links between mental health and employment was confirmed by the Ontario Minister of Health and Long-term Care's Minister's Advisory

Group in its 2009 consultation paper on mental health. That paper contained a proposal that a seamless system of mental health services be "coordinated with other health services, and with other services that people with lived experience use, such as education, social services, housing, and employment programs." The absence of such integration has real implications for economic self-sufficiency among individuals with mental health challenges. As the consultation paper explained, "workplace policies and practices that do not accommodate people with mental illness or addiction lead to structural discrimination in employment."[22]

Providing such mental health supports is not only important for an individual's economic self-sufficiency, but it is also cost-effective. In a 2003 review of the cost effectiveness of supported employment programs, Justine Schnieder noted the "growing interest in supported employment within mental health services." She was particularly interested in the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) form of supported employment, which embeds employment supports into mental health care in a time-unlimited setting. The integration of employment supports with ancillary support services led to individuals being able to find and stay in employment longer, thus keeping them off of more expensive income assistance programs.[23]

A workforce development system that provides sustainable resources for these individual-level support services is a system that affirms an integrated service perspective—a person's mental health, literacy, and language needs are fundamentally linked to their employment needs.

The crucial role of ancillary services is particularly evident in promoting self-sufficiency among individuals who face multiple barriers to sustainable labour force attachment. A non-English-speaking immigrant with a physical disability and mental health challenges faces many obstacles to sustainable attachment to the workforce.

> *Homeless people—and even "couch surfers" who rely on friends and families for temporary shelter—have an instability that can interfere with on-going work.*

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22. Minister's Advisory Group, *Every door is the right door: Towards a 10-year mental health and addictions strategy.* (Toronto: Ministry of Health and Long-term Care, July 2008).

23. Justine Schneider. "Is supported employment cost effective? A review." *International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation.* 7 (2003): 145-56.

Overcoming a single obstacle often requires several months or even years of assistance; overcoming multiple barriers is even more challenging.

A similar problem exists with homelessness, where the instability of not having a stable place to live presents a major impediment to becoming integrated into the labour force. Even those who are only at risk for homelessness—the "couch surfers" who rely on friends and families for temporary shelter—have an instability that can interfere with on-going work. These populations might be otherwise eligible for Ontario Works employment services, for example, but have extensive housing and mental health needs that must be addressed before they are even able to contemplate sustainable labour force attachment.

5.3 Integrated human services as a micro-scale workforce development strategy

> **CMSM/DSSAB recommendation:**
> ➜ Strengthen the *internal human services integration focus* to ensure that clients in need of employment supports can be supported with other services.

It is this integrated service perspective that created the Hostels to Homes project in Ontario. Begun as a pilot project in 2006, Hostels to Homes emerged from the Ministry of Community and Social Services as a way to enhance the coordination and integration of housing and other supports so as to transition people out of emergency hostels and move them into sustainable affordable accommodation. Six communities—Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, London, Kingston, and Windsor—embarked on projects, each with particular local flavours. In Hamilton, for example, the project used the monthly hostelling costs to enrol participants in Ontario Works and then applied the balance of the funds to costs associated with programming for housing, mental and physical health, addiction, and education. In Toronto, participating clients received intensive housing follow up supports for tenancy, life and social skill development; income, economic, employment and training supports; coordinated case management & access to services; client health and self-care; housing stabilization; and informal counselling and crisis support.

A similar integrated project was the Taking Health Care Home Community Employment Pathways initiative in Seattle, Washington. This homelessness employment project put forth three intertwined goals, to:

- Increase the number of homeless and formerly homeless individuals in the workforce
- Expand access to existing employment services and expanding investment of dollars from multiple systems to address education and training needs of homeless job seekers
- Improve cross-systems (housing, treatment services, and employment services) linkages so that homeless job seekers have the housing, support, and training to be successfully employed

The interconnectedness of housing, employment, and treatment, was visually described as a "proverbial three-legged stool," that "must be balanced by investment and coordination across these services in order to offer a stable platform for people to launch and maintain their attachment to the labour market."[24]

5.4 Key factors in successful strategies

The Ontario-grown Hostels to Homes projects and the Seattle-based Taking Health Care Home initiative are pointing the way towards service integration as key to helping people overcome housing, mental health, and other barriers to sustainable economic self-sufficiency. These micro-scale examples of local workforce development are, in essence, drawing on similar principles that lead to success at the macro scale of local workforce development. For example, the need for collaborative relationships, information, and flexibility, are all important at the broad systemic level, but also at the more narrow individual level.

1. **Collaborative relationships.** A workforce development system that operates only at the highest systemic levels will result in a system that offers sustainable employment but has unsustainable workers. Building relationships at the macro level across municipal governments and local businesses is important, but there must also be micro-scale relationships built with the people who will work in those businesses. This is where the case management process steps in to play an important relationship-building role.

   Successful outcomes for an individual client will likely emerge when there is a strong relationship with a case worker or employment counsellor, who can guide clients through the system

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24. *Developing community employment pathways for homeless job seekers in King County and Washington State, 7.*

and not just let them try to navigate on their own. People are more receptive to help when they feel a level of trust and comfort with the person helping them. When this relationship ends (caseworker reassigned, file is "transferred") it forces the person to have to build start the process over again. This can be challenging when the individual already brings a complex background.

2. **Information**. Someone looking to become attached to the workforce needs information—about themselves, the labour market, and the opportunities that are available. There must be useful and up-to-date websites, for example, that provide detailed information about specific jobs available and about broader employment trends.   Information alone is not the answer, however. Many individuals, particularly those with language or literacy challenges, might require training to help them access, understand, and apply the information to their particular circumstances.

3. **Flexibility**. Not everyone will move from dependence to independence in the same way. Not everyone has the same skill sets or the same interests. Even people with the same skill sets might have other differences that make a single model of service delivery impractical. There must be flexibility in how services are delivered even if the outcome target is the same.

5.5 Appropriate outcomes for workforce development

One question that invariably arises when discussing local workforce development concerns results and outcomes is: How should a results-based system measure the "success" of such efforts to help individuals overcome their barriers and harness their assets? The solution cannot be to leave such individuals out of a workforce development system altogether simply because they cannot sustainably attach to the workforce, nor is the solution to create a two-tier system that rewards services to the easily attachable clients and downplays the support work done for those with more barriers to attachment.

> **Provincial recommendation:**
> ➔ Develop an *outcome-based orientation* to employment services with a range of "successful outcomes" that include part-time and volunteer attachment. This outcome-based perspective must encompass all employment services programs, whether through more universal programs of Employment Ontario or the targeted social assistance programs of Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

Rather, a workforce development strategy must clearly develop a continuum of labour force attachment that recognizes the definitional flexibility of "attachment." At one end of the continuum might be an outcome whereby people are employed to the fullest extent of their abilities. For workers with no barriers or those that are more easily overcome (ESL classes for non-English-speaking individuals, for example), success can continue to be measured in traditional ways—sustainable, paid employment.

For those with more complex situations, where permanent or long-term workforce attachment is less likely, alternative

Barriers to employment should not become gateways to poverty.

definitions of "attachment" must be considered. A person with many barriers to traditional employment might be deemed "attached" if they successfully obtain part-time work or even become an unpaid volunteer. [25]

In some cases, however, all the available ancillary support services and individual-level interventions are still not enough to put a person in a position to achieve self-sufficiency through work. Perhaps the barrier is a physical disability or a mental health disability. Whatever the reason might be, for some people no level of human service support will be enough to enable them to attach to the workforce in a sustainable way.

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[25]. Redefining labour force attachment to include volunteerism has many benefits. Among younger citizens, volunteerism can serve as a meaningful path to longer-term labour force attachment. Youth who volunteer can learn skills necessary for workplace success, learn to accept and carry through with responsibilities, and can be exposed to new areas of work they would otherwise have not known about. For older adults, volunteerism generates economic and personal benefits. One study of volunteerism among older adults in the United States estimated that volunteering generates approximately $162 billion annually for the U.S. economy. Another study found that "the mental health benefits of engagement are clear for older adults. Volunteerism can soften the effects of aging on mortality rates, help offset the loss of purpose felt by many older adults, and lead to an overall improved quality of life. Volunteerism also reduces despair and depression, two conditions strongly linked to heart disease and worsening physical health in older adults."

For working-age adults, volunteering can bridge gaps between employment and provide exposure to new areas of work. The downside of volunteerism is the risk of people getting caught in a cycle of unpaid volunteering that does little for career development. Too few volunteer positions are structured within a workforce development strategy, where volunteers can gain transferable skills that help them to land a paid job. As well, too few organizations look to hire permanent staff from the ranks of unpaid volunteers, despite this seemingly attractive pool of talent already familiar with an organization's activities. See Richard Johnson and Simone Schaner, *Value of Unpaid Activities of Older Americans Tops $160 Billion Per Year* (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, September 2005); Robert Grimm Jr., Kimberly Spring, and Nathan Dietz, *The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research* (Washington, D.C.: Corporation for National and Community Service, April 2007). Both reports were cited in Doug Howgate, *Increasing Volunteerism Among Older Adults: Benefits and Strategies for States* (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, May 2008).

At this point, the "successful outcome" is one where the municipal service case manager steps in, determines that a local workforce development strategy is not appropriate, and helps those individuals to move to an income security program. Such a move should then trigger the full supports of Canada's income security system to ensure that a person's barriers to sustainable employment do not become a gateway to poverty. Whether it is the Ontario Disability Support Program, some form of guaranteed income, or a combination of federal and provincial supports, these pension-type benefits must be provided at sustainable levels that allow a person to live with dignity.

Even for those people who shift to some form of disability pension, the emphasis on "attachment" and involvement in the community should not be lost. As the 1988 *Transitions* report noted, those who are dependent on income support programs "must be actively supported in their efforts to make such contributions" to the community.[26]

5.6 The role of income supports in a workforce development strategy

This point about the need for a pension-style support for individuals who cannot be sustainably attached to the workforce brings the discussion to a larger policy question about the interplay between economic security, workforce development, and income support.

> **Provincial recommendation:**
> ➜ The 3 layers of a new economic security system should include:
> 1. Short-term temporary bridge assistance for individuals with strong levels of attachment or potential attachment.
> 2. Medium-term income supports for individuals receiving more intensive case management services (often with associated ancillary services).
> 3. Long-term pension-style supports for individuals unable to become sustainably attached to the workforce.

It is clear that the micro scale of workforce development is designed to provide the maximum opportunities for all individuals to become attached to the workforce to the greatest extent possible. Yet a focus on employment does not mean that income supports are discarded. Instead, a new economic security system must restructure public assistance in a way that directly supports individuals in their path up the ladder of economic self-sufficiency.

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26. *Transitions*, 10.

Specifically, as Ontario embarks on a Social Assistance Review, we recommend that a new workforce-development-oriented economic security system be implemented that includes three layers of income supports:

1. **Short-term temporary bridge assistance for those individuals with strong levels of attachment or potential attachment.** There are periods in every economic cycle where people who otherwise have no difficulty obtaining and retaining employment face layoffs or other work disruptions. In such situations, these individuals have less need for intensive employment supports as much as they require temporary income benefits to help them bridge a gap in employment.

   Although federal Employment Insurance is intended to provide such supports, many people are attached to the workforce but still do not qualify for EI benefits. Moreover, current social assistance rules generally require people to reduce their assets to poverty levels before they can access temporary benefits. A transformed social assistance system that emphasizes workforce attachment must, therefore, include a component that helps people to bridge these temporary gaps without forcing people to descend into poverty first. After all, many in this category have a high or potentially high level of economic self-sufficiency, and only need short-term supports to maintain that level while re-entering the labour market.

2. **Medium-term income supports for individuals receiving more intensive case management services (often with associated ancillary services).** These populations must be seen as being on the path towards economic self-sufficiency, but in need of greater help than those in the first group above. For many in this group, before they can even begin to think about employment-related activities, they need to be assured that their basic needs (housing, food, clothing) are met and feel secure that they will continue to be met. These income supports must be provided at sufficient levels to enable the recipients to focus on the ancillary services that will help

them to overcome barriers to workforce attachment rather than have to worry about basic survival.[27]

3. **Long-term pension-style supports for individual unable to become sustainably attached to the workforce.** Someone who has an inability to achieve sustainable workforce attachment still deserves to be supported at economically sufficient levels, and these pension-style benefits must provide that level of sufficiency, security and dignity.

The micro scale of workforce development has many layers. There is no single model for helping individuals climb the ladder of self-sufficiency through workforce attachment. Some people are readier than others, some have more complex needs than other. The responses must therefore encompass a range of activities, services—and income supports—to help people where they are.

The multiplicity of response reminds us that Ontario's workforce development-oriented economic security system is only one piece of a broader Canadian economic security system. It also returns us to Maimonides, who has anticipated our discussion in his instructions to provide "*a gift or a loan* or become a partner or find him work, so as to strengthen him until he no longer needs to ask." For those who can work, we provide it. For those who cannot, we provide the gift or a loan. In either case, it is our communal responsibility to ensure that every person is provided with the means to achieve self-sufficiency— which in turn can lead to a wider level of community sustainability, success, and prosperity.

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27. The experiences of deinstitutionalization of individuals from mental health facilities offers an important— and cautionary—parallel to the question of moving people off of social assistance. In that instance, people were sent out into their communities with very few supports to replace the intensive care of institutions. Lacking a supportive social infrastructure and an economic framework for self-sufficiency, many of these deinstitutionalized individuals were unable to cope with their new environments. The result has been high rates of homelessness, addictions, and other challenges to this population.

6. The Municipal human service manager: Community stewardship and service integration

Having presented an economic security model that emphasizes workforce attachment as a vehicle towards economic self-sufficiency, we now turn to the role of the municipal human service system manager in helping Ontario to achieve this model.

We believe that Ontario's Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) are the most logical—and most effective— bodies to oversee this system. We therefore recommend that CMSMs and DSSABs and the province jointly develop an accountability framework that gives service managers the authority, flexibility, and resources to work with their local and regional partners in creating local workforce development programs.

> **Provincial recommendation:**
> ➔ CMSMs and DSSABs and the province should jointly develop an accountability framework that gives service managers the authority, flexibility, and resources to work with their local and regional partners in creating local workforce development programs.

Our recommendations for a central role for CMSMs and DSSABs stem from the fact that municipal human service system managers possess three characteristics that are crucial to promoting workforce development and economic self-sufficiency:

- local accountability through community stewardship
- human service integration
- connections to macro and micro scales of workforce development

6.1 Local accountability through community stewardship

Of all levels of government in Canada, municipal governments are the most directly responsible for creating livable, healthy communities. Local councils have an interest and an immediate stake in the economic and social health of the people and businesses in their communities. It is fair to say that that the municipal role as community steward is unreplicated at any other level of government or by any other non-governmental agency.

> *The municipal role as "community steward" is unreplicated at any other level of government or by any other non-governmental agency.*

The notion of "community stewardship" has its roots in the world of philanthropy. We typically associate stewardship with voluntary agencies that work very locally to support neighborhoods and build communities. Clearly, voluntary, not-for-profit, and other third sector agencies are essential for a healthy community. Communities cannot exist without a vibrant involvement of those who look after one another. A place where citizens look only to their government for solutions and not to each other is not as healthy a place as it could be.[28]

Still, the fact remains that local government has a broader, more encompassing, and more accountable mandate than does any single philanthropic organization. There is a direct reciprocal relationship between a local government and its citizenry. There is often a direct personal relationship—as neighbor, relative, friend, customer, member of the electorate—between government and citizen. Even if the relationship is functional (councilors need to take care of their constituents so they can be reelected), that functionality ultimately benefits the citizens (roads are paved, water is safe, public health is maintained, social supports meet defined needs). People also do not always distinguish which order of government is ultimately responsible for solving a problem, and very often end up calling on their local government to provide such a solution.

It makes sense, then to give municipal human service managers with greater say in the labour market and workforce development planning for their community, because they have much to gain from having local citizens engaged in the labor market. After all, low workforce attachment leads to increased social service caseloads, which translates into higher service costs and lower tax revenues for service

Municipal human service managers have much to gain from having local citizens engaged in the labor market.

managers and municipal governments. Conversely, lower caseloads because of higher workforce attachment puts less strain on the service

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28. In discussing municipalities, local government, and the municipal human service manager, we recognize that Ontario's northern communities have a different municipal-human service relationship. The DSSAB, or District Social Service Administration Board, is administratively separate from any specific local government structure. This relationship can pose challenges for local planning and service delivery, because there is not the embedded administrative link between the human services and the rest of the municipal structure. On the other hand, with a wider geographic reach, DSSABs have an ability to see the larger systems picture, a perspective that is particularly important in labour market planning and workforce development for markets that cross municipal jurisdictions.

system and generates more tax revenues, which in turn creates more community prosperity. In this way, municipal service managers are accountable to their citizens and their communities in ways that colleges or universities, training firms or job coaches, are not.

6.2 Connections to macro and micro scales of workforce development

CMSMs and DSSABs are also uniquely connected to the macro and micro scales of local workforce development systems in ways that those other employment-related bodies are not. At the macro level, municipal human service managers are highly involved in regional discussions and provincial discussions (both directly and through OMSSA) about workforce development and economic security. Through the Provincial-Municipal Fiscal and Service Delivery Review, the Human Services Implementation Steering Committee, and the Local Workforce Development Reference Group, CMSMs and DSSABs have been successful in influencing policies and programs for the entire range of human services.

At the same time, CMSMs and DSSABs take those policies and programs and implement them within an integrated service system at the individual (micro) level. They do this through direct employment for Ontario Works clients, as Employment Ontario full-suite service providers or stand-alone Employment Resource Centres, or through the ancillary service programs.

This multi-level involvement contrasts, for example, with colleges or training offices that neither link upward to human service policy development nor downward to the individual and the wider spectrum of social needs (no connection to child care, housing, or income security).

6.3 The geographic challenges of modern employment

The need for the municipal service manager to be actively involved in a new economic security system that actively bridges local workforce development and economic development activities is further reinforced by the geographical realities of modern employment.

In the 21st century, each household is at the centre of its own city with the various tasks and activities radiating outward.

In the employment environment of the 21st century, workers cross boundaries and flow freely between jurisdictions. Moreover, people cross boundaries in all parts of their

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lives, not just for work, but also for education, recreation, shopping, and so forth. Historian Robert Fishman has described this as a "city a la carte," whereby individuals create their own set of paths. People will drive 40 minutes in one direction to go to work, 20 minutes in another for school, 15 in a third to do their shopping. In this city, the notion of a central city is flipped on its head; each household is at the centre of its own city with the various tasks and activities radiating outward.[29]

Clearly, people do not live their lives within strict geographical boundaries—and they especially do not work within strict geographical boundaries.[30] In Ontario, the geography of work has steadily expanded in recent years both in space and time. Commuting distances increased between 2001 and 2006 for most census metropolitan areas in Ontario. (Figure 9). In both Oshawa and Barrie, both fairly urban centres in their own right, about one-

Figure 9. Median commuting distance, census metropolitan areas, Ontario, 2001 and 2006

Census Metropolitan Area	Median commuting distance (km)		Change 2001-2006 (km)
	2001	2006	
Ottawa - Gatineau	7.9	8.1	+0.2
Kingston	5.4	5.9	+0.5
Peterborough	5	5.1	+0.1
Oshawa	10.7	11	+0.3
Toronto	9.2	9.4	+0.2
Hamilton	8.2	8.3	+0.1
St. Catharines - Niagara	5.5	5.9	+0.4
Kitchener	5.6	5.8	+0.2
Brantford	5.9	5.3	-0.6
Guelph	4.5	5	+0.5
London	5.4	5.6	+0.2
Windsor	6.1	6.6	+0.5
Barrie	8.6	9	+0.4
Greater Sudbury	6.5	6.9	+0.4
Thunder Bay	4.7	4.7	no change

Source: Statistics Canada, Commuting Patterns and Places of Work of Canadians, 2006 Census: Data tables, figures and maps, Table 10.

29. Robert Fishman, "Megalopolis Unbound: America's New City." *Wilson Quarterly* (1989).

30. A Brookings Institute study of private-sector jobs in 98 American metropolitan areas found that only 21 percent of employees in the top 98 metro areas work within three miles of downtown, while over twice that share (45 percent) work more than 10 miles away from the city center. Moreover, between 1998 and 2006, 95 out of 98 metro areas saw a decrease in the share of jobs located within three miles of downtown. Elizabeth Kneebone," Job Sprawl Revisited: The Changing Geography of Metropolitan Employment." (New York: Brookings Institute. 2009) <www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/rc/reports/2009/0406_job_sprawl_kneebone/20090406_jobsprawl_kneebone.pdf

third of all commuters still were traveling more than 25 kilometers to work. (Figure 10.)[31] In terms of time, between 1992 and 2005, workers were traveling longer between work and home, with more than half traveling more than 60 minutes round trip to work by 2005 (of which almost 30 percent had a round trip of over 90 minutes). (Figure 10.)

Figure 10: Duration of round trip between home and work by region, 1992-2005

Commuting duration	1992	1998	2005	Change 1992-2005
Less than 30 minutes	24%	23%	19%	-5%
30 to 59 minutes	34%	28%	28%	-6%
60 to 89 minutes	21%	24%	25%	+4%
90 minutes and over	21%	25%	28%	+7%

Source: Martin Turcotte, *General Social Survey on Time Use: Cycle 19, The Time it Takes to Get to Work and Back (*2005): Table 2: Duration of round trip between home and work by region, 1992-2005,

Complicating the issue further, the jobs that people are commuting to are increasingly dispersed across the landscape, rather than in traditional business centres. In Toronto, for example, the number of people who worked in a peripheral municipality (as opposed to the central business district) rose by 13 percent from 2001 and 2006. Furthermore, the rates of growth of jobs in outlying areas outpaced that of central areas for almost every major metroplitan region in Ontario.[32] In short, the traditional image of the commuter as someone "who leaves home in the morning to travel downtown to work and who makes the return trip in the evening" has faded. In its place are new images of workers engaged in long-distance, cross-jurisdictional, periphery-to-periphery commuting and even reverse urban-to-rural commuting.[33]

The cross-jurisdictional nature of work is most evident in Ontario's urban areas. Halton Region, for example, sits between the City of

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31. Statistics Canada, Statistics Canada, Commuting Patterns and Places of Work of Canadians, 2006 Census: Data tables, figures and maps, Table 10: Proportion of the median commuting distance and commuting distance of workers, census metropolitan areas, 2001 and 2006.

32. Statistics Canada, *Commuting Patterns and Places of Work of Canadians, 2006 Census: Portrait of census metropolitan areas and their municipalities: Place of work*.

33. Quotation is from Spencer Harris, Alessandro Alasia, and Ray D. Bollman, "Rural Commuting: Its Relevance to Rural and Urban Labour Markets," Statistics Canada, Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin Catalogue no. 21-006-X Vol. 7, No. 6 (September 2008). For a more detailed discussion of the urban-rural employment relationship, see Kamar Ali, M. Rose Olfert, and Mark D. Partridge, "Urban Footprints in Rural Canada: Employment Spillovers by City Size," June 19, 2008, http://www.crerl.usask.ca/research/Urban_Footprints_in_Rural_Canada_19_Jun_2008.pdf.

Hamilton on the west and Peel Region and Toronto on the east, both of which are major employment centres. Not surprisingly, 50 percent of Halton's workers worked in a different census division (which one is not identified). York, Peel, and Durham regions on the boundaries of Toronto have similarly high percentages of non-local employment.[34]

In northern Ontario communities as well, one finds cross-jurisdictional commuting and other patterns of employment-related migration. It is not uncommon for OW clients in the Algoma DSSAB to find work and commute to Sault Ste. Marie or for people to cross between Parry Sound and North Bay (from the Parry Sound DSSAB to Nipissing DSSAB). In Kirkland Lake, in the Timiskaming DSSAB, mining shift work creates a different commuting pattern. There, one mine operation operates with 7-day shifts (one week on, one week off.) Many mine employees have families who live elsewhere, commute to Kirkland Lake for their week-long shift, and then return home. Sometimes they will share an apartment with another out-of-towner who works on the opposite shift. This negatively impacts the local economy because these workers will spend little of their income in Kirkland Lake (other than the cost of apartment and food), and instead spend their employment income in their municipality where their family resides. Yet Kirkland Lake and the Timiskaming DSSAB must still provide a range of services for these commuting miners. In other parts of northern Ontario as well, the seasonality of work in the forestry sector means that workers will likely migrate from one part of northern Ontario to another in search of work.

These individualized geographic patterns have direct implications for the labour market and present a geographical conundrum for municipal service managers for trying to strengthen links between people and employment opportunities. If each household

> *If each household has its own geographic logic, then it becomes increasingly difficult to match workers to work.*

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34. Of course, the regionalization of work is only beneficial to those who have the ability to get to that work. For those without "regional" modes of transportation—read: cars—the availability of well-paid work in a new manufacturing facility 25 kilometers away is meaningless in an environment where convenient, affordable public transportation is absent. A study of social welfare programs in rural Missouri highlighted the problems of transportation, where "physical barriers such as rivers and major highways, coupled with inadequate public transportation systems, preclude single service locations or impede coordination between agencies that are not in close proximity to each other." Nancy Pindus, Robin Koralek, Karin Martinson, and John Trutko, *Coordination and integration of welfare and workforce development systems* (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).

has its own geographic logic, and if there are no clear geographic patterns for commuting, then it becomes increasingly difficult to match workers to work. Yet, employment supports are often provided geographically, with service providers focusing on the workers and employers in specific areas only. This conundrum of geography not only poses challenges to individuals looking to connect to the workforce, but also to service providers. In Missouri, service managers charged with coordinating welfare programs contended with "large multi-county service areas" and had to work with "several county welfare offices, each with its own local needs and personalities."[35]

To some degree, the challenges of cross-jurisdictional labour forces puts municipal services managers in competition with their neighbours who are also developing their own local workforce programs. Service managers face a choice: do they focus on serving the employment needs of the people in their community (regardless of where the people end up working) or do they focus on serving the staffing needs of the employers in their community (regardless of where the employees come from)?[36]

6.4 Overcoming the challenges of geography through human services integration

Fortunately, municipal service managers are well positioned to meet such inter-jurisdictional challenges. Directly and through organizations like OMSSA, municipal service managers speak to one another and work together to solve these issues. Moreover, because the challenges of geography are not unique to workforce development, municipal service managers can find solutions in other sectors. In the area of child care fee subsidy, for example, CMSMs in the GTA confronted the cases of parents who live in one jurisdiction and take their children to child care in another jurisdiction closer to work. Who should be responsible for the fee subsidies—the service manager where the parents live or where they work? They worked together and negotiated protocols to solve this problem.

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35. Pindus, Koralek, et al. *Coordination and integration of welfare and workforce development systems.*

36. The question of cross-jurisdictional mobility is neither theoretical nor confined to the world of employment supports. In a 2010 ruling, an arbitrator found that payments for social housing should be apportioned based on where an individual applicant comes from rather than based on some form of a population proportion or weighted assessment. In communities with high transience, this ruling has the potential for creating funding imbalances across service manager areas.

The cross-jurisdictional nature of employment and the difficulties that many vulnerable individuals have in accessing work offer an important opportunity for municipal human services managers to bring a human services integration approach to workforce development and economic security.

The cross-jurisdictional nature of employment offers an opportunity to push the envelope of human services integration.

Ontario's municipal human service managers have a built-in ability to manage the range of integrated human services that support people in their journey to self-sufficiency. This is particularly relevant to the issue of individuals facing multiple barriers, as municipal service managers have a public responsibility to work towards the success of *all* of their residents in ways that other organizations do not. They can harness their resources to help these people achieve a level of self-sufficiency that is reasonable and appropriate.

Individuals and families often have multiple needs, needs that are overlapping and intertwined. A person's employment needs are often connected to their child care needs, which are connected to their need for stable, affordable housing-all of which might be linked to their state of physical and mental health or substance abuse (or both). For example, accessibility to jobs is as much a function of accessibility to housing. The barriers of commuting can be lowered if people are able to find affordable housing closer to their work, which in turn raises individual and business productivity, increases revenues, and creates more prosperous communities. As one program in Chicago explains, "unstable and unaffordable housing markets affect businesses with increased stress levels, reduced worker productivity, and unsafe neighborhoods."[37] Yet for too long, people have been forced to receive services in a siloed and fragmented manner by having to deal with multiple case workers and tell their story multiple times.

Over the past decade or so, municipal human service managers have begun to refocus their attention on "putting people first." Whether

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37. Regional Employer-Assisted Collaboration for Housing website, <http://www.reachillinois.org/>. Through a partnership among the Metropolitan Planning Council, Housing Action Illinois, and over a dozen other organizations, REACH has helped more than 1,800 employees purchase homes since 2000 using a combination of employer-provided down payment or rental assistance. The regionalization of affordable housing programs such as found with REACH also points to the need for connecting questions of public transportation to cross-jurisdictional coordination of labour market development. Better coordination of regional public transit, for example, can help to promote economic opportunities across municipalities and can allow workers living in one area to more easily access jobs in another.

called "customer service," "service coordination," "customer focus," or the more formal "human services integration," the idea is the same—to deliver services that meet the needs of the whole person in a more integrated fashion.

The possibilities of municipal service integration extend far beyond the services that one typically associates with people's direct socio-economic needs. Particularly in southern Ontario, where CMSMs are embedded within a municipal government administrative structure, the human service system can tap into a wide range of other municipal services that help people stay attached to their local communities— parks and recreation, public health, education, libraries, arts and culture, heritage and tourism, and economic development. In this setting, the provision of affordable housing, quality child care, and sustainable employment opportunities become an important component of what creates a positive community environment.

To be sure, the challenge is more difficult in northern Ontario, where DSSABs sit separately from lower-tier municipal governments. But even here, such challenges can become opportunities, with the DSSABs combining their broad geographical understanding of the human service system with the local nuances of lower-tier municipal governments.

6.5 Embedding municipal service system management into workforce development strategies

A human services integration perspective is crucial to the success of a workforce development-oriented system for economic security system. Moreover, it is Ontario's municipal human services managers who are in the best position to bring this integrated services approach. We have made clear throughout this paper that, while workforce attachment is fundamental to long-term economic self-sufficiency, individuals very often have additional service needs.

It is essential, therefore, for the CMSMs and DSSABs to be part of the conversation about how Ontario can create a workforce development system that also encompasses the wider human services system. They must be part of the conversation to identify a common vision for Ontario, to identify appropriate outcomes for the system, and to help shape the macro and micro-scale activities for workforce development.

Conclusion: Now is the time

In 1988, the *Transitions* report described the "longing expressed by recipients to be free of social assistance and to become more independent and self-reliant." For most of these people, such independence and self-reliance would emerge from participating in paid employment. For those whose situations make it impossible to have sustainable work, "we must ensure that benefits are adequate to enable them to live in comfort and dignity."[38]

In 2010, the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council (SARAC) produced a report for the Ministry of Community and Social Services with very similar ideas. Ontario's income security system must be transformed, SARAC explained, so as to:

> **Provincial recommendation:**
> ➔ Use the recommendations of the Social Assistance Review Advisory Committee as a *starting point for transforming social assistance* and creating an economic security system.

- "contribute to labour market opportunities to ensure jobs provide real pathways out of poverty
- provide workforce development and related services to help all Ontarians do better, including support for out-of-work and underemployed Ontarians to transition to sustainable employment
- support Ontarians in good times and bad times, through liveable incomes and community supports."[39]

Though separated by over two decades, the thematic continuity between these reports might dishearten those who see the same solutions being proposed to resolve a problem that has not gone away. At the same time, though the recommendations are similar, the context is not.

Ontario's economic situation has changed, the geography of work has changed, and most of all—our social and cultural expectations have changed. Transforming social assistance into a workforce development strategy is no longer merely a "good idea," but it is

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38. *Transitions* (1988), 257-8.

39. Ontario Social Assistance Review Advisory Council, *Recommendations for an Ontario Income Security Review*" (May 2010), ii.

the only practical solution that can move Ontario forward. There is a public appetite for change and a willingness of municipal human service managers in CMSMs and DSSABs to lead this change.

Our change is not merely within the narrow confines of social assistance of one particular ministry, however. There must be a larger transformation that encompasses many provincial ministries and brings provincial and municipal partners together. There must be a wider transformation towards an economic security strategy that helps all Ontarians climb the ladder of self-sufficiency.

By focusing on workforce development at both the macro community systems level and the micro individual level, we can provincial culture of community prosperity and individual success. We will shift the conversation away from talking about individuals taxing the system by receiving social assistance and begin to talk about investing in those same people and their ability to contribute to the tax system through sustainable employment. An investment in the long-term attachment of people to work and support for those who are unable to do so is an investment in our communities and our province.

The time is right for Ontario to root itself in an historical tradition and to help all its citizens climb the ladder of self-sufficiency, to the highest rung of personal dignity and economic security.

Who is OMSSA?

The Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) represents Ontario's Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards (CMSMs and DSSABs), supporting the effective provision of human services across the province. Our mandate is to make positive, progressive change in the areas of social housing, homelessness prevention, social assistance, employment services, and early learning and child care services.

Human services integration. OMSSA is committed to the principles of human services integration, which we define as a system of services that is coordinated, seamless, and tailored to the needs of people so they can maximize their potential, enhance their quality of life, and contribute to their community.

Investing in people makes sense. OMSSA believes that investing in people will help to create healthy and prosperous communities. People can succeed only when they have access to adequate shelter, education, income, safety, recreation and leisure, and cultural expression. The stronger our social infrastructure—the system of social services, networks, and facilities that support people and healthy communities—the greater the opportunity for all Canadians to contribute socially and economically. Investing in people means enabling individuals to contribute to their full potential. Investing in people means working towards a society that thrives economically, socially, culturally, and politically.

Poverty reduction. At a time of economic uncertainty in Canada and across the globe, a comprehensive strategy to reduce poverty among all Canadians will build a foundation of economic certainty, confidence, and sustainability into the future. Reducing poverty strengthens individuals and families, helps our schools and businesses, and gives more people the opportunity to make meaningful contributions to our society. Poverty reduction must emerge from the investments in affordable housing, improvements in economic security, and expansion of early learning and child care opportunities. Through these efforts, poverty reduction will improve the quality of life for all Canadians, thus strengthening Canada's overall prosperity.