



Social Enterprises  
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# Social Enterprises and the Ontario Disability Support Program

## A Policy Perspective on Employing Persons with Disabilities

Gayle Broad  
Madison Saunders

**A research report prepared for the Northern Ontario, Manitoba,  
and Saskatchewan Regional Node of the Social Economy Suite**

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Entreprises sociales  
économies intelligentes  
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## **Glossary of Terms**

CCA	Canadian Cooperative Association
CCEDNet	Canadian Community Economic Development Network
CEDTAP	Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program
CAMH	Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
CED	Community Economic Development
CMHA	Canadian Mental Health Association
COIN	Community Opportunities Innovation Network Inc.
ISAC	Income Security Advocacy Centre
JRC	Jarrett Resource Centre
JV2	Jarrett Value 2 Cooperative
JVC	Jarrett Value Centre
MCSS	Ministry of Community and Social Services
OCAB	Ontario Council for Alternative Businesses
ODSP	Ontario Disability Support Program
ODSPA	Ontario Disability Support Program Act
OPADD	Ontario Partners on Aging for the Developmentally Disabled
OPDI	Ontario Peer Development Initiative
OTW	Out of This World Café
PCP	Person Centred Planning
PSPC	Peterborough Social Planning Council
NORDIK	Northern Ontario Research, Development, Ideas and Knowledge
SCAPR	Services to Children and Adults of Prescott-Russell
SDS	Sudbury Developmental Services
TEF	Toronto Enterprise Fund
VRC	Vocational Resource Centre

## 1.0 Background

The Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet) is a national association of over 250 organizations composed of practitioners, academics, policy makers and community members engaged in the social economy<sup>1</sup>. Since its inception, CCEDNet has been active in policy development to promote social economy initiatives, including improving the environment for social enterprises<sup>2</sup>.

Social enterprises are organizations which “use...earned income strategies for mission fulfillment” (Charles King, quoted in Randolph Group, 2006) and have, in part, emerged from the need for specialized employment services for vulnerable and marginalized groups. Although there is only a small body of research on social enterprises in Canada, early evidence suggests that these types of employers may be an ideal site for greater social inclusion of persons with disabilities.

In 2006 CCEDNet undertook a research initiative designed to identify areas for policy improvement related to social enterprises which employ persons in receipt of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). A recent policy forum sponsored by Ontario’s Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) (Randolph Group, 2006) indicates that there is increased interest in the province to explore public policy options for supporting social enterprises. Thus this research may be particularly significant at this time.

Four goals were established for the research:

- To expand the knowledge of policy challenges facing social enterprises which employ ODSP recipients
- To strengthen models of employment and training service delivery to recipients of ODSP
- To facilitate peer learning of social enterprise practitioners, and ODSP employment service delivery agents
- To improve income security programs across Canada through conducting high-quality research on services and programs delivered to low-income people with disabilities living in the province of Ontario.

The research began in the fall of 2006, but due to a number of factors, including some staffing changes, was not completed until the late fall of 2007. CCEDNet partnered with NORDIK and the Community Economic and Social Development program at Algoma University College to complete the research.

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<sup>1</sup> “*The Social Economy consists of association-based economic initiatives founded on values of: Service to members of community rather than generating profits; Autonomous management (not government or market controlled); Democratic decision-making; Primacy of persons and work over capital; Based on principles of participation, empowerment.*” (CCEDNet National Policy Council, Social Economy Roundtable Consultation Briefing Notes, 2005)

<sup>2</sup> See [www.ccednet.ca](http://www.ccednet.ca) for more information on the organization and its policy initiatives.

## **2.0 Methodology**

The research began with the formation of an advisory committee composed of both Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) employment service providers, and directors and managers of social enterprises which employ ODSP recipients. This advisory group had several discussions regarding the nature of their work, and the research design.

The advisory committee initially determined that a survey of social enterprises and service delivery agents should be conducted and some efforts were expended in designing a survey instrument. It became apparent however, that such a data collection tool was too ambitious for the scope of this research, and an alternative design was selected.

The final research design used four data collection methods: a literature review, focus groups and interviews; and four case studies, including two with francophone social enterprises.

A literature review was conducted using the key words: ODSP, social enterprises, persons with disabilities, employment and employment supports. The review was primarily focused on Canadian literature, but did include some literature drawn from the UK, Australia and New Zealand. The literature review revealed a gap in the literature related to this topic, with no policy analysis directly related, and only two case studies in Ontario of social enterprises employing people with disabilities.

A focus group including representatives of both service delivery agents and social enterprises was convened, and this group discussed two major questions, i.e., what is working well, and what needs to be improved. Additionally a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with advocates and social enterprise representatives. These interviews were designed to validate some of the themes emerging from the literature review and the focus groups, and were supplemented by follow-up email correspondence.

Finally, four case studies were conducted on social enterprises in Ontario which employ ODSP recipients. Of these, two were francophone, and all were selected in an attempt to capture some of the diversity of the province. Thus, one is from Toronto and employs people who are survivors of psychiatric institutions and another is drawn from Peterborough and employs people with developmental disabilities. Two social enterprises in francophone communities were also studied; Charles Printing in Hawkesbury, and the Jarrett Value 2 (JV2) used-clothing cooperative in Sudbury. (See Appendices A, B, C, and D).

## **3.0 Ontario Disability Support Program and Employment Policy**

The Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1998 (ODSPA) provides the legislative framework for the provision of financial benefits and employment support through the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Persons who are found to be financially eligible, and “disabled” as defined by the legislation may also qualify for employment supports (ISAC<sup>3</sup>, 2003).

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<sup>3</sup> ISAC is a specialty legal clinic using a variety of tactics such as law reform, community development, public legal education and test cases to address income security issues for low-income people. It provides province-wide support and leadership to a system of over seventy legal clinics and as such, has a high degree of expertise on the ODSPA and other legislation.



At the time of its introduction in 1998, the Act was touted as a program designed to “protect and preserve the benefits of persons with disabilities...while assisting them to become independent and securing employment” (ISAC, 2003:3). A review of the Act however, reveals that it does not measure up to its stated goals, although recent amendments by the Ontario government have attempted to address some of the most egregious areas. It still, however, poses a number of challenges related to the employment of persons with disabilities – some for the ODSP recipients themselves and others for their employers.

The ODSPA and the program itself has come under heavy criticism from advocacy groups for making the application process needlessly complex, and for eliminating eligibility for a large number of people with disabilities.

“This is not a system that meets the ‘unique needs’ of disabled people, as the provincial government boasted in 1998. Rather it is a system that fails to accommodate their needs”. (ISAC, 2003: 2)

Much of the criticism of the Act focuses on the application and eligibility determination process, which frequently results in initial denials of benefits, forcing persons with disabilities to go through lengthy, emotionally and logistically difficult appeal processes, often without adequate representation (ISAC, 2003). This difficult process results in the development of a ‘culture of fear’ – where the ODSP recipient quite legitimately experiences anxiety when undertaking any activity which could possibly jeopardize his/her eligibility for benefits. Since the program is needs-based, any income must be declared, and monthly reporting combined with a complex benefit calculation system, places a recipient with employment earnings at some risk.

In 2006 amendments to the Act were introduced in an attempt to address these issues, including increasing the amount of earnings and assets that a recipient can retain, and a rapid reinstatement program for those individuals whose employment earnings exceeded benefit amounts for a period, but were later reduced; however, these policy changes do not appear to be fully implemented (Letheren, 2007). Other amendments such as the extension of health benefits to those leaving ODSP for employment may also serve to assure recipients that attitudes are changing, but it is still early to assess how effective these amendments may be overall in decreasing recipients’ legitimate fears.

Under the terms of the Act, the responsibility for applying for employment services is that of the recipient and s/he does not have the right to appeal the denial of employment supports. Thus accessing the supports themselves may be a challenge, but since the issue is non-appealable, advocates have no ability to assess whether this is a valid concern.

The role of the ODSP caseworker is primarily to ensure that recipients are “employment ready” and if so, refer him/her to a service provider. Service providers are not government employees, rather they are independent contractors (some for-profit, others non-profit). Service providers are not permitted to be employers, apparently in an attempt to avoid potential conflict of

interest<sup>4</sup>. Service providers are paid on a fee-for-service basis, only after the recipient has been in receipt of paid employment for a period of 13 weeks.

The service provider is responsible for developing an employment plan with the recipient and assisting him/her in implementing it. There is some funding available on an individual basis for accommodation supports, i.e., for capital costs related to modifying the workplace to accommodate ODSP recipients.

Finally, and perhaps of most significance for this research, there is nothing in this section of the Act or in the regulations which specifically refers to social enterprises.

### **3.1 Research Findings**

The literature review explored three general topic areas:

- ODSP legislation, policies and directives
- Research on the integration of persons with disabilities into the workplace
- Research on the role social enterprises play in integrating persons with disabilities into the workplace.

Most of the literature reviewed was Canadian specific, but the European experience (e.g. Ducci et al., 2002; Spear, 2003; Spear and Bidet, 2003), which has a slightly longer history than that of Canada, was also explored.

The literature related to the topic of social economy and persons with disabilities is sparse (Spear, 2003) and in the studies that do exist, tend to be characterized by findings which are highly localized (e.g. Wilton and Schuer, 2006; Seyfang, 2001). Despite these limitations however, a number of themes emerged which can provide guidance for policy-makers, and which can also be used to interpret the data collected in this study from service providers and social enterprises employing persons with disabilities. These themes include:

- Neoliberal context for income supports and employment of persons with disabilities
- Innovation and creativity of social enterprise adaptation in meeting needs of persons with disabilities
- Social and economic benefits inherent in social enterprises' employment of persons with disabilities.

### **3.2 Neoliberal Context**

The widespread adoption of a neoliberalist agenda has impacted persons with disabilities in two ways: first, it has reformed the welfare state in a manner which places “paid work...unproblematically as the principal mechanism to secure ‘social inclusion’” (Wilton and Schuer, 2006:186) at the same time as the workplace and paid employment have been

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<sup>4</sup> The authors were advised that this section of the Act may change in 2008-09, however, at the time of finalizing this report, the changes had not yet become effective. Additionally, the expectation is that should service providers be permitted to be employers, their access to job target monies would be lost.

dramatically impacted by global economic restructuring. These two factors have resulted in a “survival-of-the-fittest” (Torjman, 2000) approach to public policy in Canada which bodes ill for any vulnerable population, particularly persons with disabilities, youth, women and other groups with disadvantages in the workplace.

The general effect of this type of legislation is a highly individualized approach to employment that places the onus for job readiness and training squarely on the shoulders of the individual. This has been characterized by an emphasis on self-employment in locales of high unemployment, and policies which explicitly state that training and job readiness supports must be designed for the shortest route to employment, rather than long-term employment opportunities (Torjman, 2000).

A second characteristic of this policy context has been an approach that reflects a distinct bias of suspicion towards all individuals requiring income supports, i.e., that individuals who may require some form of social assistance are likely to be ‘cheaters’ and defrauders of the system. This has resulted in many people having benefits terminated when they are in fact eligible and in need.

Attempting to have benefits restored often requires legal interventions, something to which vulnerable populations do not have ready access (Beatty, 2005). One study (ISAC, 2003) shows that over fifty per cent of the individuals denied ODSP are actually eligible for benefits, a travesty for a program that supposedly helps one of Ontario’s most vulnerable groups.

### **3.2.1 ODSP and the Neoliberal Agenda**

This research indicates that ODSP recipients who want to work are faced with a difficult decision: after sometimes fighting for years to achieve recognition as a person with a disability that is eligible for ODSP benefits, should they risk it all in an attempt to become employed? Advocates (Letheren, 2007) indicate that recipients are justified in fearing loss of entitlement, and that rapid reinstatement of benefits is still not fully implemented, despite government policy.

Even if the answer to that initial question is “yes”, the research indicates that there are a number of areas that continue to be problematic for the ODSP recipient. The lack of an appeal process regarding employment support issues may result in a lack of access to the benefits provided under this part of the Act<sup>5</sup>, and the complex calculation of monthly benefits often leaves recipients bewildered about earnings deductions and the submission of required documentation (see Appendix D).

This research illustrates that social enterprises provide a highly supportive workplace that accommodates the sometimes complex needs of persons with disabilities, as well as providing an opportunity for the development of social networks. The ODSPA, however, may discourage these employers through its separation of training providers from employers. The social enterprises described in Appendices A, B, C, and D of this research, are all supported by

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<sup>5</sup> Since this regulation cannot be appealed, one can only postulate. However given the high incidence of successful appeals of other Sections of the Act, it is highly likely that some individuals are denied benefits to which they may be entitled under this Section.

organizations which obtain funding, in part, from ODSP as a service provider. This separation of training dollars from social enterprise revenues ignores the reality of the need for ongoing training for persons with intellectual disabilities, and requires that more than one organization be involved in the viability of the enterprise. Each organization reviewed in this research (see Appendices A, B, C and D) has dealt with this issue in a slightly differing way, but all have had to expend energy and time on finding creative solutions to this barrier.

This research also indicates that for many ODSP recipients, the training and support necessary for employment may require long-term and even permanent job coaching (Lemon and Lemon, 2003, see Appendices A, B, C, and D). This does not fit well within legislation intended to find the shortest route to employment.

### **3.3 Social Enterprises as Employers of Persons with Disabilities**

The research shows that persons with disabilities often find obtaining employment in the 'competitive' workplace challenging, including a lack of knowledge and a basic unwillingness on the part of employers to hire persons with disabilities (Canadian Abilities Foundation, 2004; Neufeldt et al., 2000). In some cases persons with disabilities are able to work limited hours due to the nature of their disability and the limitations it may impose, others such as those with intellectual disabilities may require ongoing support and coaching in the workplace, making employment within the 'competitive' marketplace challenging, due to an emphasis on profit-making.

Social enterprises have recognized the value of creating employment for persons with disabilities. Social enterprises have, by their nature, made a commitment to their social missions, and have placed an emphasis on meeting the needs and capacities of the employees. Such enterprises therefore create workplaces which accommodate employees' needs in their governance, management, type of work, and ongoing employee support (Lemon and Lemon, 2003; Sutherland and Beachy, 2004). The case studies in this research (see Appendices A, B, C, and D) serve to illustrate the strengths of such an approach, and the variety of ways social enterprises have found to meet their employees' needs.

Social enterprises have combined their extensive knowledge of the disability, its impact and its required accommodation, with business knowledge to effectively provide supportive employment opportunities (Appendix B; Appendix C). This research demonstrates that persons experiencing intellectual disabilities, for example, require ongoing, repetitive training (Appendix C; Lemon and Lemon 2003) and that any workplace innovation will require intensive training, job coaching and support. Likewise, the research demonstrates that dealing with episodic disabilities such as psychiatric illnesses, requires employers who have an in-depth understanding of the nature of the disability, and the varying needs of the employees as a result. At the same time, they have used business knowledge and expertise, often provided by volunteers or staff recruited for that purpose (Lemon and Lemon, 2003; Appendix C).

Social enterprises have been highly creative in designing workplaces and businesses which meet the employment needs of persons with disabilities (Sutherland and Beachy, 2004). Social cooperatives (Sutherland and Beachy, 2004), worker cooperatives (Lemon and Lemon, 2003; Appendix B) and partnerships (Sutherland and Beachy, 2004) are just a few of the incorporated

forms that social enterprises have taken to address the needs of persons with disabilities. The cases examined in this research also demonstrate that social enterprises tend to develop relationships with social services and non-profits as well as other businesses (Appendix A; Appendix C) which create reciprocal benefits, including increased revenues and reduced economic leakage from rural communities.

Social enterprises can also serve as a tool to “support social movements that can bring about social change” (Charles King, as quoted in Randolph Group, 2006) through advocacy and social action. This role is jeopardized, however, when social enterprises rely too heavily on government funding.

### **3.4 Both Social and Economic Benefits Accrue to Employment of Disabled**

The literature review revealed that the employment of persons with disabilities has both social and economic benefit to society, resulting in reduced health care costs, an improved quality of life for persons with disabilities, and a reduced reliance on various forms of income support (Sutherland and Beachy, 2004). There is concern, however, that these benefits are not as yet well documented and further research needs to be done to demonstrate this to public policy makers. It also shows that employment results in increased independence of persons with disabilities, contributing to a reduced dependence on family members and on other social services (Vaillancourt et al., 2003).

One of the determinants of health is social networks (Premier’s Council, 1991) and work provides a rich source of networks with peers, customers, managers and others. The research showed that persons with disabilities who worked strongly identified themselves as workers (Neufeldt et al., 2000; Appendix A) and found employment greatly improved their quality of life.

## **4.0 Policy Recommendations**

The research findings outlined in Section 3.0 of this report indicate five major areas of concern for social enterprises and service providers, related to the employment of persons with disabilities and the administration of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) which could be addressed by policy changes. These include:

- Culture of fear and disincentives for persons with disabilities
- Focus on individualized support
- Lack of understanding of barriers facing persons with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining employment
- Lack of support for development of social enterprises.

### **4.1 Creating a Supportive Culture**

Governments at both federal and provincial levels have introduced human rights legislation to prevent, in part, the discrimination against persons with disabilities, particularly with regard to their opportunities for employment. Additionally, there is a large body of literature which demonstrates that employment with its resulting higher levels of income, social networks, and contribution to people’s feelings of self-esteem and self-worth, are highly desirable societal

goals. It is therefore in society's best interests to create a culture which supports the employment of persons with disabilities, and NOT in society's interests to discourage people from participating in the workforce. This research suggests that policy changes need to be made to eliminate the 'culture of fear' currently surrounding the access to ODSP employment support, and to provide greater incentives. Specifically:

- Government needs to provide leadership in creating an atmosphere of support and respect for persons with disabilities. Such leadership would include education and communication campaigns
- ODSP should be amended so as to be more supportive of the recipient by: a) removing the onus on ODSP recipients to prove themselves employment ready – instead all recipients should be provided with information regarding employment supports; b) providing an appeal process for those denied employment supports; c) making the reporting process less onerous for the recipient; d) making the calculation of benefits and deductions transparent and less complex.

#### **4.2 Building Support through Collectivist Approaches**

This research illustrates that many persons with disabilities experience significant barriers to workplace entry or re-entry and often require very specific accommodation to their needs, such as ongoing training and/or job coaching, or substantial flexibility in scheduling. Further, placing the onus on the individual to seek out employment supports does not reflect the reality of a number of types of disabilities such as intellectual disabilities or mental health issues. Individualized programming such as self-employment initiatives does not respond to these needs. This research demonstrates workplaces which provide employment to a number of people with disabilities in the same workplace may be preferable and much more effective in responding to the needs of some. While self-employment and individualized placement are options that may be extremely important for some persons with disabilities, it must be recognized that other options are required.

- ODSP should be amended so as to be more supportive of collective/group employment opportunities for persons with disabilities by: a) removing the restriction that service providers cannot be employers (although the conflict of interest issue must not be ignored); b) by recognizing social enterprises as a valuable and even preferred employment option for many ODSP recipients.

#### **4.3 Support Required to Overcome Barriers to Employment**

This research demonstrated that ODSP and other current government programs designed to encourage the employment of persons with disabilities, do not acknowledge that workplace accommodation, particularly for some specific types of disabilities, requires substantial change for the employer and a highly knowledgeable staff, sometimes including staff specifically recruited for that purpose. The current ODSPA does not reflect this reality, nor does it address the lack of recognition of the substantial role that social enterprises can play in addressing this need. Specifically, policy changes need to reflect the following:

- Recognition and acknowledgement of the expertise required to make appropriate workplace accommodations, and providing appropriate funding and support for such accommodation
- Increased funding to those organizations (e.g. Groupe CONVEX, Common Ground, etc) which provide ongoing support services to social enterprises in the form of job coaching and mentoring, developmental and management services.

#### **4.4 Supporting the Development and Extension of Social Enterprises**

Government also has a role to play in legitimizing social enterprises and the highly valuable role they play in building a cohesive and inclusive society. Further, current policy acts as a barrier to the formation of social cooperatives and worker cooperatives, two forms of social enterprises which show promise for substantial employment opportunities for persons with disabilities. Through strategic policy directions, the Ontario government can provide leadership to other jurisdictions by taking a proactive role in the development of new enterprises, and extending the impact of current social businesses.

- Creation of a provincial Co-operatives Secretariat and a sector-led social economy advisory committee with a minister responsible for the social economy to provide leadership in the development of social enterprises (including social cooperatives, worker cooperatives and partnerships) and to coordinate policy directions across ministries
- Procurement policies which identify social enterprises as preferred service providers
- Recognition of social enterprises as stakeholders in communities and in policy-making, and educating the general public about the role social enterprises play in building a cohesive and inclusive society
- Support for the development of social enterprises which employ persons with disabilities, specifically providing leadership in the development of education and training of ODSP workers regarding the benefits of social enterprises as employers.

#### **5.0 Conclusions**

One of the challenges faced in conducting this research was the small number of organizations which qualified as ‘social enterprises employing persons in receipt of ODSP’. As the research uncovered, the small numbers of these organizations are not reflective of their value; in fact, such enterprises appear to be highly effective in responding to a very crucial need in the community – providing supportive workplaces to persons with disabilities.

The reason for the small numbers is rather, that social enterprises of the nature sought for this research, are not well-known and are not well-supported. One of the businesses examined in the case studies, JV2, has in fact recently closed, and the organization which spawned it, the Sudbury Developmental Services (SDS), indicated that other priorities would take precedence over the development of a replacement business.

This is unfortunate. The research demonstrates a strong capacity on the part of social enterprises to respond to an identified community need – the need for supportive employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The case studies attached to this research demonstrate that these

types of social enterprises have the essential expertise, flexibility, and commitment to achieving their social mission. They have overcome substantial barriers in creating successful workplaces and businesses for a segment of the workforce which is often excluded from the labour market.

Government has an opportunity to address the employment needs of persons with disabilities, and indeed, has a responsibility to ensure that all members of society do have access to employment. By providing leadership and support both through the amendment of the ODSPA, as well as through education, policy direction and coordination, the Ontario government can realize its intention to assist persons with disabilities to become independent of government benefits through safe and secure employment.



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## Appendix A – Out of This World Café (Toronto)

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### Background

The Ontario Council for Alternative Businesses (OCAB) was developed in 1993, out of the growing need for employment opportunities requested by the psychiatric Consumer/Survivor community. The Council's formation was a result of the work being done at Fresh Start Cleaning and Maintenance, a Consumer/Survivor operated janitorial business within the City of Toronto. OCAB's mandate is to develop and support social enterprises that provide empowerment, employment, training and skills to Consumer/Survivors, and bring attention to the growing need for these opportunities. OCAB's mandate allows them to be a member of the Ontario Peer Development Initiative (OPDI), which supports and strengthens provincial Consumer/Survivor groups, and is also considered a Consumer Survivor Initiative (OPDI, 2006a).

“A Consumer/Survivor is self-defined: someone who has been institutionalized by the psychiatric system or treated by mental health staff in the community – a Consumer of services and/or a Survivor of the medical/mental health system”.

(Brown 2003: 2)

The social enterprises belonging to OCAB employ approximately 80 part-time employees with annual revenues of \$450,000 (Brown, 2007). Currently the Raging Spoon, Parkdale Green Thumb Enterprises and Out of This World Café (OTW) are the social enterprises run by OCAB. Attention will focus on OTW as it has been identified as having the largest number of employees of the three businesses with annual revenues of approximately \$220,000 (Brown, 2007).

“Consumer/Survivor Initiatives are run for and by people with mental health problems and/or those who have received mental health services”.

(CMHA Ontario et al. 2005: 2)

### Description

“An Alternative Business is one that is operated by Consumer/Survivor employees and one that has been created through a Community Economic Development (CED) approach ... While operating on business principles, Alternative Businesses offer support to staff and recognize the struggles that Consumer/Survivors face in society and with respect to employment”.

(Brown 2003: 2)

OTW is an alternative business located in downtown Toronto within the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). OTW is unique in that it is the first Consumer/Survivor run organization to operate out of a hospital. With an espresso bar, canteen, catering service and a coffee cart, OTW offers various employment opportunities for Consumer/Survivors. Two-thirds of the OCAB Board of Directors, the business manager, two lead hands and up to 40 part-time permanent employees of OTW are Consumer/Survivors, and most are in receipt of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Having Consumer/Survivor representation on the Board of

Directors can “create ownership” (Church, 2007: 7). Furthermore, Jamieson (2007) expressed how “by only employing people with experience in the mental health system, it provides a very comfortable environment for everybody, because everybody understands what it’s like to live with a mental illness”.

All the employees of OTW participate in the decision making process through regular staff meetings and day to day communications. For example, feedback is received from front-line employees around customer purchases. The business manager can then make changes to the menu and marketing materials. At the monthly Board of Directors meeting, the manager will receive input from board members and communicate employee comments and concerns. Employees are also part of CAMH committees, such as the Patient’s Advocacy Council and CAMH’s Client Employment Initiative Committee.

From 1994 until 2002, OTW operations were run by the Vocational Resource Centre (VRC) of CAMH to provide Consumer/Survivors with a new skill set and an employment opportunity. Brown (2003) outlined that OTW was run more like a business than a training program, and it extended outside the mandate of CAMH. After much discussion with a CAMH hired consultant, the clients decided to divest OTW to OCAB. Divestment resulted in a shift towards meeting industry standards, but also conducting business in a way that meets the needs of Consumer/Survivors. There were several challenges that came with divestment including: patient information was no longer provided to VRC employees; training was required for “non-profit business practices, funding requirements, how to develop a business plan and how to fine tune day to day operations”; and employees were let down when the business manager was not hired internally (Brown, 2003: 7).

Even today OTW is evolving. Donovan Gopaul, Business Manager, “wants to raise the bar higher, raise the standards, quality of food and service, get things more creative, more interesting, build more pride for employees, and build a better reputation for the company”. He wants to prepare for the future changes for OTW.

In the next 3-4 years OTW will experience significant changes with the redevelopment of CAMH. Several CAMH buildings are scheduled for demolition, to be replaced with new buildings and new streets. The redevelopment will result in disrupted service for the espresso bar, which will have to be relocated along with its 8 employees. The move however will result in several positive impacts. The redevelopment will encourage a greater integration of CAMH with the community, including a community garden and ground floor store fronts (Capponi, 2007). OTW will go from being partially hidden from the public in its current location, to a fully accessible street level shop on a main corner; and will require additional customer service training to address an increased and different customer base (Capponi, 2007).

CAMH provides support to OTW by renting the space at a minimal cost, sending emails and memos encouraging staff to purchase and use its services, and producing some printed materials for promotional use. However, OTW also receives financial support from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Toronto Enterprise Fund. The Toronto Enterprise Fund provides funding to businesses with a “double bottom-line” that includes maintaining a sustainable

business while fulfilling a social mandate (Toronto Enterprise Fund, n.d.). Partnerships, support and funding are all important for the success of a social enterprise, but there are several others.

### **Factors Critical to Success**

Various factors critical for maintaining OTW as a successful and sustainable business were identified. Most are not unlike those in the for-profit sector, including:

- Customer needs – identifying and meeting the customers’ needs and wants
- Product – being able to offer high quality products and services at a reasonable cost
- Captive Market – having a clientele including staff, patients, and visitors to the hospital that are encouraged to support OTW by CAMH
- Adaptability – making adjustments to items such as the menu, products, and prices that reflect variations in the marketplace and respond to competition
- Staff – ensuring that employees feel a sense of community and support is essential. It is also important to have a knowledgeable and experienced manager to facilitate day to day operations and training, and to provide accommodations to the employees.

However, one factor critical to fulfilling the social mandate of OTW is:

- Flexibility and Accommodation – many Consumer/Survivors require a certain level of accommodation in the workplace. For example, scheduling must account for time off needed for tests, doctor’s appointments, or for reasons related to their illness. Scheduling must also reflect the times most suitable for employees to work. Job security is provided for employees who may not feel up to working. However, alternate staff and resources are required to cover those shifts, which results in a large number of part-time staff employed with OTW. Also, many individuals who are in receipt of ODSP are only able to work part-time due to physical or mental health conditions.

### **Social and Economic Benefits**

OTW being a social enterprise is a strength in itself (Gopaul, 2007) because consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits accruing to society from the ‘double bottom-line’ approach and wish to spend their dollars in ways which support social justice. Community response to OTW has generally been positive. For example, organizations like the United Way conduct tours of the business, and OTW has also been highlighted in a workshop at the 2007 Canadian Conference on Social Enterprise in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Most employees receive certification in food handling, first aid and workplace safety as part of their employment training. Training for their day to day responsibilities, such as customer service, is usually provided by the manager and experienced staff and they are trained at jobs that suit their abilities and respond to their needs. For example, if an employee does not feel confident in managing money or giving change, then that employee would not be assigned to the cash register. However, if at a later date, that same employee felt more able to be in charge of the cash, accommodation and training will then be provided, so employees are not restricted to only one position in the company.

Brown (2003: 2) utilizes the words “comfort, ownership, pride, teamwork, safety, responsibility and respect” to describe Alternative Businesses, like OTW. People from CAMH, OCAB and OTW definitely feel a sense of pride, and employees experience improved self-esteem and confidence from working there. “The staff opportunity to work in a real business environment, to earn an income and to be part of a really caring community has had a huge impact on them” (Jamieson, 2007). The enterprise’s legitimacy as an employer is furthered by having staff identification cards, uniforms and providing a steady income to its employees (Brown, 2003).

Social enterprises are seen as a way to address the discrimination Consumer/Survivors face in the workforce and from society as a whole (Capponi, 2007). OTW staff presence throughout the hospital reduces the perception that Consumer/Survivors are not capable of participating in the workforce, and can be encouraging to current patients (Capponi, 2007). Purchasers of the goods and services provided by OTW are supporting the social mandate of the organization even though they may not be aware of it. A professional approach also shows that OTW can produce high quality goods and services while providing a valuable experience to the Consumer/Survivor community. With an increasingly successful business the benefits could reach a greater number of Consumer/Survivors.

Diana Capponi (2007) from CAMH stated that social enterprises “[use] the economy to build the community”. This method of community development is also supported by Church (1997) who highlights the process, impacts, and challenges social enterprises may experience. Employment with OTW has also allowed workers to reconnect with friends and family, build a network and socialize with co-workers, and have some structure in their lives (Jamieson, 2007). Working at OTW also results in medical benefits, such as fewer doctors’ appointments and hospital visits, and less frequent use of medication (Jamieson, 2007; Capponi, 2007). This finding is supported by other research (CMHA Ontario et al., 2005) which demonstrates how participating in a project organized and operated by Consumer/Survivors can decrease the amount of treatment and hospitalization individuals receive.

Recent changes related to ODSP medical coverage have also been beneficial for recipients who become employed. OCAB (2002) identified that some individuals who were capable of increasing their work hours did not prior to amendments to the legislation because they would lose their benefits. Recent amendments to the Act now allows these individuals to maintain their benefits until their employer provides them with a similar plan (ODSP Revisions, 2006). This increases their security and promotes the opportunity for employment.

Employees’ fears around reporting income have been reduced with the 2006 ODSP policy changes; however, with the new 50% income deductions, employees feel that they are working for \$4.00 an hour rather than \$8.00 an hour (Jamieson, 2007). Further changes in the 50% income deduction would allow more Consumer/Survivors to climb out of poverty. For example the ODSP Action Coalition, an organization campaigning to improve income and employment supports, is suggesting that recipients be allowed to keep \$430 per month before the 50% deduction is applied (Brown, 2007). The additional income ODSP recipients currently receive is beneficial for Toronto residents where the cost of living is generally higher (Jamieson, 2007). It also creates greater choices with regards to housing, recreation and nutrition (Brown, 2007).

Although the 2006 changes to ODSP policy have been generally positive for OTW employees, there are still some challenges and barriers being faced in this program.

### **Barriers and Challenges**

Due to the episodic nature of their illness, some employees of OTW may require a leave of absence from work. OCAB (2002) outlined that there is limited flexibility with the ODSP process if paperwork related to such an absence is not sent in on time; and business managers often have to mediate situations related to ODSP procedure and requirements. Another barrier is that if a Regional ODSP office does not identify the Consumer/Survivor Initiative as a required medical service then recipients may not be able to acquire financial assistance for transportation (CMHA Ontario et al., 2005).

Although OTW is marginally profitable, it still faces some significant challenges in its viability and is forced to rely on some funding from outside sources. For example, OTW initially received financial support through the Employment Innovations Fund supported by ODSP Employment Supports. This funding provides support for a maximum of three years “to develop innovative ways to create and expand job opportunities for people on social assistance, including people with disabilities” (Government of Ontario, 2005). The Employment Innovations Fund is beneficial to get programs started, but if financial assistance is still required after the first three years, finding alternative funding sources can be time consuming and difficult, particularly for small organizations.

Consumer/Survivor Initiatives have not been given any significant funding intended for development in more than 10 years (CMHA Ontario et al., 2005). Provincial government contributions were made by the New Democratic Party in 1991 and the Progressive Conservatives in 1996 (OPDI, 2006b). CMHA Ontario et al. (2005) outlines that there is a lack of funding for developing alternative businesses, and the ones that currently exist have people waiting to be employed. This is the case for OTW. People are not forced to leave, staff turnover is infrequent, and “OCAB doesn’t have the resources to put towards business development” (Capponi, 2007). Without funding for development of new enterprises, only a limited number of people will be able to access the benefits alternative businesses have to offer.

Social enterprises in the Toronto area are fortunate in that they can apply for funding through the Toronto Enterprise Fund (a fund administered by the United Way), and can receive partial funding from the provincial government. However, receiving outside sources of funding can create a perception on the part of the for-profit sector that social enterprises are not legitimate because they do not encounter as much risk (Capponi, 2007).

OTW also has internal challenges. For example, the business manager is a challenging position to fill, requiring an individual who combines a background in mental health or addictions with a specific skill set, including culinary knowledge and business management experience. The business manager must be able to “continuously balance the needs of the workers versus the needs of the business” (Capponi, 2007). For example, the manager must schedule experienced staff with less experienced staff, and there may be times when two employees might be needed even if the job usually only requires one. There is also a need for an official system for

evaluating employee performance, which would allow for raises (Gopaul, 2007). Creating an evaluation process that reflects the nature of the business and is sensitive to employees' needs is complex.

Even with all of these challenges and barriers OTW is a success. There is an obvious need for new businesses like OTW, and attention should be given to their development. Without the existence of this social enterprise, consumer/survivors are missing out on a valuable experience.

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## **Appendix B – Jarrett Value 2 Cooperative (Sudbury)**

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### **History**

Like many social enterprises, the Jarrett Value 2 Cooperative grew out of an existing social service agency, Sudbury Developmental Services (SDS). SDS is a transfer payment agency for the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) which began in the early 1950s with several parents of developmentally disabled children who were concerned about their education. The parents came together and built a school, which over the years evolved into an association providing day, respite and residential services for developmentally disabled individuals. These services offer life skills and vocational training to individuals who are often marginalized.

“When you give a human being a chance at something, it [will really] surprise you how they will strive to get it done. Give them an opportunity, a foot in the door and they will wow you”.

Mila Wong  
Sudbury Developmental  
Services

SDS began providing job skills and readiness training, initially through the Jarrett Resource Centre (JRC) in the 1950s, and more recently through the Jarrett Value Centre (JVC), both of which began as ‘sheltered workshops’. For approximately 50 years, JRC has been providing products such as pallets and blasting plugs to industries like INCO and Falconbridge Ltd., while JVC is a recycling business that has been collecting community donations since 1985. Together JRC and JVC provide training for 100 adults. All the developmentally disabled trainees are recipients of Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits. In addition to their ODSP income, the JVC clients receive a training allowance of between \$ .50 and \$1.60 for every hour worked depending on responsibilities and abilities. Receiving this money augments overall income for clients even with the ODSP deductions.

Funding to support the vocational component and wages comes from two sources. MCSS provides 55% of the funding and the other 45% is generated through revenue from the businesses. Revenues are shared between JRC and JVC in order to compensate for any losses suffered by any one particular business. For example, the recycling business is a very dependable source of income with a constant supply of goods from the community, which could assist the industrial arm if material prices rise (Wong, 2007).

If the SDS Program Planning Team, with client, staff and management representation, develop an idea around an innovative employment initiative, the Board of Directors is always open to input and new ideas that they may wish to pursue. Currently, however, SDS priorities are focused on addressing the needs of the aging population, and new social enterprise development is not expected in the near future.

### **Jarrett Value 2 Cooperative**

In 2000, five JVC clients who showed great potential for business came together with the assistance and support of SDS to become the owners of a cooperative retail store. Jarrett Value 2 (JV2) was located in downtown Sudbury providing quality second hand clothing to the

community. Any high-end clothing that was received by the JVC was collected and given to JV2 at no cost. Receiving quality donations from the community helped sustain JV2 providing a product for those who shop secondhand to purchase. Seasonal fluctuations of clothing exist, where an increase in community contributions are received during the Spring and Fall. Even though the customer demand for recycled goods is stable, there is an increased amount of competition from other businesses (Paonessa, 2007).

Due to their experience at JVC, the owners had been trained in some aspects of retail and customer service, however additional training related to cooperative principles and business management, such as financial management and bank deposits, was required. Some of the day to day responsibilities described by Bonnie Werry, former owner of JV2, were to hang clothing, provide change rooms for customers and operate the cash register. The Community Economic Development Technical Assistance Program (CEDTAP) and the Canadian Cooperative Association (CCA) provided the additional training and support. Mila Wong, the Executive Director of SDS, commented on how remarkable it was that the training was completed so quickly, “when you give a human being a chance at something it [will really] surprise you how they will strive to get it done. Give them an opportunity, a foot in the door and they will wow you”.

“CEDTAP has assisted over 400 CED agencies in support of leading-edge, community development initiatives to create new, sustainable economic development solutions in disadvantaged communities throughout Canada”.

(CEDTAP, n.d.)

“CCA provides leadership to promote, develop, and unite co-operatives and credit unions for the benefit of people in Canada and around the world”.

(CCA, n.d.)

During the development and start-up of the business the SDS and JVC provided a great deal of direction and support; however over time the support lessened, the 5 owners become more independent, and eventually JV2 day to day operations were run similarly to other small businesses (Paonessa, 2007). Mary-Elizabeth Paonessa, Business Manager, maintained a presence at the weekly staff meetings to provide a connection to and support from JVC, and the owners continued to participate in the Person Centred Planning (PCP) process<sup>6</sup>.

JV2 has been highlighted in the local newspaper, the Sudbury Star (Haddow, 2000; Huttala, 2000), as a project that allows for increased independence and a different avenue of employment for the developmentally disabled person. Aside from articles in the newspaper, the primary means of advertising was through word of mouth and a strong reputation in the community. SDS is also a member of the Chamber of Commerce, and had a link on their website for JV2 while it was operational.

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<sup>6</sup>The PCP process assesses developmentally disabled individuals’ cognitive and physical potential in order to meet their identified goals, provide appropriate services and accommodations to them. All participants in SDS services and programs complete the PCP with input from the individual and their families.

The profits that JV2 made provided an increased income for the owners. However, since they were still receiving disability assistance it wasn't much of an increase from JVC. Not only did this provide a source of employment and income for the owners, but also a social opportunity. On occasion the owners would spend time with one another by going to watch a movie or go out for something to eat (Werry, 2007).

On occasion the owners would spend time with one another by going to watch a movie or go out for something to eat.

Bonnie Werry  
Former JV2 Owner

After the business's incorporation it was successfully run for 6 years before the owners decided to close down, due to a number of factors including the pending retirement of some of the cooperative's owners. After the business was dissolved, a few of the former JV2 owners returned to working with the JVC. JVC opened up a small location in the same mall and named it Jarrett Value 2 Boutique. The operations are similar to that of the cooperative, but the ownership no longer remains in the hands of the clients.

### **Employee Social and Economic Benefits**

Integration into the community is one way in which paid training and employment can benefit developmentally disabled individuals particularly by raising the individuals' self-esteem (Paonessa, 2007). Social opportunities like going to the theatre and physical activities allow these individuals to remain "healthy, active and happy" (Wong, 2007). This is not only a benefit to the individuals involved but will also result in a reduced use and subsequent costs of the health care system (Wong, 2007).

A recent ODSP change that Mila Wong identified as positive is Rapid Reinstatement. Rapid Reinstatement allows recipients who discontinue ODSP for employment or paid training, to bypass the Disability Adjudication Process if they need to return to income support (Government of Ontario, 2006). Wong described the adjudication and reporting processes as "onerous", particularly for those with developmental disabilities. Some ODSP recipients may not understand the content of letters they are sent or may have difficulty with automated telephone systems (Paonessa, 2007). Rapid Reinstatement may reduce some of the difficulties related to the ODSP process.

### **Barriers and Challenges**

Challenges that the JV2 cooperative experienced and which ultimately led to their closure are:

- Overhead Costs – the lease at their final location needed to be renewed, and the rental cost was being increased. This and other operating costs were becoming a heavy pressure on running the business
- Aging – as the owners became older it was more difficult to keep working full-time hours and fulfilling a demanding workload

- Group Dynamics – because some of the owners decided to leave, the dynamic of the group was going to change, whether the remaining owners continued on their own or whether they decided to bring in new people. Paonessa (2007) stated that “it was important for the group to get along together because they were so independent”
- Funding – the cooperative was successful at obtaining funding for training related to business management. However, other costs associated with development, transition, and monitoring was (and is) difficult to obtain and maintain.

Even though these individuals faced many challenges and a great deal of stress they maintained their business for six years after incorporation.

Continued support is required when clients become part of a community business. However, the initial support can be beneficial and eventually minimized. Without continued support that individual may be unsuccessful in maintaining their position (Wong, 2007). Support for other issues, such as the needs of the aging population can be addressed through partnerships. SDS has partnered with the Ontario Partners on Aging for the Developmentally Disabled (OPADD) whose mission is to “ensure that the general and special needs of persons with a developmental disability who are aging, are identified and addressed effectively to ensure quality of life” (OPADD, 2007). Innovative policy needs to be developed around the aging population and address the needs of developmentally disabled individuals (Wong, 2007).

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## Appendix C – Charles Printing (Prescott-Russell)

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### History

Groupe CONVEX was created with the primary purpose of expanding employment and training opportunities for individuals with a developmental disability (Groupe CONVEX, n.d.a). The initiative grew out of the work of Services to Children and Adults of Prescott-Russell (SCAPR) which offers a variety of supports to vulnerable individuals (SCAPR, 2007). Although SCAPR's clients already were experiencing some social exclusion related to their disability, trying to enter the workforce created additional challenges to their participation (Arcand, 2007). The development of competitive employment opportunities for vulnerable individuals faces particular challenges in rural areas such as the county of Prescott-Russell due to high levels of unemployment and the lack of public transportation (Arcand, 2007). To address these challenges and to move away from the client based model, affirmative enterprises were created (Groupe CONVEX, n.d.a). Groupe CONVEX focuses on the expansion of innovative businesses and creating conditions in the workplace that positively impact employees (Groupe CONVEX, n.d.a).

Together the Groupe CONVEX network generates approximately \$1,000,000 in revenue a year (Ontario Co-operative Association, 2007) and employs 145 individuals of whom approximately 85% are in receipt of benefits provided through the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) (Arcand, 2007). Nine enterprises are currently in operation through Groupe CONVEX providing a wide range of products and services to the Prescott-Russell region.

Enterprises include Hawkesbury Antiques, Casselman Packaging, Hawkesbury Packaging, Express Net, Gold & Spices, Librairie du Coin, Menuiserie Casselman, The Harvesters, and Charles Printing. Being a network of enterprises, they have the ability to utilize each other's services. For example, Menuiserie Casselman sends its products to Casselman Packaging to be packaged (Anonymous, 2007).

“I love my job. It's quite simple. I love my job”.

Carole Jedynack  
Charles Printing

The Board of Directors is composed of 6 individuals from the Prescott-Russell area, each with differing areas of expertise, who meet monthly and make strategic and policy decisions, as well decisions regarding larger purchases such as equipment. Each of the 9 enterprises has a manager in charge of making decisions related to the day to day operations of the business, recruiting, hiring and supervising the employees. All of the business managers meet 4 times a year and report to the Executive Director who is responsible for the overall development of strategies and businesses, administration, financial aspects, and the human resources of Groupe CONVEX. An Administrative Assistant is also employed at the organization's head office to assist with items such as invoicing and collections. Advertisements and recruitment are completed through local employment and social service organizations who inform ODSP recipients of the Groupe's employment and training opportunities.

Funding is received from SCAPR, grants and revenues derived from the businesses. Profits, as well as deficits generated by all of Groupe's businesses are combined and reinvested into the

overall budget of Groupe CONVEX. Recently the organization was granted \$130,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to assist with public awareness with other businesses and organizations who want to learn more about developing social enterprises, and to produce resources such as a CD and DVD. With the increasing demand for information about social enterprises and their social and economic benefits, these materials will provide guidance to those newly entering the sector.

Groupe CONVEX enterprises are designed to operate similar to mainstream businesses, and the community and customers respond to them that way. Some customers do not identify the social purpose until after they enter the store (Jedynack, 2007). The process for hiring employees is comparable to other businesses where individuals hand in their resume, an interview is conducted, and after a successful probationary period they are hired. In order to help the employees enter the workforce an employee handbook was developed, which outlines the responsibilities and rights of the workers. In the handbook it states “we consider our workers to be our biggest asset” (Groupe CONVEX, n.d.b).

Accommodations are tailored to the needs of each of the employees. For example, Carole Jedynack, Manager of Charles Printing, explained one employee has an individual work station to address the nervousness and pressure he experiences from working in close quarters with other employees. This type of accommodation assists in eliminating inconsistencies in the work and improving the quality of the finished product, as well as ensuring a viable workplace for its employees.

## **Description**

Charles Printing is a self-described ‘affirmative business’ which provides printing services to customers in Hawkesbury. Such services include colour printing and copying, and tasks related to print finishing such as collating materials. Answering the telephone, photocopying, laminating, and filing are just a few examples of duties Lucie Jenevieve Roch, a Charles Printing Employee of more than two years, performs during her shifts. Roch was introduced to Groupe CONVEX by her mother and began working with Hawkesbury Packaging before moving into her current position with Charles Printing.

Charles Printing was originally operated as a mainstream small business but as the owner approached retirement, he was unable to find a successor. Discussions with the Groupe occurred over a couple of years (in part because the Groupe was somewhat reluctant to open a print shop in Hawkesbury) before the deal was finally closed. Several services were added such as laminating and binding, in an effort to increase employment opportunities (Jedynack, 2007). Since it was purchased, the business has grown and now provides employment for a business manager, two pressmen<sup>7</sup>, and 5 employees. Employees offer their ideas regarding various issues, including their workspace. For example, employees requested a lunchroom and this suggestion is now being realized (Jedynack, 2007).

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<sup>7</sup> Due to the highly specialized skills required of these positions, these positions are recruited from the general public rather than from target employees.



Training comprises a large component of the enterprise, as the skills, abilities, and ways of learning vary substantially from one employee to another. The manager and the two pressmen provide the training to workers on the various tasks providing repetitive opportunities for skills development (Jedynack, 2007). Some projects are specifically utilized as training tools to assist new employees in their skill development. During the training period, trainees receive compensation based on the job and output, but if the individual is hired on full time after their training period is completed they are paid a competitive wage (Jedynack, 2007) and currently 45% of ODSP recipients have moved from trainees to employees (Arcand, 2007).

Over time the employees become more and more independent in their tasks and roles within the organization. For example, one of the former trainees who is now an employee has become independent in greeting customers in person and over the phone, as well as receiving and completing copy orders. One of the challenges faced by the organization is the lack of anyone solely dedicated to training. Currently, the pressmen face conflicting priorities between completing jobs to deadlines, while providing training to employees on the press (Jedynack, 2007).

### **Employee Social and Economic Benefits**

Even the organization's title, CONVEX, is a metaphor for the continuous growth of an individual's skills, abilities and self-esteem (Groupe CONVEX, n.d.a). Groupe CONVEX was described as providing employees with "self-esteem", "valorization", "social inclusion", "community integration", and "pride of working" (Anonymous, 2007; Arcand, 2007; Jedynack, 2007). For example, one of the disabled employees at Charles Printing lives independently, works 30 hours a week, earns a competitive wage, and has become friends with other employees. Lucie Jenevieve Roch, an employee at Charles Printing, explained that she goes bicycling and walking with another employee outside of work. Working for Charles Printing also gave her the opportunity to visit France for a social enterprise conference where she was able to interact with various individuals from diverse backgrounds, as well as having a lot of fun. Other taken-for-granted activities such as buying Christmas presents for family members, are special events for individuals who have for many years been unable to access waged work.

Groupe CONVEX is not involved in the administration of ODSP for employees, because it is trying to maintain a business environment rather than a social service (Arcand, 2007). Carole Jedynack of Charles Printing stated that "we give them real jobs, real responsibility and real work. I find it fascinating to see how they love what they do..."

Groupe CONVEX is always seeking innovative ideas for enterprises, and they often begin from within the community. Recently, for example, the Casselman Chamber of Commerce contacted Groupe CONVEX about the community's need for an LCBO and Beer Store Deposit Centre. Currently community members have to travel outside of the village for this particular service, resulting in economic leakage through the purchase goods in other communities. By introducing this service into the community, the Groupe will not only provide additional employment opportunities for people in receipt of ODSP, they will also be plugging some of the holes in the region's economic leakage (Arcand, 2007).

## Factors Critical to Success

Like all of the Groupe's 9 enterprises, Charles Printing belongs to its local Chamber of Commerce, which assists in its promotion, and the Groupe's enterprises are also able to support and promote each other through referrals. Charles Printing has benefited from the partnerships developed with the other print shops in Hawkesbury, sometimes doing finishing work for which the other shops do not have the capacity. Likewise, printing projects that cannot be completed in house at Charles Printing, will be sent to other local businesses (Jedynack, 2007).

The business sometimes generates as much as \$20,000 in a good month (Arcand, 2007). Caroline Arcand, Executive Director of Groupe CONVEX, provides a piece of advice to others interested in the social enterprise sector, "the important thing is to never lower [your] price" and to ensure high standards for both the products and for the people who make them. Product quality was identified as an important element to the print shop's success (Anonymous, 2007; Jedynack, 2007).

Management is one of the greatest strengths for Groupe CONVEX (Arcand, 2007; Jedynack, 2007). Many of the people involved in the organization are not there just as a means of employment, but because they really believe in what the organization is trying to achieve. "I can make a difference in somebody's life, it's really valuable for me..." (Anonymous, 2007). As Carole Jedynack, the Manager of Charles Printing stated "I love my job. It's quite simple. I love my job".

<p>"the important thing is to never lower [your] price".</p> <p>Caroline Arcand Groupe CONVEX</p>
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Like other member enterprises operating under the Groupe CONVEX umbrella, Charles Printing benefits from the support of the larger organization. Specifically:

- The enterprise shares in the revenues (and losses) of all 9 enterprises, making it more likely to be viable
- The Groupe is highly experienced in workplace accommodation and providing training for persons with disabilities
- Referrals from its 'sister' businesses.

## Barriers and Challenges

Employees of social enterprises "don't always understand the importance of quality, and the importance of the tools they're using" (Jedynack, 2007). For example, one employee damaged a piece of equipment by attempting to cut a paper clip with a tool utilized for trimming laminations (Jedynack, 2007). This resulted in substantial costs for repairs and delays in other jobs.

One barrier that was identified specifically related to ODSP was the fear that employees and their families experience when reporting their income, and the subsequent deductions to their ODSP pension. Parents fear the increased income because they want to ensure their children's finances for the future (Arcand, 2007). However, one change to the ODSP structure (Ontario regulations, 2006) that was identified as an incentive to work was the ability to maintain health

benefits (Arcand, 2007). Maintaining health benefits contributes to reducing the fear about and creating more incentives for individuals entering the workforce.

Charles Printing still has a lot of potential for growth. Purchasing an additional printer and press would create more employment and training opportunities. These purchases would also be responding to the move towards digital printing that currently exists in the marketplace. Employees may be able to learn more easily on the printer than the press (Jedynack, 2007). This is important because developmentally disabled individuals' productivity is on average less than that of an employee without a disability (Arcand, 2007).

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## Appendix D – COIN Food Services (Peterborough)

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### History

The Community Opportunity Innovation Network Inc. (COIN) was developed in the early 1990s in response to poverty research conducted by the Peterborough Social Planning Council (PSPC) and the Peterborough and District United Way. Out of this research came the call for a community economic development initiative (CED) in the area. As a non-profit organization, COIN is committed to improving the skills of individuals in the Peterborough community in order to overcome obstacles they may encounter in obtaining employment, including a developmental disability.

PSPC’s vision is “to be an organization that facilitates active, broad based citizen participation in shaping healthy communities in Peterborough city and County; acts as a catalyst for positive, sustainable social change; and promotes the understanding that social justice is in everyone's interest”.

(PSPC, n.d.)

“A social enterprise is a business like any other with customers, products and services, but as a non-profit it also has a social objective like helping the unemployed or protecting the environment”.

(COIN, n.d.: 4)

COIN’s organizational structure encompasses a Board of Directors which meets once a month and is made up of 7 volunteers from the community. A general manager, administrative officer, enterprise managers, staff, clients and co-op students/volunteers also help to frame and support the organization. Decisions related to day to day operations are mainly made by the managers of the social enterprises, and larger decisions such as policy issues would be presented to the Board of Directors. Weekly staff meetings provide an opportunity to voice concerns and suggestions, but because COIN is a relatively small organization, open communication is maintained between employees and management.

COIN has developed several social enterprises which provide quality products and services to Peterborough, and builds confidence and empowers individuals through skills and readiness training. TEKdesk, reBOOT and COIN Food Services are the social enterprises managed by COIN. Training programs that are provided depend on the nature of the social enterprise. For example, reBOOT is a computer business so its training focuses on technical and technological skills, whereas COIN Food Services offers training programs related to the food services sector, such as customer service and utilizing the cash register. Since COIN Food Services employs persons with developmental disabilities, it also offers work place skills, job coaching and follow up (COIN, n.d.). Although there are suggested timeframes for completing these training programs, COIN is flexible in meeting the requirements of each individual. COIN (n.d.: 2) states “[by] helping people gain employability and job skills at a pace that suits individual needs, we support the opportunity for long term employment in the future”.

COIN Food Services is partnered with the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), as a service provider for the Employment Supports program of ODSP. Several methods are

utilized for attracting clients, including referrals, word of mouth and announcements in the newspaper (Anonymous, 2007a; Grills, 2007). Service providers can offer clients assistance with developing goals and an employment plan, and obtaining and maintaining a job placement (Government of Ontario, 2006).

### **COIN Food Services**

COIN Food Services has two arms, World 2 Go Foods and Natural Blends Café. In 1996, World 2 Go Foods began training people in food preparation and filling custom catering orders; and more recently Natural Blends Café, operating out of the Peterborough Public Library, serves coffee, muffins, soup and sandwiches to customers. A food cart arranged by the Café and provided to employees at Ontario Works extends the customer base and increases the Café's income. Both of these enterprises provide food service training to developmentally disabled individuals, and by purchasing their goods and services customers are helping to sustain these programs (COIN, 2003-04).

Businesses under COIN Food Services were built out of partnerships with other community groups. Natural Blends Café partnered with the Peterborough Public Library and Peterborough and District Association for Community Living, while World 2 Go Foods began through a partnership with the Trent Valley Literacy Association and Community Living Peterborough. However, World 2 Go Foods no longer maintains any affiliations.

Training revenues from the MCSS help support the social enterprises, and business revenues are reinvested to purchase products and pay the wages of employees. If one particular enterprise experiences a deficit, then the revenues from the remaining enterprises can be used to mitigate the loss. Funding opportunities are also identified by the Board of Directors as they are actively involved in the community, and business revenues are often augmented by other grants and donations.

### **Factors Critical to Success**

One slogan utilized by World 2 Go Foods is "Quality Foods at Affordable Prices" (COIN, 2003-04). This statement is crucial to business sustainability, and is also a common goal for the for-profit sector. By offering excellent products at a reasonable cost, the businesses under COIN Food Services have become increasingly reputable over the years. Even though there are customers who may not be aware of the underlying social values of the businesses, there are those who purposefully support the social purpose. Customers of Natural Blends Café will be patient with the servers, for example, and allow them extra time to complete their assigned duties. In Peterborough other non-profit groups are aware of the social purpose of World 2 Go Foods and support it by utilizing their catering services for their own events. Having support from other non-profit groups and a captive market within the library adds to the success of these businesses.

COIN's programs could not be successful without trained employees who devote their time to maintaining the enterprise. Krisanne Grills, former Natural Blends Café employee, stated that "... the people are very motivated and very dedicated to the clients. They really have the best

interest of the clients at heart and they really try and do their best to... train them well... There are a lot of very skilled people with a variety of talents". For example, writing proposals and completing funding applications is one talent that currently exists at COIN (Anonymous, 2007a). In order to obtain funding, non-profit organizations have to adapt to changing government priorities and expectations: "[COIN has] had to adapt to ODSP [changes], as frustrating as their new programs are, you have to be able to do that if want to survive" (Grills 2007).

### **Employee Social and Economic Benefits**

COIN is a unique and beneficial organization for the City of Peterborough (Grills, 2007) and particularly for persons with developmental disabilities in a number of ways. Individuals can receive certification in food handling if they are interested, however, "personalized instruction" has been identified by COIN (n.d.: 5) as the most beneficial aspect of the training services provided to clients. Strengths and weaknesses of clients vary by individual, and identifying them and creating an environment for them to succeed is very important (Grills, 2007). This can be shown by the way people learn. If a client excels in visual and verbal learning, then following a written recipe is not going to be as effective as guiding them through it several times (Anonymous, 2007b).

Individuals participate in these programs for various reasons, yet because of the ODSP deductions money was not considered a top priority. Instead "self-esteem", "confidence", "productive", "purpose", "contribute to society", "reason to get up in the morning", "social outlet", "meeting people" and "fun" were terms and phrases that interviewees used to describe the outcomes (Anonymous, 2007a; Anonymous, 2007b; Anonymous, 2007c; Grills, 2007). COIN Food Services provides valuable skills related to cooking and food preparation, as well as nutrition education and a pleasurable experience (Anonymous, 2007b). A trainee from COIN Food Services, (Anonymous (2007c) indicated that the experience of working with fruits and vegetables was helpful in addressing diabetes.

Participation in COIN Food Services not only provides training for individuals, but allows for community inclusion. COIN may "help society with learning that people with disabilities are just like anyone else and hopefully they see the person first and the disability second" (Anonymous, 2007b). Changing the perception of individuals in the community is critical in reducing the fears and discrimination that developmentally disabled people face. ODSP recipients have a lot to offer and sometimes it may be difficult for employers in the community to recognize their potential (Anonymous, 2007a).

### **Barriers and Challenges**

Interviewees highlighted a number of barriers related to ODSP process and procedures:

- Time Limits – next year the most recent ODSP Employment Supports model will be implemented which will require the client to obtain employment for 13 weeks in order for the service provider to receive their job placement target. If this employment target is not reached compensation is not received for the training, planning, and placement of ODSP recipients. However, this process does not take into account reasons for which a client

may not complete the 13 weeks, for example, the client may discover that s/he is not well suited to the food industry after starting his/her placement (Anonymous, 2007b)

- Administrative – employees are not compensated for the additional time it takes to complete the cumbersome amount of paperwork expected from ODSP (Grills, 2007). Communication barriers also exist, because financial deposits received from ODSP do not indicate which invoice it is paying (Anonymous, 2007a)
- Hiring COIN Clients – If a staff position opened up at COIN, a client who was trained there and would potentially be successful in the position could not be hired on without forfeiture of the job placement target money. In the past, World 2 Go Foods has employed an ODSP recipient who worked 8-12 hours a week and received minimum wage. However, if a position becomes vacant in the future, COIN management has been told by an employment support specialist that this is no longer possible
- Job Trials - Since being trained with COIN is a stepping stone to employment in the community, having employers who will hire ODSP recipients is crucial. However, if an individual is not ready for community employment and is unsuccessful in their job trial, the employer may not be willing to accept future clients
- Funding – lack of financial resources limits what a social enterprise can do. For example, without funding keeping staff members may be difficult and employees may be required to take on additional tasks (Anonymous, 2007b). It is also frustrating when ideas for development exist but there is limited funding to grow (Anonymous, 2007b). Underfunding can also hinder the development process because “if you are spread too thin then you can’t do anything well” (Anonymous, 2007b).

If at the end of the process the client is happy and successful, then COIN Food Services has accomplished its primary goal (Anonymous, 2007b) but as current enterprises are struggling to maintain their own employees, the likelihood of new developments and enterprises are unlikely. The sustainability of these projects is dependent on income, and to date, revenues generated by the businesses themselves are insufficient. Despite these challenges, however, “The organization has been around a long time and it’s gone through good and bad, and people are pretty motivated to see it continue” (Grills, 2007).

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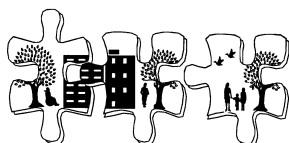


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