

## Chair's Message

The most exciting aspect of working with the Contact Niagara Board has been the sense that we are forever creating something new. With each step we take, I feel that we are turning a fresh page and beginning a powerful new passage in our community of children's and developmental services. These early months have been a stimulating trial and error process as we have worked to gain a full understanding of the needs of our client base and the abilities of our many partner agencies to meet those needs.

With each day, our knowledge has grown and will continue to grow, as we develop into a valuable system resource for the children's and developmental sectors in the Niagara Region. Our ability to assemble information on the myriad of resources available in our region will soon be second to none and the advice we will be able to offer those in charge of administering, funding and creating service programs will be invaluable.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of the exciting birth process of an organization like Contact Niagara. It has the potential to do so much good in our community.

**Art Wing, Contact Niagara Board Chair**

### Contact Niagara's Progress from April 1, 2000 to April 1, 2001:

#### April/May

- Board at full complement
- Five Resource Coordinators began employment
- Intensive training and orientation for staff

#### June

- Team Leader joined staff at Contact Niagara
- The Residential Placement Advisory Committee and the Niagara children's case resolution process became operational under Contact Niagara

#### July

- Focus on implementation strategies for four main system features:
  - Single point of access
  - Common tool for intake
  - Adult case resolution
  - Coordinated information
- Initial design of the 'access' model and the common intake tool after review of literature and best practices across our community

#### August

- Community consultation with service providers and consumers to review system feature design work
- Model for adult case resolution began to be designed

#### September/October

- Continuation of community consultation regarding system features
- Revisions and embellishments made to proposed models
- Assumed intake responsibilities for six programs, within five agencies on September 25, 2000

#### November/December

- Contact Niagara's grand opening ceremony and open house
- Distribution of Service Provider Questionnaires by Contact Niagara
- Web site launched

#### January/February

- Began intake responsibilities for another two agencies
- Over 1,000 requests for support were received by Contact Niagara

#### March/April

- Began intake responsibilities for four more agencies
- Contact Niagara starts to administer Performance Management Surveys to consumers as requested by the Ministry of Community and Social Services

## Report of the Executive Director

Less than two years ago, Contact Niagara was only a name. Today, it is an organization that is providing an important intake, information and liaison service to the Niagara community.

Working together, the Contact Niagara team has taken the core elements of its mandate, put them into action, and created a single point of access for Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) funded children's and developmental services. Without a detailed road map nor a similar program with which to compare ourselves, we worked within the Ministry's guidelines and broad directions to create and implement a working model. It seemed an enormous challenge when staff began in May of 2000, but by September 25, 2000 we were able to roll out our pilot project involving 'access' with our first six partners.

Another important achievement over these first eighteen months has been the development of a common tool for intake. In essence, it is an identification of the information required to help service providers to accept clients and offer the appropriate help. To create this tool, also launched on September 25 of last year, we reviewed the intake forms used by our many partners and combined the important elements into one tool that we believe best captures the pertinent information. In June 2000, we took another important step forward when we accepted responsibility for the Residential Placement Advisory Committee, and later, the children's case resolution process.

When I consider what lies ahead for Contact Niagara, I see a bright and exciting future. Our unique position as the single point of access to the system of MCSS funded children's and developmental services will enable us to accomplish another element of our mandate—community planning. We are learning about the successes in our community and are just beginning to identify more strengths, as well as gaps in service provision. We will be able to offer this information to decision makers to help them to improve what is available and provide what is not. I am energized and optimistic about the healthy interdependence across our community of partners which will allow us to best serve the needs of individuals and families.

**Stephen Novosedlik, Executive Director**

### Mission

Contact Niagara exists to make a positive difference to individuals, families and the Niagara community by providing coordinated information, community planning and access to MCSS-funded services and supports.

### Vision

Contact Niagara will be valued as an essential member of the service system and recognized by the community for its leadership, innovation, and commitment to individuals and families.

### Values

Individuals and families are central to our work at Contact Niagara. Our decisions and actions are guided by our commitment to the following core values:

### Integrity, Accountability, Trust

Committed to service excellence, our values will be evident in all we do. We will:

- Be open, honest and objective
- Seek input and welcome advice
- Make decisions fairly and responsibly
- Be guided by what we learn through innovation and creativity

### Personal Development

We believe people are individuals, each with unique strengths, needs, feelings and thoughts. We will:

- Work with each person and family towards the achievement of individual and collective goals
- Work and act in partnership with individuals and families, and our shared communities

### Respect

Recognizing and valuing the importance of partnerships, alliances and collaborative effort, we will:

- Ensure timely, flexible and appropriate responses
- Value the diversity of our communities and individuals
- Honour the privacy and dignity of others

### Financial Report

Revenue	Fiscal Year Ended March 31, 2001	Period October 6, 1999 to March 31, 2001
Grants MCSS, Etc.	\$971,981.00	\$158,000.00
Interest Income	\$6,899.00	\$921.00
	\$978,880.00	\$158,921.00
Expenses		
Salaries & Benefits	\$470,623.00	\$38,978.00
Amortization	\$34,864.00	\$4,176.00
Other	\$250,601.00	\$52,175.00
Net Excess of Revenue over Expenses	\$222,792.00	\$63,592.00

### Statistics

Number of referrals to Contact Niagara:  
September 25, 2000 launch to March 31, 2001

Intakes	693
Information	761
Case Resolution - Children	13
Case Resolution - Adults	4
Residential Placement Advisory Committee	32

## In Memory of Bob O'Neill

Bob O'Neill chaired the original advisory panel that looked at many aspects of services funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services in the Niagara Region to serve children and people with developmental disabilities. In his usual pleasant manner, Bob worked hard to ensure that the best interests of individuals would be paramount. He created opportunities for public input and hosted a series of meetings to gather the best advice possible for the panel to consider. In January of 1998, the panel submitted its report and the first recommendation implemented was the establishment of the new Niagara Community Services Board that, within a year, became known as Contact Niagara. Bob was selected for that inaugural Board

and continued to make a major contribution until his death on June 14th, 2001.

A member of the St. Catharines Rotary Club, Chair of the Mayor's Committee on Accessibility, a past member of the Board of the Niagara Centre For Independent Living, a member of the Niagara District Health Council and a past Director of Education for the Lincoln County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, Bob was passionate about the things that mattered to him. The interests of individuals and families who would come through Contact Niagara fit solidly on the list of what mattered to Bob. We will miss him.

### Board of Directors

Chair: Art Wing  
Vice-Chair: Bill Matheson  
Treasurer: Joe Krar  
Secretary: Stephen Novosedlik, Executive Director  
Peter Croskery  
Irene Foster  
Margaret Kleinsmith  
Wendy Luce Meyer  
Paul Roberts

### Contact Niagara Staff

Stephen Novosedlik,  
Executive Director  
Carol Lukasik,  
Executive Assistant  
Beth Foster,  
Team Leader  
Tom Archer,  
Resource Coordinator  
Susan Kowalski,  
Resource Coordinator  
Marcia Cramp,  
Resource Coordinator  
Karen Colavecchia,  
Resource Coordinator  
Chris Montreuil,  
Resource Coordinator, Bilingual  
Anita Klemmensen,  
Administrative Support and Receptionist  
Susan Dolgos,  
Administrative Support

### Agencies/Services

The following is a list of the MCSS agencies and services for whom Contact Niagara currently provides a single point of access:

Hotel Dieu: Children's Developmental Assessment Services  
Hotel Dieu: Autism Consultation Service  
Hotel Dieu: Autism Early Intervention Program  
Niagara Support Services  
Bethesda  
Niagara Child Development Centre  
Niagara Training & Employment Agency  
St. Catharines Association For Community Living  
Grimsby/Lincoln & District Association For Community Living  
Christian Horizons  
Community Living Fort Erie  
Port Colborne District Association For Community Living  
Mainstream  
Welland District Association For Community Living  
Niagara Centre For Youth Care

These two organizations will soon be involved with Contact Niagara's single point of access:

Family Counselling Centre: Adult Protective Services Workers  
Niagara Regional Youth Home

While Contact Niagara does not provide single point of access for the following organizations, we are either working collaboratively with them or will be very soon:

Family and Children's Services Niagara  
Boys and Girls Club of Niagara  
David S. Horne  
Centre de sante communautaire  
Fort Erie Native Cultural Centre

## Profiles

### Susan Kowalski, Resource Coordinator

"I wanted to be a part of Contact Niagara because of the unique opportunity we have to look at the whole system of services for children and adults with developmental disabilities, to identify the strengths that exist as well as the gaps, and to help develop a community planning model to address them. It's exciting!"

Susan Kowalski leads a busy life as a Resource Coordinator at Contact Niagara. When the phone rings in her office, she's ready to be presented with a myriad of different problems and has the information necessary to help. Susan listens carefully to the situation being described and either begins the intake process if the situation can be addressed by one of Contact Niagara's partner agencies, or assists the individual in finding a service or support that is more appropriate.

By learning about what the individual is looking for and understanding what areas of life he or she wants to focus on, Susan educates her caller about the many services available in Niagara that can provide programs and assistance that meet immediate and long term needs, advises if a waiting period can be expected and offers some much-needed encouragement.

"I like to say: don't worry, you've done the right thing by calling us."

### Wendy Luce Meyer, Board Member

"When my son was going through some very difficult years, I found myself telling his story over and over again to every professional we talked to. There was no central information service, and no continuous or shared record/history-it was an exhausting and frustrating process. I'm eager to be part of an organization that makes things so much better for parents trying to help their children."

Wendy Luce-Meyer, a Program Assistant to the Child and Youth Worker Program at Niagara College and a member of the Contact Niagara Board, knows all about the children's mental health services system. For many years, she worked her way through the system, trying to find the appropriate services for her son, who was experiencing difficulties she couldn't handle alone. Because Wendy is an assertive person used to doing research and keeping detailed notes, she was able to find the necessary care; today, her son has grown past many of his troubles and is leading a productive life. But Wendy hasn't forgotten her struggle, or the other parents she encountered along the way who were not as successful at navigating the complex world of medical, academic and social work professionals and the agencies that could provide the care and services needed.

"I was so pleased to hear about the work being done by Contact Niagara-so relieved to know that there would now be a single access point for families needing help. I wanted to be a part of that organization, and have found my time on the board to be very rewarding."

## Consumer Perspectives

"Resource Coordinator was a very good listener, directed me to appropriate service. Informed me of waitlists but recommended alternatives."

"Listened to me, did not superimpose ideas. Very knowledgeable. Keep up the good work and stay non-judgmental."

"Resource Coordinator helped me more than anyone else in years."

"Response time was excellent. Resource Coordinator was knowledgeable and informative. Great turnaround time."

"[It is helpful] that the Resource Coordinator got all the information and sent it to the service provider and that I will not have to repeat the information."

"I like the manner and compassion displayed by everyone I've talked to so far"