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June 5, 2017

Dear Employment Ontario service providers:

I am writing to inform you about today's release of [Access Talent](#), Ontario's employment strategy for people with disabilities. This cross-cutting, multi-ministry strategy fulfills a 2016 Budget commitment, while responding to recommendations made by the Partnership Council on Employment Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the Premier's Highly Skilled Workforce Panel.

The Ontario government strongly believes that people of all abilities can contribute their diverse skills and talents to their communities. The actions and programs outlined in Access Talent will help achieve this by connecting more people with disabilities to meaningful job opportunities, and helping more employers to meet their workforce needs.

One of the commitments in this strategy is the Supported Employment program to be delivered through the Employment Ontario network. In the next year, Ontario will launch Phase 1 of the program to provide employment services to people with disabilities who want more intensive support services than those currently offered.

The Supported Employment program is based on an evidence-based model widely recognized as a best practice in the field. It will offer the flexibility and choice needed to meet a broad range of needs, including: job readiness; job matching; long-term job retention services; and financial support for assistive devices, adaptive technologies, and other workplace accommodations. The Supported Employment program will provide services that are flexible and responsive to the diverse needs of employers and individuals. There will also be flexibility within the new program for providers to deliver as a sole provider or partner as part of a consortium, in order to ensure the right expertise exists to serve people with a range of disabilities.

The first phase of Supported Employment will be offered in only three select communities across the province. This phase will use feedback from service providers, the broader community, external stakeholder working groups, and individuals accessing the program, to make improvements or adjustments before further phases are implemented. All existing providers who deliver Ontario Employment Assistance Services, Ontario Disability Supports Program-Employment Supports, and Mental Health Vocational Employment Supports services in Phase 1 communities will be given the opportunity to participate in the service model. Phase 1 will not result in loss of funding.

Before confirming the three communities that will be selected for Phase 1, staff from the ministries will engage service providers in potential communities to assess their willingness and readiness to participate in Supported Employment. The ministry will provide more information once this engagement has taken place.

I believe that Access Talent will help build a stronger, more innovative economy that allows businesses to expand, and people of all abilities to share in—and contribute to—the province’s economic growth. Thank you for your ongoing work to support the career aspirations of people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

(original signed by)

Shelley Unterlander

Assistant Deputy Minister  
Employment and Training Division  
Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development