



## MEMO

To: All Ongwanada Staff

From: Lorrie Heffernan

Date: November 28, 2024

Re: Important Update: Temporary Program Reductions Due to Staffing Shortages

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Good afternoon,

As you may be aware, Ongwanada and most other DS organizations have been experiencing a significant staff shortage. This has been especially concerning within our residential homes. This concern has been increasing over time instead of decreasing, even with our efforts to improve our staffing complement.

We have initiated many different activities over the past few weeks. We will, in the weeks to come, increase our staffing numbers and be able to eliminate or reduce forced overtime situations. These include a new "We're Hiring" campaign, a review of our staffing patterns, and an update on our process to onboard and orient new staff. We are also partnering with St Lawrence College on a couple of initiatives with their Career Centre.

This situation is critical now, though; as a result, it has been decided to reduce program participation in the Crescent and Napanee programs. Our priority needs to be to maintain safe and supportive homes. Individuals at home with family or supported through the SIL and Host Family programs will continue to have access to their programs. Individuals living in Ongwanada community homes will not be attending programs. The Crescent and Napanee program staff will be reassigned on a temporary basis into community home staff lines. The reassignment work is being done now following the articles in the collective agreement that apply.

We will have these changes in place in 2 weeks. Specific details will follow shortly. This is a short-term response. We intend to return to regular service by mid to the end of February. If we can do it earlier, we will.

We did not make this decision easily, and we recognize the significant disruption this will have for many, both supported individuals and staff. We ask that you refrain from discussing your concerns or challenges in the presence of the individuals we support, recognizing that you will need to work with them to understand the change in their daily routine.

We appreciate everything our employees do to ensure that the people we serve are supported, safe, and living in healthy environments. We will return to regular work soon and continue growing, developing, and serving Ongwanada individuals, families, and the local community.

Sincerely,

Lorrie Heffernan  
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