

Hello Everyone,

WARNING: LONG MESSAGE WITH LOTS OF INFORMATION!

We are on the cusp of Step One of re-opening Ontario following an extremely challenging Wave 3 of COVID. It has been the most difficult 16 months of our lives dealing with three waves. I believe this will substantially change the way we all conduct ourselves professionally and personally as we move forward from “response mode” to “recovery”. The first thing I want to do is commend all of our staff and our consumers for their diligence and their sacrifices throughout this Pandemic. We are not out of the woods yet but we can see a clearing in the distance. I look forward to a time in the not too distant future when we can begin to meet again in groups face to face. Whether that is for training, a barbeque, Accessibility Awards or a Holiday party it feels like there is hope for such gatherings that we maybe took for granted in the past.

I send you this message to give you a full update on ALSO. I have said this many times but it remains to be the truth: the only thing that is constant for us is change. We are again embarking on substantial growth as an organization.

In the next 6-9 months we will be opening up about 100 new units where we will be supporting consumers in Windsor and Essex County.

Chateau Masson is located at 415 University Avenue East, Windsor. It is directly behind the casino parking garage. It is an old building that most of you have passed a thousand times. The City of Windsor has done renovations in the building and there will be about 50 individuals living there when it is at capacity. Currently there are about 20. ALSO is part of a Collaboration of supports with Hotel Dieu Grace Healthcare (ACT Team), Canadian Mental Health Association, The Community Housing Corporation and Family Service Windsor to provide supports to the residents of the building. The building is not accessible so it is not our usual consumer group. The residents have experienced homelessness or are at risk for homelessness. This includes individuals with mental health disabilities, substance misuse, addictions, acquired brain injuries and perhaps some physical disabilities. It is a complex population.

We worked with the union to create a new job classification; Community Service Worker. We currently have two part time staff Shannon Stradeski and Matthew Mannina who are the first staff to occupy the new role. They are covering the overnight shift at Chateau Masson. It is quiet right now but they are at the start of an interesting and unique collaboration.

Chez Nous is a former Retirement Home located in Stoney Point. It will be under renovation commencing in July. By mid to late September we intend to start welcoming residents to live at this new site. It will be a Housing with Supports initiative. There will be 38 units in total and most of them have a good level of accessibility. We will be looking for more staff as this site comes on line. Stay tuned!

3141 Sandwich Street is our current head office. The building has been sold. Staff in the building along with our summer students are working diligently to scan and digitize documents and to clear up 11 years of accumulated items so that our move will go smoothly. As soon as our new head office at **1100 University Ave West** is ready for occupation, we will be setting up there.

Renovations will begin at the same time at Sandwich Street to convert the building back to its original use, which is residential. There will be 29 Housing with Supports units. Completion is slated for December 2021. ALSO will be operating this project.

With all of these exciting changes, we have made some Human Resources adjustments as well.

Michelle Russell will take the recently posted Term Certain Program Manager. Many of you know Michelle. She has worked for ALSO for over 10 years. She has experience at almost all of our sites and most recently worked as a lead in Belle River. Michelle will manage Westgate. Her start date is June 14th and we are excited to have her.

Joslin Allen will be move from Central Y to Monarch. She will be practically next door to Michelle and will be able to offer her support and experience to her. Joslin will continue the important work of implementing the Alayacare scheduling and payroll software.

Kimberly Wirag will continue to manage Longfellow and Lasalle. She will take on oversight of the Scheduling team.

Christina Callard will manage Central Y and Y Residence Neighbourhoods of Care.

As you are aware, we welcomed Leigh Vachon to our Senior Management team this week. As our new Director of Enhanced Service and Partnership Development, she will have oversight of the following programs:

- Housing with Supports
- Collaborative Supports project (Chateau Masson)
- Day Programs
- Employment Supports
- Client Intervention Services and Consumer Service Navigation
- ABI System Navigation

Michele Legere will join Leigh's team and will manage Sandwich Street, Chateau Masson and Client Intervention. I want to say a special thank you to Michele who literally dropped what she was doing and went to run the Temporary Emergency Shelter Aquatic Centre (TESAC) when our shelter system was in outbreak. Michele did an amazing job supporting individuals experiencing homelessness in some of the most difficult of circumstances. She will continue that good work and dedication as we embark on a new chapter of ALSO service. Laura Kay will work with Michele to take over management of our two Day Programs and Employment Supports.

All other Program Manager assignments will remain the same. We are in the process of planning for the opening of a new Neighbourhood of Care in Essex as well so there will be more changes to come. We are growing.

On June 20th, we will begin our migration to our new Head Office at 1100 University Ave West. There is still significant work to do (including the installation of the elevator) before we can plan for re-opening our day programs and welcoming the public back to our offices. There will be more information to follow including a formal press release with the property owners and fellow tenants of the new Graffiti commercial site.

We are moving in the middle of a pandemic and we are opening up new sites and supports. What has not changed is our dedication to our community. We want to provide the best services to those who require supports to live successfully in the community. Those supports will look a bit different than our "traditional" attendant service focus. In the end we do the practical running on the ground with care and professionalism. Our front line staff always are the ones who get the credit for this work. Our front line staff are the ones who make growth and change possible for this organization. Our front line staff are the ones who build the ALSO reputation for taking care of our neighbours and our community. Thank you.

I warned you that this was a long communication. Thanks for reading all the way through. If you have questions, comments, concerns please do not hesitate to ask your Program Manager, reach out to our Leadership Team or contact myself. We are excited to talk to you about change and we are happy to answer your questions.

All the best,

Lynn Calder
Executive Director