



**Children's Aid Society**  
of Oxford County

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

## **(2007 – 2010)**

## **1.0 Introduction**

The mandate of the Children's Aid Society of Oxford County (Oxford CAS) is to deliver child welfare services under the Child and Family Services Act of the Province of Ontario. The Society delivers its services across Oxford County. It is a non-profit organization with a volunteer Board of Directors representing the community.

In the winter of 2006, the Board of Directors determined to develop a new Strategic Plan. The Society had not completed a Plan for a number of years, although the organization's operating environment had gone through and continues to experience significant change.

Key changes involve the introduction and planned implementation of the Province's Transformation Agenda, which would significantly impact the work and priorities of the Society. In addition, management of the Oxford CAS has undergone a leadership change. Substantial economic growth predicted for Oxford County will enlarge and change the population profile and potentially the service demands on the CAS. The Board felt the combination of these factors required the Society to examine its strengths and weaknesses, reassess its Vision and Mission and develop a new strategic direction for the next three to five years.

Fred Galloway of F. J. Galloway Associations Inc. of London, Ontario, was retained to facilitate the strategic planning process. Part of the process involved the creation of a series of eight focus groups comprised of staff, volunteers, foster parents and community service providers. Three telephone interviews were also completed. The results of the focus groups and the outcomes of these sessions have been prepared under separate cover. The strategic themes from the process are available as Appendix I of this report.

On Saturday, October 7, 2006, nine members of the Board of Directors and senior management met with a facilitator to develop the new Strategic Plan. This involved a review of the current Vision, Mission and Principles and Values, followed by the identification of the "Areas of Effort" that the Society will focus on over the next three to five years.

This document is the draft of the Strategic Plan that emerged from the planning session. It will be reviewed by the workshop participants and by others. An additional draft will be prepared following the review process and will be presented to the Board of Directors for final approval. Once approved, senior management will prepare and undertake an implementation strategy, monitor progress, and report to the Board on the Plan's progress and outcomes.

## **2.0 Vision**

A Vision is a statement designed to galvanize the energy and purpose of all the Society's stakeholders; it seeks to ensure all are moving in the same direction to achieve an organization's mandate. A Vision provides a sense of strategic direction toward an outcome. It can change over time, as the operating environment evolves.

The following vision was developed for the Children’s Aid Society of Oxford County:

***“Promising futures for children”***

This means:

**Promising futures** – that every child has abilities, interests and potential. The Society’s Vision is to work with children, their families and the community to help children in need to realize their promising future. That vision is what motivates the Society, its staff, volunteers and foster parents.

**Children** – that children are the priority, focus and mandate of the Society. It recognizes that while not every child will need the services and support of Oxford CAS, the CAS needs to be there for all children, as they may at some time need the Society’s support.

### **3.0 Mission Statement**

A Mission Statement identifies the essentials and substance of an organization. Every strategic and operational decision undertaken by an organization needs to connect to and support the Mission. If a decision does not connect to and support the Mission Statement, the organization should review the decision.

The following Mission Statement has been developed for the Oxford CAS:

**The Society serves and promotes:**

- **The best interests, safety and well-being of children.**
- **The integrity and diversity of our families and communities.**

This means:

**The Society serves and promotes** – that these are the two key action areas undertaken by the Society. “Serving” involves the development, delivery and ongoing evaluation of programs and services for children and families to help them achieve promising futures. These programs involve residential services, supervised access, child safety and many other protection and prevention initiatives.

“Promotion” incorporates activities related to advocacy, community education, training and development, working collaboratively; and other approaches that create the necessary family and community environments that will foster promising futures for children.

**The best interests, safety and well-being of children** – that the primary focus of Oxford CAS involves ensuring that decisions made with a view to the following: the best interests of children and their futures; ensuring their safety and security, whether emotional, physical or social; and, undertaking these actions directly or in collaboration with other community organizations to stabilize and enhance the overall well-being of every child served.

**The integrity and diversity of our families and communities** – that the Society works in a complex and multi-dimensional environment. The Society recognizes there are many different definitions of family, and a diversity of faith and cultural backgrounds. It also recognizes there are many different communities in Oxford County, and that these communities are in turn made up of sub-communities. All of these perspectives are important. Oxford CAS is aware, sensitive to and supportive of this diversity.

#### **4.0 Principles and Values**

Principles and Values have three applications within a Strategic Plan. First, they provide additional perspective to the components of the Mission Statement. Second, they outline how the Society wishes to develop and sustain its relationships with stakeholders. Third, they can identify some of the key accountabilities of the organization.

The following Principles and Values have been developed for Oxford CAS:

**We believe...**

##### **Protection of Children**

That our primary responsibility is the protection of children who are at risk of abuse or neglect.

##### **Dignity and Worth**

In the inherent dignity, worth and equality of each individual, and in the need to treat each individual with fairness and respect.

##### **Family**

That strong family units in all their diversity are the primary resource for developing a safe and nurturing environment for each child, and that our services should promote the autonomy and integrity of the family unit, proceeding, whenever possible, on the basis of informed consent.

##### **Community**

That connection to, involvement in and support from the community is essential to ensure the best outcomes for children in realizing their future promise.

##### **Advocacy**

In advocating with the community to establish the value of and the supports necessary for strong families, the safety of children and building promising futures for them.

### **Culture of Excellence**

In creating an organizational culture that fosters the pursuit of excellence through continuous improvement and a learning organization that facilitates innovation in the development of all the Society's programs and services.

### **Staff, Foster Parents and Volunteers**

In the value and importance of our staff, foster parents and volunteers in contributing to the achievement of positive outcomes for all the children and families the Society serves.

### **Accountability**

In being accountable to those we serve, funders and the community, by always acting with integrity, transparency and honesty.

The Society's most fundamental value is the belief that its first and foremost responsibility is to protect children who are in danger or potentially at risk of abuse. This is undertaken alone or in conjunction with other community service providers.

The Society believes that every person has value and a purpose, that they can contribute and can build on their strengths. The Society treats every person with dignity and respect, fairness and equality, and will always support individuals in the development of their strengths and their ability to contribute to the community.

The Society values the importance and role of families in all the work it undertakes. It believes that a strong family unit, no matter what form that family takes, is the primary and most important social unit in ensuring and developing safe and nurturing environments for children. Strong families are the preferred and best way to nurture and develop children to realize their potential. Often, it is the family that needs support to successfully fulfill this vital role. The removal of children from families is a final consideration when the safety and security of the child becomes paramount.

The Society believes that it is important for all service providers to promote and support the autonomy and integrity of each family unit. Whenever possible, decisions involving the family are based upon informed consent, to enhance the family's role and sense of partnership.

Another key value held by the Oxford CAS is the importance of its relationship with the community. The community is an integral part of the environment within which children and families live. It is important that the community be supportive and nurturing and create the understanding and the environment necessary to enhance the well-being of children.

The Society believes in advocacy both alone and also with other community service providers. Advocacy is key to educating the community about children who are at risk,

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and how to create healthy and supportive environments that contribute to stronger families.

The Oxford CAS values an organizational culture that supports innovation, continuous improvement, teamwork and mutual support and that invests in learning. This organizational culture allows the Society to better serve children, families and the community, and enhances the Society's relationships with other service providers.

The Oxford CAS believes in the importance of developing the capacities of staff, foster parents and volunteers. They are integral components in the overall service mix. Without them, children and families served by the Society would be missing key connections and resources.

The Society firmly believes in its accountability to those it serves, its funders and the community. The organization is accountable for the resources it uses, and the services it provides. Accountability is delivered by operating with transparency, honesty and the utmost integrity.

### **5.0 Areas of Effort**

Areas of Effort represent the first level in putting the Strategic Plan into operation. They define the key priorities or action areas that the Society has identified for the next three to five years.

The following Areas of Effort have been identified for 2007-2010:

#### **Infrastructure:**

1. To undertake a comprehensive infrastructure development program, involving:
  - Enhanced facilities, parking and related physical assets;
  - Enhanced technology systems, supports and training resources;
  - Enhanced capacity for fund development within the Society.

#### **Human Resources Strategy:**

2. To develop and implement a comprehensive Human Resources Strategy for staff, foster parents and volunteers, involving the following key areas:
  - A wellness program, focusing on both physical and emotional well-being.
  - Staff training for developing a learning organization responsive to increasingly complex cases and related initiatives;
  - Enhanced recruitment and retention strategies for volunteers, foster parents and staff;
  - Succession planning, especially at senior staff levels;
  - Board development;
  - Recognition and value programs;
  - A consistently utilized performance appraisal program, aligned with the Society's Strategic Plan.

**Services and Program Enhancement:**

3. To develop and implement a services and programs enhancement strategy, focusing on:
  - Improved after-hours services and case coverage;
  - Increased access to and development of locally operated services and programs;
  - Implementation and partnership development initiatives for the Transformation Agenda, including shared services, partnerships and related outcomes;
  - A comprehensive review of service/program policies and procedures in order to gain consistency, enhanced communications and improved outcomes.
  - Strategies to improve workload challenges.

**Stronger Bridges with Stakeholders:**

4. To undertake improved connection/linkage strategies and initiatives with stakeholders, involving:
  - Communications and education/training with both internal and external stakeholders;
  - Society and broader-based advocacy initiatives;
  - Customer service improvements;
  - Community development and education activities.

**Organizational Development:**

5. To design and implement organizational development initiatives that focus on:
  - Enriching the organization's culture and sense of team through continuous improvement by encouraging meaningful input by taking steps to foster excellence through innovation and by developing a learning organization;
  - Enhancing planning, preparedness and evaluation systems to better position the organization to respond to future trends, impacts and needs;
  - Developing an organizational accountability model and reporting system.

The strategic planning process has drawn attention to the need for substantially enhanced physical and financial infrastructure. Over the next three to five years, the need for new buildings and related facilities, parking and other special considerations is paramount. These needs are more pressing than was anticipated in earlier planning, because of the growth of the organization and increasing caseloads.

Increasing needs also demand a comprehensive assessment of technology systems, including the development of the support and training necessary to bring the Society's information and communications technology capacity to a new level.

A third component of the infrastructure Area of Effort is the development of a more comprehensive and far-reaching Fund Development capacity. This will likely be needed to support facilities development and ongoing non-funded Society needs.

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The second Area of Effort involves human resources skills and capacity. The value and importance of a wellness program has been identified. Succession planning, recruitment, retention and recognition programs are also important components of an overall human resources initiative.

Board development will ensure that the Board has the skills and capacities to govern the organization and represent the Society's constituents effectively. The development of a performance appraisal system, and its use on a consistent and regular basis, is also a fundamental human resources need.

The third Area of Effort focuses on services and programs. Of particular concern are after-hours services, as well as case coverage when staff are away. Improving the consistency and quality of services and programs will improve relationships associated with the Society's services.

The development of local services is also seen as a key Area of Effort. Currently, over 50 per cent of the children in care are supported outside Oxford County. The Society, working with other service providers, needs to bring services and programs to its community.

Another key component of this Area of Effort is the need to respond to the Transformation Agenda. This Agenda calls for restructuring and for new goals and objectives that will entail more shared services and partnerships with community members and service providers. Important steps need to be taken in this area in terms of education, training and the development of partnership activities.

Case services and program policies and procedures need to be comprehensively reviewed, and their application and interpretation must be consistently followed by all staff. A workload management strategy must ensure that coverage, policies and procedures and other issues can be effectively undertaken within reasonable workloads. The potential to pursue integrated administrative services will also be assessed.

The fourth Area of Effort centres on building connections with all stakeholders. This is vital to bring the Society more strongly into the community. Key elements involve enhanced communications, education and training with all stakeholders, the development of advocacy strategies and improved customer service and community development initiatives.

Enriching the Society's organizational culture is a fifth Area of Effort. Team development, fostering innovation, implementing continuous improvement programs and giving meaningful voice to stakeholders are keys to gaining support and momentum to move forward with the Areas of Effort.

The final component of this Area of Effort is the development of an accountability model and reporting system to ensure that the Society is a more respected, a better understood and a more valued member of the community.

## **6.0 Implementation**

### **6.1 Implementation Strategy**

Management will develop an implementation strategy following the approval of the Strategic Plan by the Board of Directors. It is important to understand that implementation is effected by changes in the operating environment, by the emergence of new information and by other factors.

Therefore, the Board of Directors must receive regular updates on the implementation of the Areas of Effort. It must be assured that the Strategic Plan is progressing and informed where changes are required and barriers are being experienced.

The attached charts provide templates for the development of an implementation plan. They can also be used for ongoing review and evaluation.

### **6.2 Strategic Plan Review**

The following is recommended for ongoing review and development of the Society's Strategic Plan:

- Every quarter, the Executive Director should report verbally to the Board on progress being made, challenges being faced, and directions being taken.
- Annually, the Board should set aside one to two hours to review the progress of the Plan, assessing changes in the operating environment and possible amendments where appropriate.
- Every three years, the Board and senior staff should undertake a strategic planning workshop to update, re-develop or reposition the Strategic Plan for the next three-to-five year period.

**2006-2010 Strategic Plan for Children's Aid Society of Oxford County  
Implementation Program**

OBJECTIVES	Priority Ranking	Project Lead/Team	Tasks	Reporting Dates mm/dd/yr	Approval Requirements
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<b>Area of Effort No. 1</b>	<b>To undertake a comprehensive infrastructure development program, involving:</b>				
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1.1 Enhanced facilities, parking and related physical assets;					
1.2 Enhanced technology systems, supports and training resources;					
1.3 Enhanced capacity for Fund Development within the Society.					

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OBJECTIVES	Priority Ranking	Project Lead/Team	Tasks	Reporting Dates mm/dd/yr	Approval Requirements
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<b>Area of Effort No. 2</b>	<b>To develop and implement a comprehensive Human Resources Strategy for staff, foster parents and volunteers, involving the following key areas of endeavour:</b>				
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2.1 A wellness program focusing on both physical and emotional well-being;					
2.2 Staff training and development in terms of growing a learning organization and responding to increasingly complex cases and related initiatives;					
2.3 Enhanced recruitment and retention strategies for volunteers, foster parents and staff;					
2.4 Succession planning, especially at senior staff levels;					
2.5 Board development;					

**STRATEGIC PLAN – OXFORD CAS (2007 - 2010)**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>Priority Ranking</b>	<b>Project Lead/Team</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Reporting Dates mm/dd/yr</b>	<b>Approval Requirements</b>
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**Area of Effort No. 2**                      **To develop and implement a comprehensive Human Resources Strategy for staff, foster parents and volunteers, involving the following key areas of endeavour:**

2.6 Recognition and value programs;

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2.7 A consistently utilized performance appraisal program aligned with the Strategic Plan.

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**STRATEGIC PLAN – OXFORD CAS (2007 - 2010)**

<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>Priority Ranking</b>	<b>Project Lead/Team</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Reporting Dates mm/dd/yr</b>	<b>Approval Requirements</b>
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<b>Area of Effort No. 3</b>	<b>To develop and implement a services and programs enhancement strategy, focusing on:</b>				
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3.1 Improved after hours services and case coverage;

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3.2 Increased access to and development of locally operated services and programs;

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3.3 Implementation and partnership development initiatives for the Transformation Agenda, including shared services, partnerships and related outcomes;

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3.4 A comprehensive review of service/program policies and procedures in order to gain consistency, enhanced communications and improved outcomes;

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3.5 Strategies to improve work load challenges.

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**STRATEGIC PLAN – OXFORD CAS (2007 - 2010)**

OBJECTIVES	Priority Ranking	Project Lead/Team	Tasks	Reporting Dates mm/dd/yr	Approval Requirements
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<b>Area of Effort No. 4</b>	<b>To undertake improved connection/linkage strategies and initiatives with stakeholders, involving:</b>				
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4.1 Communications and education/training with both internal and external stakeholders;

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4.2 Society and broader-based advocacy initiatives;

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4.3 Customer service improvements;

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4.4 Community development and education activities.

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**STRATEGIC PLAN – OXFORD CAS (2007 - 2010)**

OBJECTIVES	Priority Ranking	Project Lead/Team	Tasks	Reporting Dates mm/dd/yr	Approval Requirements
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**Area of Effort No. 5**                      **To design and implement organizational development initiatives that focus on:**

5.1 Enriching the organization's culture and sense of team, through continuous improvement by providing opportunities for meaningful input by taking steps to foster excellence through innovation and by developing a learning organization;

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5.2 Enhanced planning, preparedness and evaluation systems to better position the organization to respond to future trends, impacts and needs;

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5.3 Developing an organizational accountability model and reporting system.

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**APPENDIX I**  
**CONSULTATION PROGRAM**  
**STRATEGIC THEMES**

## **OBSERVATIONS**

### **Strengths**

- Human resources of the organization in terms of the staff, volunteers and foster parents, related to:
  - Their dedication and commitment;
  - Their skills and capacities;
  - Their caring for children and families.
- Improving relationships with community partners and the start of a stronger community presence;
- A committed Board, with people who are engaged in and are genuinely interested in children and families;
- Being a smaller agency, which provides for greater agility, flexibility, responsiveness and not being as bureaucratic;
- The Transformation Agenda, which could move the work of the agency away from paper and apprehension and towards more social work and being supportive;
- A strong sense of team among the staff who support one another professionally and personally;
- The recognition and the possible introduction of wellness as an important organizational initiative;
- The interim leadership and the potential hope with the new leadership transition;
- Some indications of improving communications.

### ***Concerns / Issues / Weaknesses***

- The building, parking, productivity/efficiency, safety and many other considerations;
- The organization's infrastructure in terms of technology, facility maintenance, a human resources capacity and many other areas. The organization is significantly underdeveloped in this area;
- Operating procedures, practices and systems are rigid, inflexible, redundant in many areas and from another era;
- The overwhelming change that has occurred recently and that is anticipated, which stresses staff and volunteers, and creates other challenges;
- Work load levels are too high for effective client servicing. Staffing levels are not at the level required to effectively provide direct and indirect services;
- Coverage and after hours capacities are weak, and create reduced client servicing capabilities, frustrate volunteers and foster parents and community partners; and represent potential risks for the Society;
- The service emphasis remains too much on apprehension, and not enough on social work, prevention, support and specialized services/therapeutic/clinical activity;
- The recent management changes have been well received. The expectations of what this will lead to are very high and present a liability if not delivered upon;

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- Cases are becoming more complex. The methadone clinic is drawing different types of people to the community and the training and capacities of staff are not tracking accordingly;
- There has been lots of discussion and some limited training on the Transformation Agenda, but staff and the community service providers don't know what this means. Angst is rising, as it is known that implementation is going to occur. A "real thirst" for information exists;
- Work with community partners has a long way to go, though it is starting to move positively;
- The lack of clinical and support services in the community generally makes court orders challenging and causes a lot of transportation outside of the community;
- Over fifty percent of the children in care live outside of the community, which removes children from their home communities and creates a lot of driving time and costs;
- Communication systems, practices and effectiveness in the organization are significant issues. Approximately one in four volunteer driving requirements has a problem associated with not being aware of cancellations, wrong information, etc.
- There is a lot of fragmentation of information, communications, record keeping and related activity in the organization, which undermines effective communications, creates redundancy, etc;
- Some dimensions of the organization are significantly under-resourced in terms of specialized activity and tend to be invisible and not seen as part of the overall Mission of the organization;

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- Case planning and the sourcing of input appears to have diminished in the last few years. Also, there tends to be case allocation challenges;
- Some children seem to be in the care of the Intake Unit for an extended period of time;
- Foster parents have continuing concern about not being on the team, not having the information they require, effectively accessing medical services and a number of other challenges;
- Computer systems often freeze, the limitations on IFFERS results in not being able to access updated addresses and a host of other efficiency, accuracy and related challenges exist, including suspicion about the quality of some of the data;
- Some staff wear many hats and become fragmented in their roles and responsibilities, or there is over-dependency on one or two people. When they are not available chaos can occur, especially if they create their own parallel systems/files;
- Significant concerns around the consistency of practice, decision-making, information sharing, recognition and related dimensions of the organization by both internal and external parties;
- Policies and procedures, both for internal operations and in terms of external relationships are not at the level or as available as they need to be;
- Record keeping, data and related systems need investigation and development in conjunction with work flow, technology and other

dimensions of the operation. The organization needs to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century on all fronts;

- Significant inconsistency between the agency's case loads and operations and those for four other comparative societies, which raises questions about community responsiveness, penetration rates, perceptions, etc;
- The Society is generally viewed/treated as an apprehension organization, which frames its relationship with clients and families, service providers and others in a narrow and negative context;
- Amalgamation continues to hang over the organization, and would have a huge impact on local servicing approaches, representation, etc;
- Some of the parents involved with the Society consistently cancel appointments/visitations; and interfere and complicate the lives of foster parents, volunteers and staff; sometimes at considerable expense;

### ***Five to Ten Year Perspectives***

- A potentially larger Oxford community, not just Woodstock, which could result in more cases with greater complexity. It also could result in more foster parents;
- The methadone clinic is attracting a different type of clientele that is growing in numbers and often have family-related issues;
- Increasing incidence of diabetes, autism, physical disabilities and other challenges that result in more complex cases with significantly higher costs;
- The Transformation Agenda which could radically change the role of the Society, funding, relationships with community partners and the need for additional community services and supports;
- Potential for a growing focus on prevention and support services as a means to reduce long term impacts on children, costs, etc., especially related to children in care;
- The possibility of more integrated services at a minimum or amalgamation at a maximum, as is occurring with the Local Integrated Health Networks, which will change the servicing perspective and focus;
- An aging population with more people working out of the households could impact the availability of foster parents and case loads;
- Increasing challenges with recruiting and retaining volunteers, sourcing funds from charitable organizations to help families, the competitiveness of fundraising and other trends could impact the work of the Society.

## ***Strategic Themes***

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- The need to move the organization's infrastructure to another level/era, (building, technology, human resources, records management, etc.)
- Redesign of the work load levels and systems and procedures to be more effective, efficient and contemporary;
- Investing in staff and volunteers relative to ongoing training and development, recognition, team building and general and specialized training and development;
- Developing comprehensive communication systems that work and are efficient;
- Overcoming coverage and after hours weaknesses/gaps;
- Building new/improved community relationships, partnerships and capacities;
- Positively capitalizing on the sense of hope and opportunity that currently exists within the internal and external operating environments and culture of the Society;
- Better positioning the Board, staff and the organization in a potentially escalating change environment.