

Guelph Services for the Autistic

Records of Annual General Meetings since 1998

<http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-summary+links.pdf>

For index to Minutes of Board Meetings, by year, see:

<http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/GSA-Bd-mtg-year-dates.pdf>

X available in print and digital; * print not digital; NA not available Footnotes give links to more documentation						
Date of AGM	Rept scope	Audit yr	Minutes	Report	Audit	Notable events and reports in basic Housing Trust and outreach roles
17 November 1998	1997-1998	NA	X	X	NA	Refocus GSA as model Housing Trust; ¹ IFCO links ² ; bylaws and other legal underpinnings. ³
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-19981117.pdf						
29 September 1999	1998-1999	1998	X	X	*	Community outreach; ⁴ search for TPA for AB, ⁵ composing model agreements. ⁶
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-19990929.pdf						
11 October 2000	1999-2000	1999	X	X	X	House ⁷ & Audit Committees. ⁸ refinement of GSA model. ⁹ Listening to AB. ¹⁰
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20001011.pdf						
8 November 2001	2000-2001	2000	X	X	X	OAARSN website. ¹¹ Plans for local outreach - > ASPIRE (Trillium application).
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20011108.pdf						
11 November 2002	2001-2002	2001	X	X	X	Supersensory workshops in May 2001. ¹² Focus on Microboards ¹³ in Nov 2001.
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20021111.pdf						
8 December 2003	2002-2003	2002	X	X	X	Incorporation of Ontario's 1 st Aroha. ¹⁴ Outreach, local/general: ASPIRE and PATHs ¹⁵
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20031208.pdf						
1 November 2004	2003-2004	2003	X	X	X	Presentations and partnerships. ¹⁶ Ontario Ministry of Community & Social Services begins "transformation" of developmental services-> new 2008 legislation. ¹⁷
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20041101.pdf						
7 November 2005	2004-2005	2004	X	X	X	Farm community events ¹⁸ -> ACES group. ¹⁹ Bridges communication group from 2004. ²⁰
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20051107.pdf						
26 June 2006	2005	2005	X	X	X	Creative Supports conference April 2005 for 200; video+print report. ²¹
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20060626.pdf						
11 June 2007	2006	2006	X	X	X	Colloquium for "brokerage"/independent facilitation of personal supports in April. ²²
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20070611.pdf						

9 June 2008	2007	2007	X	X	X	Homes focus since 2004 ->IRMI proposal. ²³ Produced GSA Manual, <i>Creating a Home of my Own: strategies & formal agreements.</i> ²⁴
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20080609.pdf						
8 June 2009	2008	2008	X	X	X	Interview CBC radio program about Autism. ²⁵ Support continues for ACES, Bridges, IFP, OPAAA, OAARSN, "transformation", "IRMI" ²⁶
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20090608.pdf						
7 June 2010	2009	2009	X	X	X	Support continues for ACES, Bridges, IFP, OPAAA, OAARSN update, ²⁷ "transformation"
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20100607.pdf						
13 June 2011	2010	2010	X	X	X	Bridges-Over-Barriers video and book <i>In Our Own Words.</i> ²⁸ Support continues....
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20110613.pdf						
11 June 2012	2011	2011	X	X	X	AB memoir published to benefit Bridges. ²⁹ New revised edition of GSA Manual. ³⁰
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20120611.pdf						
4 May 2013	2012	2012	X	X	X	Housing Trust and outreach roles continued. Interest in Aroha throughout Ontario. ³¹
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20130504.pdf						
8 June 2014	2013	2013	X	X	X	Updating Housing Trust and Aroha model agreements among AB, FAB and GSA. ³²
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20140608.pdf						
7 June 2015	2014	2014	X	X	X	<i> Holding in the Storm </i> film. ³³ Bridges members to Syracuse ST workshops. Guelph Mayor's award to AB (& GSA model) ³⁴
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20150607.pdf						
5 June 2016	2015	2015	X	X	X	Innovative project proposed to Housing Task Force. ³⁵ Bridges on Facebook. ³⁶ Aroha/FAB video. ³⁷ "Bridges-Over-Barriers" name for GSA outreach. ³⁸
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20160605.pdf						
4 June 2017	2016	2016	X	X	X	Bridges members tell their stories to reach everyone and gain respect and support. ³⁹ "GSA Priorities: for new directors" ⁴⁰
http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AGM-GSA-20170604.pdf						

See more detail below for each numbered item in the table.

¹ "Proposing a New Role for Guelph Services for the Autistic (GSA)," 24 June 1997. Document in <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/GSA-Bd-mins-1997.pdf> pp.1-4. GSA (first incorporated as a not-for-profit in August 1980) reinvented itself in 1997-8 to enable individual adults to lead good lives in homes of their own. For the next 12 years, GSA pioneered procedures and model agreements to administer homes in trust by:

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- * Involving circles of support of family and friends;
 - * Individualized funding strategies;
 - * Purchasing properties and negotiating mortgages including a role for family funding;
 - * Ensuring safety and proper maintenance;
 - * Enabling occupancy by recruiting “lifesharers”;
 - * Establishing sound legal basis for governance, including revised bylaws, charitable status, liability insurance;
 - * Drafting model legal agreements among all parties including person, family, GSA and any other entities.

The first home was bought by family 25 June 1997 in trust for AB, and formally transferred to GSA on 11 February 1998. The biggest challenge for the GSA Board in its first two years was gaining permission from the Ministry of Community and Social Services to use any funds for the individualized model of home and personal support.

² The **Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario (IFCO)** began in 1995 and held its first large conference at Couchiching in October 1998. Elizabeth Bloomfield who had connected with progressive advocates across Ontario because of GSA’s new focus was invited to attend. We were encouraged to find that others shared our vision of the forms of support that might work best for individual persons, especially those living with complex challenges. Facilitated discussions were led around the “foundational building blocks” of person-centred planning, personal support relationships, individualization of funds, management of supports, community development and transitional support. Individualized funding refers to any system in which dollars are provided to disabled consumers for the direct purchase of needed personal supports. These include a range of disability-related goods and services, such as technical aids and equipment, attendant care, homemaker assistance and respite services. *Individualized Funding: A New Vision* (July 1999).

https://individualizedfunding.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/individualized-funding-a-new-vision_report-from-1998-symposium.pdf

Michelle Friesen has also composed an historical overview to mark IFCO’s first ten years in *IFCO (A summary of the first 10 years and more)* to March 2005.

<https://blog.individualizedfunding.ca/history-and-events/history/>

³ Diane Squires of the Guelph law firm Smith Valeriotte provided valuable legal advice in setting up GSA with a new focus and drafting formal agreements among the various partners involved in the GSA model of support. After some further small amendments, the current GSA Bylaw is at this link, <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/GSA-bylaw1.pdf>

⁴ For example, the article in *At Guelph: “Guelph Services for the Autistic details new model for people living with the disorder”*, 25 March 1999. <http://www.uoguelph.ca/news/archives/001385.html> GSA continued to put out the quarterly print newsletter *Adult Autism Issues in Waterloo-Wellington (AAIWW)*, jointly with Waterloo-Wellington Autism Services, from 1998 to 2005. See listing and live links at <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/documents.shtml>

⁵ After strong advocacy from GSA and AB’s friends and allies, the Ontario authorities eventually accepted the GSA support model but only with restrictions on the choices by focus person and family. Funding could flow only to a Transfer Payment Agency, not the focus person and support group. No agencies nearer than **Windsor Community Living Support Services** accepted the principles of individualized funding; we were very glad to win the approval and support of its director, Malcolm Jeffreys. We invited Malcolm to visit Guelph to speak about individualized funding and person-centred plans at a public meeting following GSA’s AGM on 29 September 1999. He continued very interested in and supportive of AB until his sudden death in December 2003. **Kerry’s Place Autism Services** later assumed the TPA role for AB from October 2002 and still has this role. Both agencies simply flowed the funds; AB and his Aroha close supporters can decide where the funds are best spent. Funds are given monthly to GSA for its costs of maintaining AB’s occupancy of the home.

⁶ **Early model agreements** were the Family Funding Agreement between family and Housing Trust made in December 1997, the Occupancy Agreement between focus person with family and housing trust signed 11 February 1998. GSA's lifesharing agreement and procedures were drafted during 1998, and the Personal Support Agreement with the Transfer Payment Agency was finalized in October 1998. Anonymized versions of these agreements may be found in the GSA Manual *Creating a Home and Good Life of My Own* (2012 revised) as appendices 5, 6, 7 and 8.

⁷ The **House Committee** was a core group of the focus person's support cluster/circle of friends who undertook the role of monitoring the physical features of AB's house and advising GSA's board and in these early years was concerned with the search for "homesharers" who might provide in-home support and coordination. For example: <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/GSA-minutes-19990510-homeshar-brainstorm.pdf> This role was later assumed by the Aroha Friends of AB from 2002. Many physical improvements to AB's home, paid for by donations from his parents, are not chronicled here. Nor are the many trials with possible homesharers.

⁸ GSA's bylaws were revised in 1999-2000 to allow for an **Audit Committee** (two members who were not directors) to review and sign the annual financial statements. GSA's accounts have been modest as it has no paid staff. We appreciate the faithful service of Mary Johnston and her associates Grace Swartz and Helen Cleghorn as the Audit Committee from 1999 to 2013, and of George Lee and George Forsyth since 2013.

⁹ While pioneering the individualized approach to comprehensive support for our focus person, GSA has also responded to inquiries from a range of other people with varied needs, and considered how the key features of our model might be adapted. Other adults and/or their families and support circles want various kinds of help with housing and residential support and key elements to make life plans good and sustainable. GSA has shared its experience and the legal documents drafted for its unique services and supports with other persons and families—individually throughout but also through two editions of the GSA Manual, *Creating a Home and Good Life of My Own* (2008, 2012).

¹⁰ While an important part of the GSA model is self-determination by the focus person, in practice a family or board may be too preoccupied with legal and funding issues to listen. AB and the House Committee asked for more opportunities for him to express himself about his life. We invited Martha Leary of Toronto, autism specialist in communication and movement differences, to facilitate a discussion about the right to communicate and the need to be listened to. GSA wrote to CASLPO the college of speech pathologists in Ontario, advocating for AB to be allowed to communicate in his way. AB and parents invited Martha to create with Andrew a video, *Listening to Andrew*, completed in 2000, which was intended to help AB's companions and support workers interact with him.

¹¹ In March 2000, the **Ontario Adult Autism Research & Support Network (OAARSN)** launched a website and Listservs. Originally meant to be mainly for GSA and local contacts, OAARSN's role was expanded as we soon discovered the scarcity of good information and communication resources to connect all kinds of people concerned with Autism in adults. Hosted by the University of Guelph, OAARSN was maintained by Elizabeth Bloomfield with advice from programmer Peter McCaskell. More than 1000 contacts, mainly in Ontario but also in most provinces and countries outside Canada, were connected by the OAARSN Listserv to which we added the Creative Supports Listserv in 2005 for people concerned with other issues than Autism Spectrum Disorder. OAARSN publicized and encouraged discussion of issues important to GSA but without cost until updating in 2010 was helped by a small GSA grant. Because of AODA, the OAARSN website is now not regularly edited; updates are provided by bulletins to the Listserv addresses. For more information, link to OAARSN's home page: <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/>

¹² “Super-Sensory” workshops led by Gail Gillingham Wylie of Edmonton and hosted by GSA at University of Guelph (see report pp.4-5 at. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/pdf/111.PDF>) illustrate GSA’s early outreach role in featuring the sensory and movement challenges faced by people with complex health conditions and the strategies that help. GSA also hosted a good many events featuring nutrition and supplements, communication using augmentative and alternative modes, the value of circles/networks of friends, person-centred planning, and the PLAN way of living a good life.

¹³ **Focus on Microboards** events were hosted in November 2001 at the University of Guelph, facilitated by David and Faye Wetherow of Vancouver Island, and attended by 60 people from across Ontario. Information and discussion of “self-directed support corporations” or “incorporated entities for personal empowerment and support”. Since David Wetherow’s first formation of a Microboard in Manitoba in 1985, the idea had been taken up in British Columbia and several US states. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/pdf/AAIWW12.PDF> (page 2) and report at this OAARN link: <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/entities.shtml#2>

¹⁴ Inspired by the Wetherows, GSA’s first active member pioneered the incorporation of Ontario’s first such entity, with a core group of his circle of friends. What was most remarkable is that he himself called for such an entity as a safety net so he would not be alone beyond the lives of his parents. We decided to use the generic term Aroha, rather than Microboard. “Aroha” is a Maori word from Aotearoa/New Zealand, meaning the various qualities and values that are needed in a caring circle of friends-- affection, love, charity, compassion, empathy, concern, trust, pity, understanding and true friendship—all in active ways, not just ideas or feelings. GSA supported this move and decided that all active members seeking GSA’s role with a housing trust must have such an entity to safeguard quality of life and sustainability. In the past 15 years, at least 50 family groups have consulted us about forming an Aroha aka microboard. See OAARSN link <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/aroha.shtml>, the story of **Ontario’s first Aroha** <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/entities.shtml#4> and the Aroha blog at <http://aroha1.blogspot.ca>

¹⁵ From 2000, GSA’s Board shared news of its support model to encourage more families to be innovative in planning for adulthood through various forms of outreach. One was by promoting **ASPIRE: Autism Support: Project Information Resources Empowerment** with two main parts: a) surveying the present situations, abilities and needs of adults with autism; and b) modelling effective ways to inform and empower autistic individuals, with their families and friends, so they can plan and find resources for all the elements of a good life, including relationships with a personal support network, a home of one’s own, ways to make choices and contribute to the community, and a safe and secure future. After GSA did not succeed in obtaining Trillium funds for ASPIRE in 2001, Waterloo-Wellington Autism Services agreed to collaborate with a grant of \$20,000 which paid for part-time help by Jan Cooper, Nancy Miles and Nancy Cherry during the three years from August 2002 <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/aspire.shtml> <http://www.uoguelph.ca/oaar/aspire-project.shtml> In Jan’s first year, she met with 15 families in the Wellington-Waterloo region at least once, for in-depth discussion of needs and goals GSA sent Jan to Toronto for a three-day course offered by the Marsha Forest Centre for Inclusion, Family and Community in April 2003, so that she could advise ASPIRE families about how to use the planning tools of CIRCLES, MAPS and PATH. Jan and Beth Hancox of Waterloo together facilitated a workshop in Guelph early September 2003, to introduce PATH events (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) to ASPIRE adults and their families. ASPIRE paid for full PATH planning days for six adults with their families in the Waterloo-Wellington region in 2003/2004. See one report <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/PATH-jan05.pdf> In the last year or so of ASPIRE, Nancy Cherry concentrated on documenting services that are intended for or could serve adults with ASD, particularly in the Waterloo Region.

¹⁶ In the past 20 years, GSA has encouraged **collaboration and partnerships with other organizations and autonomous groups** who are working for similar goals. Through OAARSN we have been connected with

organizations outside our own region. GSA and OAARSN actively supported the Mastermind Strategy for Individualized Funding from 2002 and spoke up in meeting with the Minister of Community and Social Services who was also Guelph's MPP, in October 2002. We also addressed various groups on GSA values and strategies. This is a sampling of invitations to make presentations or compose position papers between June 2003 and May 2004. Gerald Bloomfield represented GSA at a workshop offered by Kerry's Place Autism Services on the topic "Balancing Rights, Risks and Responsibilities". For some years, Elizabeth represented GSA and adult autism issues on the Guelph-Wellington Working Group on Autism Spectrum Disorders that includes staff of the various agencies that have any connection with ASD. She wrote a report about the situation of adults with autism in Guelph-Wellington. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/Guelph-Well%20Adults%20with%20ASD%202003.pdf> She was invited to contribute a display about Adult Autism to the Ontario Ministry of Education's conference in September 2003, for which we also produced the brochure **Adults with Autism**. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/Adults-with-Autism-display.PDF> Because of her work with GSA and OAARSN, she is often invited to speak on the various issues that are part of GSA's mission. She gave presentations at the national Autism and Fragile-X conference in Kingston and to graduate students in Ryerson University's Institute of Disability Studies in July 2003 and then addressed meetings of Families for a Secure Future (Wellington-Dufferin), Planned Lifetime Networks (Waterloo-Wellington) and HAADD: Homes for Adults with Autism and Developmental Disabilities (Toronto). Andrew Foster represented us at the Individualized Funding conference in Toronto in February 2004. Elizabeth helped to organize a Guelph workshop in early May about Adult ASD issues across Ontario, called by Autism Ontario and facilitated by John Lord.

¹⁷ The Ontario Ministry of Community & Social Services under the new Liberal Government in 2004 announced its intention to "transform" services for people with developmental disabilities by changing the existing legislation dating from 1974. The process involved discussions with "stakeholders" including heads of service agencies and representatives of autonomous family groups. The Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008, was described as giving people with a developmental disability more independence and choice. The act was not officially proclaimed until July 2011. <http://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/developmental/improving/legislation.aspx>

¹⁸ In spring 2004 the Bloomfields were invited by the local chapter of Autism Ontario to show and speak to the film about Bittersweet Farms, a farm community for adults with autism founded in northwest Ohio in the early 1980s. The film excited interest among Wellington and Waterloo families in the possibility of an intentional community, perhaps farm-based, and supported the idea of a focus on **Autism and Community** to coincide with GSA's AGM in November. WWAS shared costs of the two workshops for which Bruce Kappel facilitated discussion. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/ASD-FCC-nov04.pdf>

¹⁹ While a farm community did not in the end seem viable, the experience of discussing Autism and Community as well as lessons from the ASPIRE project encouraged a spirit of collaboration among Waterloo and Wellington families who live with autism. GSA jointly supported a project called ACES which had a larger vision. We hosted a series of discussions among parents and allies on the goals of a centre of autism expertise as well as prospects for creating individualized homes. ACES also set up a Wednesday program that lasted four years until May 2009, providing transitional support for young adults who had recently left school. Participants from both Waterloo and Wellington met in rented space at the Ignatius Centre. Most funds were contributed by WWAS with direction by Moira Hollingsworth but GSA was also involved. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AIWW-31-2005.pdf> page 3.

²⁰ **Bridges-Over-Barriers** grew out of an informal group of young adults who type to talk because they cannot communicate with their voices. Most had first been helped with Supported Typing (ST, previously known as facilitated communication) in the early 1990s but official support had been withdrawn and they were mute

and isolated, not knowing that other people used ST. AB was fortunate to be supported regularly by expert facilitators from 2000. He became expressive as a wordsmith, poet and self-advocate, speaking up for others as well. Knowing of them through his facilitator Beth, he invited two Toronto communicators to his Guelph home in early 2000. Then we thought of other people who could be interested and others again heard about the group and asked to join. By May 2004, there were 7 members who came with their facilitators and other supporters and the number of communicators connected with Bridges have grown to around 30. We started a pattern of monthly gatherings in Guelph except in winter. Smaller gatherings are held in AB's home; larger ones at the Ignatius Jesuit Centre or sometimes at the University. We have recorded what everyone types and put out regular bulletins. In August 2005 AB proposed that we should work toward a centre of life planning and communication which could be called Bridges-Over-Barriers. It would need funds and he asked GSA at its November 2005 meeting to shelter Bridges by receiving and disbursing funds for projects to help people communicate reliably. Susan Honeyman and Andrew Foster agreed to be trustees and evaluate projects worthy of funding. GSA received donations on behalf of Bridges and ten Bridges members have been supported with grants to attend summer conferences by the Institute of Communication and Inclusion at Syracuse University, to show how they communicate, and to train supporters in the most effective strategies. The Bridges bulletins to 2014 at this link give an idea of the range of Bridges activities: <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/Bridges-bulletin-links-to-2014.pdf>

²¹ GSA's most ambitious outreach effort, the **Guelph Spring Conference on Creative Supports for Vulnerable Adults** in April 2005, was a contribution to the whole Ontario community that is concerned with vulnerable people. We convened a gathering of nearly 200 people from across the province who wanted to be creative in supporting good lives with and for adults who are vulnerable because of their physical, mental, communication or developmental differences. Our concern was practical--how to plan and implement the elements of a good life for each person, and to learn from each other's effective strategies and success stories. We hoped to put our minds and imaginations around various strategies, to show the connections among them, and to help persons and families think about and choose combinations that work for them. The conference was especially timely, in view of the announcement in 2004 that the Ministry of Community and Social Services intended to transform services for persons with developmental disabilities in lasting ways. We obtained a grant of \$10,200 from The Ontario Trillium Foundation to help with conference costs. Planning began 12 months before, when we obtained the co-operation of our keynote speaker, John Lord, and the six workshop leaders from all over Ontario. The event itself called forth a great of interest and participation by a remarkable range of people--vulnerable citizens themselves as self-advocates, parents and siblings, friends, support staff, professionals in the various fields, administrators and managers. Planning the event itself and follow-up efforts involved partnerships locally, regionally and provincially with other organizations and groups. Locally, we worked with the Canadian Mental Health Association and several of its initiatives, the Community Mental Health Clinic, Families for a Secure Future, Community Living Guelph-Wellington, Planned Lifetime Networks, Waterloo-Wellington Autism Services, Kerry's Place Autism services, the Community Music Therapy Association. Across Ontario, we related to another 30 groups and initiatives. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/CS2005-displays.pdf> We planned a process of collaboration in discussion and sharing resources—before, during and after the conference--adding a new Creative Supports Listserv to the OAARSN website and other media. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/creative.shtml> We could have doubled the number of participants if we had the space. Many who attended wished they could have learned from more than one of the workshops. To meet these needs, we recorded the conference and produced a professionally edited videotape of the highlights (49 minutes) and a printed report of edited presentations (80 pages), both entitled **Creative Supports for Vulnerable Citizens**. We thank Kerry's Place Autism Services and the

Community Mental Health Clinic in Guelph for grants towards having the video professionally edited.

<http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/CS-resources.html>

²² Based on our perceptions of regional needs and priorities during the ASPIRE project (2002-2005) and our experience of organizing the 2005 conference, we developed plans for a **regional Colloquium about adult autistic needs**, for both agency and family representatives. A full-day discussion on 21 April 2006, led by David DeVidi, explored the potential for “brokerage”, also known as independent planning and facilitation, in tailoring supports to the needs and gifts of each person. We agreed that brokerage and an autism resource centre would be cost-effective innovations for our region and of special benefit for adults with autism.

<http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/Colloquium-2006-rept-draft.pdf> <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/Colloq-summary.pdf>

In a series of meetings through the remainder of 2006 and 2007, we fleshed out how brokerage could work, through study of documents about models in North America and Europe and a site visit to the Windsor-Essex Brokerage for Personal Supports. Discussions and advocacy continued from 2006, strengthened by the growing recognition that **independent planning and facilitation** are essential for direct, individualized funding to be effective. See for example: <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/WDSPG-2007-1.pdf> The idea was taken up by managers of developmental services generally, rather than being focused on adults with autism. David DeVidi put large efforts into developing this initiative, first as chair and later as president. Ted McCartney also represented GSA on the planning group. Through a series of pilot projects with provincial funding, this process led to the incorporation of **Facilitation Wellington Dufferin** in 2014.

<http://www.facilitationwellingtondufferin.ca/>

²³ GSA-supported ACES group of Wellington and Waterloo families had been meeting to discuss creative ways of supporting individualized homes and lives since 2004. Research on good models, including physical design and smart technology, involved valuable correspondence and a site visit by GSA vice-president Andrew Foster to a model project in Aberdeen, Scotland. See <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/HOMES-ACES-2007nov.pdf> for discussions and reports. On the basis of this research, GSA made a proposal to the Ministry to be a resource for its **Innovative Residential Model Initiative (IRMI)** projects. See more on proposal at <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/GSA-IRMI-proposal-2007.pdf> and about IRMI below.

²⁴ **GSA’s energies as a Housing Trust** had been concentrated on making a success of its first house and organizing itself to extend its services to other vulnerable adults. GSA’s first focus person (and active member) helped prepare the house for occupancy by others he chose as personal support workers and living companions. He became an eloquent self-advocate and spoke up for others whose voices were not being heard. He also pioneered for Ontario the incorporation of an entity of personal empowerment and support which we call an Aroha (aka microboard). An Aroha is required for any adult GSA supports in his or her own home, together with control over individualized funds. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/entities.shtml> Because of this first success, GSA was approached by other adults and/or their families who wanted various kinds of help with housing and person-directed planning and support. We responded to individual inquiries, inviting people to visit AB’s home. We also represented GSA on various committees and action groups, and made presentations to workshops, support groups and conferences. For example, Gerald Bloomfield made a presentation to 50 interested family and agency people in the Durham Region in October 2006 about the "GSA model". See <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/GSA-model.pdf> Fulfilling a long-held intention, Gerald and Elizabeth Bloomfield completed the first edition of a “GSA Manual” at the end of 2007. Entitled **Creating a Home and Good Life of My Own: Strategies and formal agreements developed by Guelph Services for the Autistic in its role as housing trust**, it is described at this link: <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/Creating-home-2008.html> A second revised edition was published in 2012.

²⁵ Bernice Landry's prizewinning CBC Ideas program "The Dark End of the Spectrum"
<http://www.cbc.ca/andthewinneris/2013/04/11/the-dark-end-of-the-spectrum-1/>

²⁶ For a brief period in 2007-9, the Ontario MCSS offered funding for a pilot project of individualized residential support. The **Innovative Residential Model Initiative** gave a select number of adults with a developmental disability and their families the opportunity to propose alternative, individually tailored residential arrangements with choice as to where, how and with whom a person would live. Individuals, their families and service providers can develop proposals for housing options that are best suited to their personal needs, wants and dreams. As our GSA model was developed with such goals and strategies, we were called on for advice and support. The nearly 90 family groups that took part in the IRMI project were enthusiastic, as evidenced in the final report "**A Home That's Right For Me**": **Valuing Choice, Evolving Individualized Residential Options** (Summary Report of Policy Forums sponsored by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, July 2009). <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/Final-IRMI-Rept-2009.pdf> and <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/Final-IRMI-App-2009.pdf> Protests about housing shortages in Ontario impelled the Government to vote new funds for competing innovative housing projects in 2015-16. But opportunities for individualized residential funding and support have not yet been renewed.

²⁷ GSA decided that **updating OAARSN as an independent website** was justified because of the diverse range of people we had drawn together and for our focus on adult autism issues. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/> The website has a simple and logical structure, with all features accessible from the homepage. [Autism Information](#) addresses questions such as "What is Autism?", "How many people have Autism?", "What causes Autism?", "How is Autism diagnosed?", "Types of Autism" and "Autism in adulthood". [Treatments and Therapies](#) discusses various helpful interventions for adults. [Autism Resources](#) outlines the values and approaches that can support each individual with the complex needs to have the greatest quality of life. It also provides some guidance in searching for further Internet resources as well as to organizations that we have found helpful. [Creative Supports for Vulnerable Citizens](#) outlines the larger context and values in creating a good life for all people with a disability—including supported decision-making, independent planning and facilitation (aka brokerage of personal supports), direct and individualized funding, building community capacity, and inclusion. [Document Centre](#) presents links to PDF documents on the OAARSN site that may have lasting value—including perspectives on individual and family experiences, statements of helpful approaches and methods, and accounts of special meetings and project plans. **Communications Centre** has six sections, to which new materials are continuously added and announced in our OAARSN and Creative Supports news bulletins. --[Books on the Autism Spectrum](#) --[OAARSN's Adult Autism News Bulletins](#) --[Creative Supports Bulletins](#) --[AROHA-Entities for Personal Empowerment and Support](#) --[Bridges-Over-Barriers Communication Support Initiative](#) --[Guelph Services for Adults with Autism](#)

²⁸ Total donations to the Bridges-Over-Barriers trust fund amounted to about \$35,000 by the end of 2010, of which nearly half had been spent on special projects. Several individuals with their supporters were helped to develop their communication skills while smaller amounts have been used for resources and attendance at training and conferences. The name Bridges-Over-Barriers was registered as a trade-mark. A book and documentary film on DVD entitled **Bridges-Over-Barriers: In Our Own Words** were produced late in 2010 and widely distributed to promote understanding, acceptance and respect. See <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/Bridges-announce-1.pdf> The film is now on youtube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JentrBCN7Z8> Bridges has a webpage on the OAARSN site, with links to its newsletters and other communications at <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/bridges.shtml>

²⁹ GSA's first active member has been integral to GSA's development. His primary desire to lead his own life in a home of his own with companions he chooses impelled the organization to refocus itself as a Housing Trust

in 1997. The GSA model was continuously shaped by his needs and goals and also designed to be adaptable to other individual adults. AB's response to his opportunities attracted the interest of other individuals, families and autonomous groups. Above all, his determination to advocate for himself and others who do not speak with their voices attracted GSA's support for various forms of outreach notably with Aroha entities and Bridges-Over-Barriers. AB has attended many Board meetings and composed eloquent messages to the Board since 2000. For a current example: <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AB-to-GSA-20110613.pdf>

In 2011 he published the story of his life, *Bridges over Barriers in my Life with Autism*, for which David DeVidi provided a perceptive foreword. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AB-2011-blurb.pdf> ; <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AB2011-Foreword-DD.pdf> To reach a scholarly audience, AB was invited to compose an article about his experience including the founding of Bridges, and this was published as "What everyone yearns for: the Ontario story of Bridges-Over-Barriers", *Canadian Journal of Disability Studies* vol 1, no 2 (2012), 33pp. <http://cids.uwaterloo.ca/index.php/cids/article/view/46>

³⁰ For more on the 2nd edition of *Creating a Home and Good Life of My Own: the roles of a housing trust* (2012, 192p. ISBN 978-0-9866586-3-1), see: <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/manual-2012-flyer.pdf> with chapter 1 online at <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/GSA-manual-2012-ch1.pdf> GSA has responded many times to requests for consultation around creating a home and good life for someone with complex needs. This is a sample discussion guide about the process: <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/GSA-HT-process-2012.pdf>

³¹ Our pioneering of the **Aroha** (aka Microboard) as a safeguard to sustain a person's good life has attracted interest since 2001. Individual families asked for advice and visited to see AB's home and good life, while groups invited us to their events to explain the purposes and procedures. We gave at least 12 presentations in the ten years following the Focus on Microboard events in November 2001. Several factors increased the level of interest from 2012: the potential relevance of Aroha entities to supported decision-making, independent facilitation, direct individualized funding, and the acute shortage of housing options in Ontario. GSA representatives presented on Aroha entities as part of the GSA model in Windsor in June 2012, York Region in November 2012, Cambridge in March 2013 and Ottawa in April 2013. To respond to this interest we posted more about Aroha online. See for example: http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/AROHA-ENTITIES--PP_m-2.pdf , <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/aroha.shtml> , <http://aroha1.blogspot.ca/>

³² AB's Aroha directors reaffirmed and updated their Supported Decision-Making and Power of Attorney agreements with him on January 2013. Aroha directors met with GSA directors on 4 May 2013 to update and confirm the Occupancy/Housing Agreement and Personal Support Agreement with AB. Anonymized versions of these agreements are in the second edition of *Creating a Home and Good Life of My Own* (2012); schedules add individual details.

³³ Bridges communicators inspired the making of a short dramatic film directed and produced by Christine Zorn who had made our Bridges documentary video 2008-2010. *Holding in the Storm: My Life with Autism* was filmed in Guelph in 2013 and successfully launched in March 2014 to mark World Autism Awareness Week. It has won awards at several film festivals. GSA sponsored the making of this film, finding and administering the necessary funds of more than \$30,000. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7RKiabgFCc>

³⁴ AB's good life in his own home and his outreach efforts with Bridges were recognized by an award in June 2014 from the Mayor of Guelph for being a difference-maker. A short film of his good life including his acceptance speech is on youtube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pIQBC4_iLO

³⁵ GSA proposal to Housing Task Force offering consultation and mentoring based on 18 years of GSA experience as Housing Trust about key elements in creating a good whole life in home and community.

Describes GSA's outreach roles since 1997 and provides a good overview of GSA model. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/HTFproject-GSA-2015-3.pdf>

³⁶ The Bridges Communication Group on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1675591712669414/> was started by AB on 1 July 2015. It was intended to complement actual Bridges gatherings as some families were finding it harder to travel as often to Guelph or lived outside traveling distance. It has also proved to be a means of including more friends and allies who support the ideals of Bridges-Over-Barriers.

³⁷ As part of the increased interest in Aroha entities, Josée Boulanger of the Ottawa area proposed to make a new video featuring AB's FAB Aroha. She has a brother who could benefit from such an entity; she is also in a doctoral program of disability studies and involved in independent facilitation and co-housing initiatives. Josée stayed in AB's home for a weekend in August 2015 with her assistant Leah. She has edited one video in AB's voice (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BKu6POLiv8> or <https://vimeo.com/189787285>) and will produce a second video of interviews with the FAB directors whom she interviewed on her visit.

³⁸ At the 2015 AGM, GSA resolved that the name "Bridges-Over-Barriers" be adopted for GSA outreach functions that may be distinguished from GSA's role as Housing Trust. This decision was based on discussions since 2011 (see report below) and experience of the previous decade in speaking up for innovative and creative strategies. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca//GSA-outreach-priorities-from-2012.pdf>

³⁹ GSA is committed to supporting Bridges communicators to express themselves in ways that are most reliable for them. A few have published their life stories or are composing them now. Others want to make films that illustrate what's most important in their lives. Two examples from 2016 may be viewed at these youtube links: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tLs_UoqeGAA&t=21s
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GF5_BM9OOa4

⁴⁰ Summary of GSA roles and values for prospective new directors, based on discussions 2012-2017. <http://www.ont-autism.uoguelph.ca/GSA-Priorities-2017.pdf>