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*Series note: Karis Disability Services is clear about its role as a service provider – but we strive for these services to be experienced in specific ways. This Reflection is part of a series covering our Service Principles, the second of which is, “We promote full citizenship.”*

As we reflect on our service principles – in particular, promoting citizenship - I’m pleased to share two ways citizenship is expressed and experienced in Durham, Ontario: At a community level and by someone who uses our services directly.

Our description of this service principle says, “We recognize that people with disabilities are at risk of not benefitting fully from the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship” (*Policy A.2.6*). In other words, people who use Karis Disability Services are at risk of not experiencing *belonging* as citizens, which includes sharing their gifts with their community (responsibilities) and benefitting from the privileges or gifts that come with full citizenship (its rewards!).

**A. Organizational Citizenship**

On December 8, 2023, MPP Peter Bethenfalvy hosted [Michael Parsa](#) (Minister of Children, Community and Social Services) in Pickering. Karis Disability Services has been advocating for additional resources, and was invited to be part this major announcement in which our community and our organization were fully represented. Here, the Minister announced that the Ontario government is investing \$181,000 in upgrades and repairs at Karis Disability Services locations in Pickering through the [Partner Facility Renewal Program](#)! "Today's announcement reflects the government's unwavering commitment to building an inclusive and supportive Ontario," Mr. Bethenfalvy said. District Executive Director Paul Gillam expressed appreciation for the partnership: "This funding will provide much needed upgrades to windows, doors, and bathroom spaces – making these homes safer, more welcoming, and more accessible places to live."



This is one of many examples of how Karis Disability Services is recognized as a “good citizen” of the communities in which we serve!

**Left:** Representatives of Karis Disability Services meet with elected officials in Pickering as part of the special announcement.

## B. Individual Citizenship



Karla Vance (image to the left) is a citizen of Durham Ontario, who uses Karis Disabilities services. Karla has always wanted to give back to her community, and in 2022 she was hired to serve as a hostess at the provincial election! Her passion and dedication led her to wake up early to prepare for the task ahead. She met friendly employees and made new friends. Karla now shares about this citizenship opportunity with her friends and direct support professionals. She motivates others to see the benefits of giving back to their communities.

When we talk about promoting full citizenship, we are simply advocating “that people [with developmental disabilities] are treated with dignity and respect and are able to exercise their rights and responsibilities as accepted members of society” (*Policy A.2.6*). As an employee and a leader in the Durham community, I will continue to advocate for people who use Karis Disability Services, when necessary, to realize the benefits of full citizenship. Karla would like everyone reading this reflection to be encouraged to give back to the communities they belong to!

### Making the Connection

- What does it mean to be a “full citizen”? How have you experienced this, or is it something that you think you have experienced?
- What are some examples of where you have seen Karis Disability Services promote full citizenship?

For more information on the “Organizational Citizenship” story, visit [Ontario Investing in Critical Upgrades and Repairs to Community Agency Facilities | Peter Bethlenfalvy, MPP \(peterbethlenfalvympp.ca\)](https://www.ontario.ca/en/press-releases/2023/06/06/ontario-investing-in-critical-upgrades-and-repairs-to-community-agency-facilities)