

June 30, 2025

Re: Ready for the Challenges Ahead

Dear Team Members, Allies & Advocates Update,

June 30th marks an important milestone in the history of Tropicana Community Services. This year we are celebrating 45 years of service to the community. This milestone is both a cause for celebration and a moment for reflection.

On November 26, 2024, I candidly shared what was happening internally at Tropicana and our perspectives of the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors on the transformation that began in 2023. It was a sober assessment of all that was underway and what had to be done to lead Tropicana through challenging times.

I am now able to provide the final update related to the transformation. On May 5, 2025, the final component of our 2-year transformation was put in place. We welcomed Daniel Anckle as our new CEO & Executive Director. With Daniel now installed to lead the operations, the Executive Committee (Board Chair, Treasurer, and Secretary) have officially handed over operational control. As we reflect on the journey that took place from the summer of 2023 until the spring of 2025, Tropicana has gone through a great deal; arguably the most significant change in its 45-year history. This handoff represents the culmination of a deliberate, strategic journey – proof that our path forward was not reactionary, but truly about rebuilding with purpose.

What We Accomplished During the Transformation

Phase 1: January 2024 – September 2024

We conducted a full 360-degree review of operations management within Tropicana. The results of which informed where we needed to delve deeper to understand the concerns raised during the review.

The review identified the following nine key areas of concern:

1. Culture – we identified the need to revive a workplace culture that had drifted away from its core values. Our team members had retreated from the best version of themselves. This was a result of many factors including COVID-19, management approaches, not

regrouping after unionization in 2020, and in some cases not following best practices with regards to human resources management. **This became a focus for the Executive Committee as we began the transformation work. We met with all team members within Tropicana and reinstated the principles of transparency, servant leadership, teamwork, absolute candor - even if the topic is uncomfortable, every voice matters & has something to contribute, and most importantly, we must all commit to a workplace that we can be proud of - the “Employer of Choice” for community services. This work is ongoing.**

2. Division – Each department was working in silos, making “One Tropicana” more of a slogan than a practice. In some cases, it was actively discouraged. There were reported instances where our clients had been receiving support from one department, they inquired about another service and were instructed to “call over there to see if they can help.” When the debrief of the interaction occurred, we found that the team member was instructed to not provide information as they were not sure about what services we offered in the other department and did not want to misinform. **There was clearly an opportunity to make sure that all team members understood what services their colleagues were offering to support every client that reach out to us. We set about to establish the rallying mantra of “One Tropicana” led by the newly established Culture Committee. The result of their work has been outstanding in bringing everyone together.**

3. Operations – We uncovered numerous inconsistencies across the operations of Tropicana. Our procurement policies, expense management, delegation of authorities, and business process flows needed a comprehensive review and update, thus the following was documented, updated, and implemented:

- **A new expense management system to manage expenses & procurement policies.**
- **The procurement policy and delegation of authorities’ matrix.**
- **The major operational process flows to the entire organization.**
- **The human resources platform to help team members stay current with their obligations.**

4. Comprehensive Fiscal Review – As we further examined operations and our financial management, we recognized that the path that Tropicana was traveling was not sustainable. We needed to act immediately to change course.

We reviewed every program line by line to understand what Tropicana committed to deliver. We then examined the funding associated with the commitment to deliver.

What we discovered was that many of the programs were not viable. The cost to deliver the programs was significantly more than the funding envelop and the fund-raising activity results. In some cases, programs were underfunded by 100% in that for us to deliver the program in the agreed contract, we would have needed to double the funding from the Funder/ Grantee/ Program Sponsor. Tropicana was in essence financing some of these programs with money we did not have.

We implemented a Business Case Policy whereby every program was reviewed for viability. Each program must break even or produce a surplus. Any exception to this policy must be approved by the FAR (Finance Audit & Risk Committee), approved by the Treasurer, and finally approved by the Board of Directors.

The guiding principle is business management, and we must operate in a fiscally responsible manner.

5. Vendor Management – A key component to our transformation was to audit every 3rd party vendor relationship that we had. Each service provider agreement that we had was scrutinized.

Every agreement was renegotiated and resulted in significant cost savings to Tropicana.

In some cases, we were able to reduce our monthly expenses by more than 35%; we were able to reduce the provisioned services to align with what we actually consumed.

We consolidated services where we could, and reduced services that were no longer necessary, or found an alternative which was more cost effective.

We were able to right-size our vendor management portfolio to align with our needs.

6. People Management – The most crucial aspect of the transformation was to understand the sustainability of our staffing levels.

As the results of the Programs review concluded, our fears were made clear - we had an unsustainable level of staffing for the consolidated program portfolio.

We had realized all the cost-savings opportunities and at the end, it was not enough to avoid reductions in staff.

We worked with the operations leadership team and the Union to determine how to approach the inevitable.

We reached out to our funders to see if there were any further opportunities to increase the funding envelopes – where they could provide supplemental funding, we included that in our approach.

In the end we needed to reduce our staffing levels by 30%. This was the most difficult part of the transformation, but we had to do it to secure the future of Tropicana.

The Union leadership team was a crucial partner in this activity, and I want to take a moment to commend the team on their humanity and empathy throughout.

7. Integrated Employment Services (IES) – March 2025 marked the end of Tropicana's legacy Employment Services program and the launch of the new IES program.

As Employment Services is the 2nd largest program run by Tropicana, the transformation in this sector was (and continues to be) a significant departure from business as usual with the potential to create even greater challenges during an already volatile period.

The new program preparation was a coordinated effort led by our Director of Employment Services, Nimo Abdulkadir, supported by the entire operations leadership team.

We approached the transformation as a project and ensured that all Team Members in the Employment Centre had the requisite support & training to be successful.

At the first quarterly reporting deadline, results have exceeded all expectations, and Tropicana is on track to maintain this performance.

8. SBCCI (Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative) – As a founding member of this important Canadian Government led & funded program, Tropicana continues to lead the way with our partners from Africa Centre (Edmonton), BBI (Halifax), and Group 3737 (Montreal) in creating new resources for our Canadian Black Communities. This program has been so successful that it has been showcased at the United Nations PFPAD (Permanent Forum for People of African Descent).

We now enter the 2nd Decade of this global initiative and Tropicana is working with our partners to make these resources more permanent.

We have secured additional funding and once we finalize the program for this coming year, we will inform the community of what it all means.

We continue to work tirelessly to secure investments in our communities across Canada for the benefit of all Canadian Black Community services organizations.

This work continues and we continue to be an influential voice working with ESDC (Employment & Social Development Canada) to keep the momentum and address the systemic issues that persist within Canadian society.

9. Executive Director - CEO – The final piece of the transformation was also the activity that took the longest amount of time to complete. After reviewing more than 50 applications, 6 short-listed candidates, 3 finalists, we found our new Executive Director - CEO.

We are delighted to welcome Daniel Anckle to Tropicana. Daniel was ready to lead Tropicana before his start date on May 5, 2025. He spent time in the weeks prior to joining to meet with our team, the Executive Committee, and the Board of Directors in advance of assuming his responsibilities.

He also attended one of our events to better understand the Tropicana Effect and what to expect as its new leader.

I am happy to report that both Daniel and Tropicana are off to a great start! There will be more updates in the time ahead.

In Summary: Rebuilding With Purpose

It was an incredibly challenging two (2) years for Tropicana, however we emerge from this challenging period with a number of positive outcomes to meet the challenges ahead:

- A cultural rejuvenation led by the Executive Committee and supported by Bridget James, Executive Assistant to the Board & Executive Director along with the Culture Committee.
- New operations management process, tools, and discipline.
- New business management procedures, tools, and protocols.
- New expense management tools and procedures.
- We launched the Youth Justice program led by Paula Morrison, Director, Marketing & Communications.
- We launched a new employment program for People With Disabilities (PWD) led by Elvis Oliphant, Project Officer at our Employment Centre.
- A new finance and accounting platform led by Curtis Eadie, Director Finance and Shanuka Liyanage, Sr. Financial Analyst.
- A focus on “finishing the job” as a reliable organization representing the Canadian Black Community. This is through always adhering to our processes and procedures and acting as a transparent and reliable partner to our funder/ grantors/ and program sponsors.
- Building on the 45 years of service to the community and making sure that Tropicana is viable and strong to meet the headwinds and challenges ahead.

The Next Horizon for Tropicana Community Services

I am happy to report that the operations and financial management disciplines that were instituted along with the teamwork has yielded positive results. We start the new fiscal year with a surplus of ~\$40,000.

We have begun the cultural healing process across all aspects of Tropicana.

Tropicana Community Services continues to be an important community services organization in the GTA (Greater Toronto Area), and in the past 5 years, our impact has been felt across Canada as a founding member of the [SBCCI \(Supporting Black Canadian Communities Initiative\)](#). We are operating with the type of management discipline that will govern the business activities of Tropicana for years to come.

The current state of Tropicana Community Services is stable, and we are now growing and expanding the services that we provide to the Black, Caribbean, and other diverse communities in need of support.

We welcome your continued support as we embark on this next chapter. If you have any questions or wish to meet with our leadership team, please contact us at info@tropicanacommunity.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. Grey", enclosed within a blue oval.

Anthony Grey,
President & Chair
Board of Directors
Tropicana Community Services Organization