

# SPOTLIGHT

on transformation

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## An Update from Minister Ted McMeekin

### The Future of Developmental Services in Ontario

It's a year since I was appointed Minister of Community and Social Services, a good moment to take stock and look to the future. I've talked with hundreds of people across the province – individuals, families and developmental services professionals – and I've learned a great deal about what we've achieved together, and about the challenges ahead.

We can be proud of our progress toward a more inclusive Ontario in which people with a developmental disability live as independently as possible in our communities.

Through the introduction of Developmental Services Ontario (DSO), we've brought long-needed consistency to decisions about eligibility and assessment, and we've provided families with a single point of access to services.

Since 2004 we've supported these changes with more than \$620 million in new, ongoing funding for services to adults, bringing our annual commitment to more than \$1.7 billion.

All of these changes reflect improvements that agencies, families and people with a developmental disability themselves have told us

are needed. But I am acutely aware that we still need to expand resources for families and address waits for services and housing.

Earlier this month, Minister McMeekin visited with day program participants and staff at Niagara Support Services in Port Robinson, Ontario. From left to right: Adam, Minister McMeekin, CEO Andrew Lewis, Michael and Jessica.



## Message from the minister continued

As I look ahead, I see a need to focus on four key areas.

First, **expanding direct funding** must be a priority, giving individuals and families greater ability to determine the most appropriate supports for themselves.

Second, we must **better support people in key life transitions** – especially when they become adults and enter the job market.

Third, we must do better at **responding to people who have urgent support needs**. This means having the right kinds of services to support people who often have complex needs, and having clear, consistent ways to respond to and prevent urgent situations.

Fourth, we need **broader options for residential support**. We must continue to look beyond group homes and be innovative in to provide a wider range of residential options for people.

### **New Steps to Better Support People with a Developmental Disability**

#### Helping DSO support families

The ministry will work with Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) on how to better support families through the application process.

The ministry and DSO will:

- identify strengths and areas that need improvement
- codify best practices for delivering service consistently
- establish service standards to help DSO continuously achieve high quality service for individuals and families through the application process.

#### Finding New Housing Options

The minister is appointing a **Developmental Services Housing Task Force** (recommended by Developmental Services partners) which will seek innovative housing solutions and develop online resources to help families find housing solutions.

#### Increasing Jobs, Inclusion, Independence and Innovation

Community agencies will lead projects that:

- provide pre-employment training, skills development, employment supports, youth employment, coaching and work experience
- increase employer awareness of the skills and abilities of individuals with developmental disabilities
- modernize services by leveraging partnerships across the sector or achieving cost savings that can be reinvested in service.

## Message from the minister *continued*

I know these are some of the issues being examined by the Select Committee on Developmental Services and by the Ontario Ombudsman, and I look forward to receiving their advice. But I think there are some new steps we can take immediately.

For instance, I have heard a number of concerns about the need to improve families' experiences with Developmental Services Ontario. Because DSO has a key role in our transformation plan, we want to be sure it is working as well as possible for families. So, as one example, we'll look at ways that DSO can better connect individuals with a developmental disability to available community resources.

Second, we know that improving housing for people with developmental disabilities is critical. One challenge has been the many different players – different parts of government, municipal partners, and experts in housing and social services. On the recommendation of our Developmental Services Partnership Table, I am creating an Inter-ministerial **Housing Task Force** to bring all these players together and recommend innovative housing solutions.

The challenges we face will involve more investment for families, and they must also involve smarter investments. If we are serious about inclusion, we must leverage the strengths of our communities to provide a wider range of options for people and their families.

So this year, we are **investing \$3 million** in projects across Ontario specifically to support community innovation. This funding will help community agencies undertake projects that increase community inclusion and job prospects, and promote independence for people with a developmental disability. It will also help community agencies pursue innovative partnerships, promote best practices and leverage change to improve service delivery.

All of us have a role in creating a more inclusive Ontario. By continuing to work together I know we will continue to make steady progress.

— Ted McMeekin  
Minister



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In the coming weeks, we will create a tool on our website so you can subscribe online and receive new issues right in your email inbox. Be sure to [check out the Developmental Services section of our website](#) for that.

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