



Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs
Agences ontariennes de soutien pour les personnes qui ont des besoins spéciaux

INFORMATION BULLETIN
TO MEMBERS OF PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT
February 2012

Dear Member of the Ontario Legislature,

This Bulletin has been prepared to provide you, our provincial Members of Parliament, with information concerning topical issues and matters relevant to the Developmental Services sector. It is our hope that by keeping you informed about matters in our sector, you will be better informed to make decisions, ask questions, and support our collective efforts towards ensuring the highest quality of support and services for all Ontarians living with a developmental disability.

OASIS member organizations provide services to Ontarians with a developmental disability in your riding. We appreciate the feedback that we have received from MPP's regarding previous Bulletins, and look forward to sustaining that dialogue.

We recognize that currently the economy is weak and that government must make difficult choices in where to allocate resources. We are concerned that continuing to support Health and Education means ignoring the growing needs in our sector. The Developmental Services sector is at a very critical juncture and needs the support of all Members of Parliament, to ensure it continues to serve and support some of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. Unless there is a responsible and reasonable increase to our budgets in this and coming years, our sector will not be able to sustain our current service levels and worse, service levels will erode. It is time to once again, as a Government and a collection of communities, to partner our efforts and build upon what we have been able to achieve.

FACTS

In a recent survey completed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services 15,246 individuals with a developmental disability receive residential supports. For people receiving residential supports 59% of all residents are between the ages of 40 and 64 and 4% are over the age of 70. Mobility aids are required by 20% of the residents supported of which 86% are wheelchair dependent and feeding assistance is required by 16% of our residents. One third of the individuals supported have a mental health disorder and more than 60% used health-related supports such as psychiatrists, behavior consultant/therapists, dieticians and occupational therapists in the past year. In the general population these types of supports would be funded through the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. However, the majority of these services for individuals with a developmental disability are funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. As the individuals we support age, the demands for services are increasing as well as the demand for new services is growing. Aging parents are facing financial and emotional stress as well as additional stress on their own health while trying to support individuals waiting for residential services. Waiting lists for residential supports have risen to 12,000 people. It is imperative that people who have a developmental disability are not inappropriately placed in long-term care homes or end up in hospitals placing an additional drain on our health care system because appropriate community supports are not available.

Younger families are facing financial and emotional stress as they try to care for their loved ones when services and supports are not available. Parents are faced with the difficult choice of having to give up careers and financial stability when educational supports are no longer available to their children. Close to 10,000 individuals are waiting for funding through SSAH and Passport.

In 2010, the Government canceled a commitment made 3 years earlier, to provide a 2% increase in funding to the sector leaving service providers scrambling to find resources to pay for commitments made based on the promised funds. Transfer payment agencies in this sector have complied with the compensation constraint requested by the Government over the past two years while facing the pressure of implementing the impact of the Increasing Community Capacity Initiative (ICCI) which required agencies to expand services by 2% within existing resources. Many agencies are also obligated under the Pay Equity Act to make annual adjustments to our employees' wages at a rate of 1% of the prior year's payroll also within existing resources. Further, our unions have clearly stated that they are prepared to strike unless "reasonable" increases are gained at the bargaining table. Many of our agencies have been able to negotiate settlements less than our counterparts in the broader public sector, taking reasonable risks and hoping that the province will provide the necessary funding so service reductions do not have to occur.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services is presently implementing a significant Transformation of Developmental Services. Developmental services agencies have not only partnered to assist, but in many instances have taken leadership roles in developing, mentoring, and supporting the Transformation initiative. Frankly, many of its ingredients will be lost or unattainable without supportive funding to the sector. In an attempt to protect our service levels during these down years, agencies have all sacrificed what little discretionary funding they may receive. For many organizations, administrative support cannot keep up with the increased demands of the province. As well, many organizations have eliminated their budget lines for staff training, repairs and maintenance, new furnishings, etc. We still incur expenses in these areas, which simply add to our growing deficits. Boards of Directors are becoming increasingly frustrated and anxious about their personal liability for undertaking their role without sufficient funding in the organization.

WHAT CAN YOU DO

The level of unmet need for community supports and services for Ontarians with a developmental disability and their families has never been as high as it is today. We require a plan for continued investment in the Developmental Services sector to meet this growing need. We need the Government to commit to ensuring that by 2020, every person who has a developmental disability and their family has access to the supports and services that they need to live in the community, free from poverty and in a manner of their choosing. We need to ensure that agencies have the necessary funding to guarantee their sustainability, meet legislative requirements and provide quality services and supports to individuals with a developmental disability.

If Ontario wishes to continue to be considered a leader and champion in the delivery of supports and services for individuals with a developmental disability, there must be further funding commitments to continue the work of providing quality supports to our most vulnerable citizens. While the needs of our sector will take significant multi-year investment from the province to be fully addressed, at this time we are seeking a \$64 Million dollar investment to initiate the first steps towards stabilizing the sector and reaching out to many Ontario families who are desperately waiting for services. We would be happy to discuss what this investment could provide as we seek a long-term funding strategy.

We sincerely thank you for taking the time to review our Bulletin, and hope that you will be able to support your local Developmental Service organizations by advocating on their behalf. We encourage you to obtain details on these matters from the OASIS website at: www.oasisonline.ca, or by contacting myself or your local agency representatives.

Sincerely,

Judy Reid, President

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