

Introduction

The Provincial Network on Developmental Services represents over 300 non-profit agencies throughout Ontario, consisting of membership from Christian Horizons, Community Living Ontario, Developmental Services Ontario Provincial Network, Faith and Culture, Great Lakes Society, Toronto Developmental Services Alliance (TDSA – formerly MARC), Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs (OASIS), and the Ontario Association on Developmental Disabilities (OADD). Together we are a network of grass roots volunteer organizations that have played a vital role in the building of inclusive communities throughout the province. Our local membership organizations have a proven track record in listening and responding to the needs of families. Each of our member organizations is led by a volunteer board of directors consisting of self-advocates, families and committed citizens. At present, organizations representing the Provincial Network provide support to over 36,000 people with intellectual disabilities and their families, and employ over 40,000 full and part-time staff.

The Network is proud of the collaborative relationship we have developed with the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Together we have made tremendous progress in working with individuals, their families and their support systems in developing positive community based supports.

The Standing Committee on Developmental Services made some encouraging and bold recommendations to help create a sustainable system that promotes and upholds the rights of individuals with a developmental disability to be included, respected and valued in our communities across Ontario. These were also consistent with the Social Inclusion for Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act (SIPDDA) and an inclusive Ontario. In addition, the Auditor General's Report made several recommendations to strengthen the system and reduce service gaps while continuing to provide a high level of support.

It is important that these recommendations be aligned within a long-term strategy and receive annualized funding that places our investment in developmental services on solid ground. People with a developmental disability have much to contribute to society, to the Ontario economy and the diversity of our communities. What is required is a plan that supports the principles of SIPDDA. Therefore, together with our partners we are recommending continued:

- An investment in developmental services expenditures that are grounded in a long-term strategic plan that is based on the outcomes and goals for individuals to fully participate in an inclusive Ontario;
- An investment that ensures all expenditures are equally accountable based on these outcomes;
- Commitment to person-centred approaches recognizing choice and allowing for accountability;
- An investment in a continuum of services that support inclusion and shifts from crisis management or a dependent response;
- An investment in professionalization of the developmental services sector through the Developmental Services Human Resource Strategy.

We were very pleased to see the recent investment in the 2014 budget, which included funding to reduce waitlists, increase employment opportunities and residential options, and provide stability to the sector through wage increases to staff. In total, the investment increases the developmental services' annual budget by almost \$400 million. This investment will help to ease some of the immediate pressures facing people with a developmental disability, their families and the agencies that provide supports and services.

However, the current investment is not a long-term strategy and will not result in sustainable transformation of developmental services unless the following issues are addressed.

Investment in Developmental Services and Long-Term Planning

Of the recent \$810million, \$372 million is annualized funding that will be allocated over the next 3 years. There is no plan for what happens at the end of the funding cycle, nor is there a strategy to prevent new waitlists, or for long term solutions to address the lack of supportive residential options. In the Auditor

General's report on residential services for people with developmental disabilities, it indicates that 17,900 people received residential services during the 2013/2014 fiscal year, yet there are still 14,300 adults waiting for services at year end. This indicates we still have a lot of work to do. In the long term plan, it is imperative to set a clear date when the residential wait list will be eliminated – this will provide a target date that families can rely on, and create some hope for families. It's also important that the plan have capacity to prevent the creation of new wait lists, ensuring that appropriate, quality developmental services and supports are available and sustainable.

A good example of short-term solutions is the Housing Task Force that was created in partnership with MCSS. Over the next two years the Task Force will make funding recommendations on alternative residential options for people with a developmental disability. There is much concern, however about how the funding will be provided for these demonstration projects and whether there is intent to invest in the long-term the sustainability. We need to ensure that investment in the creation of, and sustainability of residential opportunities for people suit their needs, and achieve their long-term and individual level of independence. In addition, a lack of a long-term investment strategy will:

- Jeopardize the health and welfare of people as the system will not be positioned to respond quickly, in a sustainable way, to the changing needs of individuals at different stages in their life. We must keep in mind that a crisis in developmental services creates crisis in other sectors – for example, the most recent media coverage regarding lack of beds on local psychiatric units is partially because people with developmental disabilities have taken those beds due to a lack of residential options in the community. A responsive system will reduce costs and provide quality and appropriate services for people.
- Risk the creation of a two-tier system. Agency supports are regulated and offered by trained, experienced and committed staff. They are more expensive to deliver due to QAM and other regulations. They also provide assurance that an individual will be treated with respect, be able to exercise their rights as individuals and receive excellent support. However, cheaper, unregulated services will allow an individual's funding to go further but will also reduce safety and accountability. What is needed is a funding model based on the hours a person requires, and the outcomes they have identified.
- Put the vision of Individualized Funding, and transformation, at risk. A significant portion of the new investment is designated for Individualized Funding. This is an excellent tool to help ensure that a person's goals, level of support and community are at the heart of services and supports provided to them. However, Individualized Funding will not achieve this if there are not strong, sustainable supports and services. Allocating funds to an individual and their family needs assurance that they will be able to access person-centred supports and have every opportunity to develop connections and community relations that help them achieve their goals.

If a long-term strategy is created that focuses not on volume, but on the goals and outcomes of individuals with a developmental disability and their right to be a part of their communities, then all of Ontario will benefit and real transformation of the sector will be realized. We know from other sectors, such as health that early and strategic investment reduces reliance on the system down the road; it is sound, and tested social policy.

Timelines, Person-Centred Approaches and Outcome-Based Performance Measures

Transformation of the sector means that people with a developmental disability are at the centre, and in control of, the decisions that impact their lives. What they do during the day, where they live and with who and the relationships and friendships they make are rights that are supported and upheld by appropriately trained Developmental Services professionals and the agencies for whom they work. However, the Auditor General's report indicates that several areas of improvement, including outcome-based performance indicators and pressures to fill vacancies within a timeframe similar to long-term care. As a result, implementations that have been released to date have had very tight timelines for decision-making and submissions.

While we understand the need to flow funds and to realize the impact of those dollars in a short period of time, person-centred approaches are at risk of being compromised for persons who hopefully have a long, meaningful life ahead of them. We must remember that people with a developmental disability are at the centre of the vision for transformation, and to ensure true inclusion we cannot lose sight of that. Not everyone is able to be employed competitively, not everyone can live in a family home environment. The system must support a range of choices and it is through the partnership between community services, individuals, their families and government that those needs can be met.

Professionalization of Developmental Services

Through the Human Resource Strategy, a partnership between government and the Provincial Network, great strides have been made in professionalizing the work of Developmental Services Professionals and promoting the sector as a valuable, rewarding career option. Recent budget investment will help to reinforce the critical and specialized role that Developmental Services Professionals provide, and hopefully help to settle the 100+ collective agreements still outstanding across the province.

However, the recent budget investment is targeted for frontline positions and threatens to compress wages between frontline and management staff and could have a negative impact on succession planning and the strategic vision of the sector. Executive Directors/CEOs, Managers and Supervisors are responsible for implementing policies and regulations from government, building community connections and opportunities for inclusion and creating and implementing a vision for transformation. Investment and recognition of the role that all sector staff play is critical to ensuring sustainability, retaining professional staff throughout their careers and ensuring that qualified leaders are in place to lead the sector in the future.

Recommendations

The recent budget investment will go a long way towards addressing critical and current needs of the developmental services sector and the people we support. However, to ensure the sustainability of quality supports and services, and achieve the vision of transformation for the sector, it is critical that a long-term plan be developed to stabilize the developmental services sector and increase the opportunities for inclusion and participation of people with developmental disability in our communities across Ontario. This long-term strategy should address the following recommendations:

- A long-term investment strategy be developed that is responsive, flexible and sustainable and addresses current and future needs of people as their needs change. It needs to respond to needs before they become a crisis. It needs to reflect real need and outcomes identified in their person-directed plan. We need to prevent a two-tier system of support and ensure that people receive quality, safe services.
- A date and plan for the elimination of a residential wait list and develop a sustainable plan that will prevent the creation of a new wait list.
- Outcome and accountability measures need to reflect and respect the personal nature of planning and support in the developmental services sector – people in developmental services require support for life and their life quality is imperative.
- Continued investment in all staff in the developmental services sector will help to further professionalize services and supports and support transformation.

Summary

The developmental services sector requires fair and equitable access to supports for all people with a developmental disability, not just those in crisis. Current pressures and waitlists need to be addressed, but systems that will exist and support future generations of individuals with developmental disabilities. If a long-term strategy is not created, sustainability of services and the quality of all staff will be compromised and put the transformation vision at risk. It is essential that Ontarians have access to a stable, professional and responsive developmental services system.



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