

Introduction

The Provincial Network on Developmental Services is proud of the collaborative relationship we have developed with the government and 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.

People with a developmental disability deserve every opportunity to live a life free of poverty, pursue their individual goals and aspirations, and be supported by skilled, professional staff that believe and uphold the principles of inclusion.

People with a developmental disability have much to contribute to society, to the Ontario economy and the diversity of our communities. However, there is still a waitlist of thousands of people requiring support, people still live in poverty and agencies are finding it increasingly difficult to manage eroding budgets and retain their skilled and trained staff. While a long-term, strategic, multi-sector and multi-discipline plan is required, there are investments that can be made now that will help build and maintain healthy, sustainable developmental services provided by experienced and professional staff.

Stability of Services and Supports

Base budgets to Ontario's developmental services agencies haven't been increased in 7 years. This has eroded the ability to expand capacity, develop new innovative services that increase opportunities for community activity and maintain service levels.

Further, agencies are experiencing difficulty in retaining staff trained and skilled in providing support as other sectors, such as health, pay higher wages for similar work. This also impacts the next generation of leadership, as the pool of qualified candidates to lead agencies into the future of transformation is decreasing.

Pay equity and the gender wage gap have begun to cripple many developmental services agencies, particularly those who had to utilize the proxy comparison method. It is important that the government funds pay equity agreements to enable agencies to attract and maintain professional, experienced staff. With resources agencies are able to meet their pay equity obligations and offer competitive wages where pay equity has already been met.

All of these issues put the stability of Ontario's developmental service agency system at risk. Without stable, quality supports and services by agencies that adhere to quality assurance and safety measures, people with a developmental disability and their families will be impacted.

It is recommended that investment be made in:

- *Developmental Service agency operating budgets. It is estimated that a 2.5% increase in base funding per year for three years (\$50 million per year, for a total of \$150 million for three years) would restore stability to agencies and enable them to continue providing quality supports and services.*
- *Pay Equity Regulations be examined and measures taken to reduce hardship on agencies and to maintain high quality services for people with developmental disabilities and their families.*

Services for People With A Developmental Disability

There are approximately 14,900 people with a developmental disability waiting for services and supports in Ontario. There are many issues that contribute to this:

- Young people with a developmental disability in the child welfare system transitioning to adult services; entitlement of services and support often means people from the community needs list are not offered a vacancy. These youth often have very complex needs that require supports not covered in agency budgets.

- Direct funding has been slow to roll out to individuals and families and ensure that proper measures are in place so that individuals receive adequate levels of supports that help them achieve their goals.
- Lack of inter-ministerial coordination that could provide holistic support to a person while saving the province funds, as people will not be housed in inappropriate situations, such as a hospital, while waiting for appropriate placement with an agency.
- Lack of residential spaces. Agencies are looking at creative ways of expanding capacity and providing more independence for people by working within existing budgets; however, this does not provide an opportunity to include people on the community needs list. The government has released two rounds of residential funding in the past two years; however, this has only resulted in a handful of projects being funded and has not impacted those waiting for a place to live. By further investing in residential supports, agencies can expand residential opportunities.

It is recommended that:

- *Ongoing investment be made in new, innovative residential services that expand capacity and adhere to the principles of inclusion and independence.*
- *Direct funding services be expanded and measures be put in place to ensure quality assurance and community participation.*
- *Supports for youth transitioning to adult services from child welfare do not impact funded vacancies that could be provided to a person on the community needs list.*

Summary

To ensure the sustainability of quality supports and services and achieve the vision of transformation for the sector, it is critical that immediate needs be addressed, while a long-term plan be developed to increase the opportunities for inclusion and participation of people with a developmental disability in our communities across Ontario. We are hoping the upcoming budget will address the following recommendations:

- Investing in developmental service agency operating budgets to provide financial stability, while enabling retention of trained and qualified staff who provide critical supports and services to people with a developmental disability. This includes addressing issues of pay equity and the gender wage gap.
- Investing in residential services, direct funding and passport so, people can achieve their person-directed goals of living a full life in the community.
- Ensuring youth transitioning to adult services who are entitled to services under the child welfare do not impact funding or vacancy space in the adult system, further blocking people on the community needs list.

All of these changes are dependent on inter-ministerial coordination and consultation to streamline and coordinate services for people with a developmental disability in Ontario, ensuring they have every opportunity to be valued, contributing and respected citizens.

About the Provincial Network

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



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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.