

BRAMPTON CALEDON COMMUNITY LIVING

SUBMISSION TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

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For all intent and purposes, public policy governing the care and support for Ontarians with a disability in Ontario today is predicated upon the age-old stereotype that people with a disability are burdens to the public purse. Its primary objective is for government, and in turn, its transfer-payment agencies, to avoid, whenever possible and as long as possible, the role of caregiver, and for families and communities to bear as much as possible the costs and responsibilities associated with supporting people with a developmental disability.

The fundamental flaw with such a policy, of course, is that it fails to grasp indubitable realities: parents get sick, parents grow old, parents die, families break down and many people with a developmental disability require ongoing support for the rest of their lives.

And in the meantime, while the sector “transforms” itself and has been transforming itself since 2004, parents continue to grow old, parents continue to get sick, families continue to break down, and yes, parents continue to die.

What little investments and activity we have witnessed in the developmental sector over the past decade has been designed to rationalize existing resources, reduce or minimize the expansion of “bricks and mortar” solutions, and squarely establish the family as the primary vehicle for the delivery and management of developmental services.

In recent years, the Ministry’s *Transformation Initiative* has given us regional access mechanisms known as Developmental Services Ontario and direct funding to purchase day supports in the marketplace. Soon, it will generate a resource allocation model designed to expand direct funding for the purchase of other services. Although there may be merit in some of these initiatives, for example, clear eligibility criteria to promote uniformity across the province in terms of access, these so called transformational initiatives, when viewed as a whole, belie the name of the Act under which these initiatives have been taken: *Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act*.

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One is hard pressed to trace a pathway from the legislation and its regulations to one that leads to social inclusion. Scratch the surface of such words *du jour* as “choice” and “citizenship” that adorn these transformational initiatives and one can see that they are designed to tighten the strings of the public purse, stimulate a marketplace of alternative, cheaper service delivery solutions, and confine government expenditures to those in absolute dire circumstances.

How do we explain, for example, whether in times of boom or bust, predictable, multi-year funding models for the education and health sectors, while the developmental services sector lurches from one fiscal year to the next without even a grudging nod to inflation or rising fixed costs, let alone predictable funding? We are a sector that relies on the largesse of governments rather than multi-year, predictable funding afforded to other more powerful sectors.

The capacity of the developmental service sector to endure such differential treatment has been tested often over the years. In September of 2008, under a Ministry directive known as the *Increasing Community Capacity Initiative*, the sector was required to increase the number of persons served by “redirecting” existing resources—once again, to do more with less. The initiative, coincidentally enough, came on the heels of labour disputes in the summer of 2007 when the government negotiated directly with the Ontario Public Services Union to settle strikes at several community living organizations. Having settled these strikes and word having gotten out, the government found itself having to extend similar increases to other union locals in the province. Then in 2010, after generous settlements with teachers and public service workers, the Ministry announced it was renegeing on its commitment to deliver wage enhancements for developmental service workers, this after service providers negotiated contracts based on this commitment. We suspect that such treatment would not be dared contemplated for other sectors or professions.

The developmental services sector is a sector that has been chronically underfunded, serves a relatively small constituency with little political clout and operates within a policy framework designed to limit the expenditures and involvement of government in the care and support of people with a developmental disability. Is it any wonder families in Ontario are in crisis?

Over the past year a number of national media outlets, including CTV, The Toronto Star, The Globe and Mail and the CBC featured heart-wrenching stories of loving, caring families in Ontario who could no longer care for their disabled family member and people languishing on ever growing waiting lists.

In November of 2012, against the backdrop of these stories and in response to hundreds of complaints from families across the province about the lack of services, the Provincial Ombudsman of Ontario launched an investigation into developmental services.

Yet, despite widespread media coverage, alarms being raised at the Ombudsman's Office and warnings about the toll years of chronic underfunding have taken on families and the sector, Ontarians with a developmental disability and their families see no reason to believe that things will change.

Families are losing hope.

At the time of this writing, the Ombudsman of Ontario has yet to release his report.

We anticipate that it will echo what families and service providers have been saying for years:

- Young men and women are being placed in nursing homes and long-term care centres because there is nowhere else to go,
- Young adults are graduating from high school with no meaningful futures to look forward to,
- Parents are quitting their jobs because they need to care for their adult son or daughter at home,
- Loving but desperate parents are relinquishing care of their children in hospital emergency wards because they can no longer cope,
- People with no families, "citizens of the world", are in jails or shelters because they have fallen through the cracks.

These are the inevitable costs and consequences of a public policy that is narrow in scope and fundamentally a program of fiscal restraint and is at its essence rooted in the nineteenth century notion that people with a developmental disability are burdens whose keep is the responsibility of those who borne them.

One may wish to reject this view, but one thing is certain: we are utterly unprepared as a system to respond to the growing needs in our community that will soon reach epidemic proportions.

And surely we can agree that we can do better than jails or shelters for our fellow Ontarians who have a developmental disability.