



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

April 23, 2010

Honourable Madeleine Meilleur
Minister of Community and Social Services
Queen's Park, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor St. 6th Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9

Dear Minister:

Since our inception nearly fifteen years ago, Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs (OASIS) has worked in partnership with the provincial government in the development of cost effective quality supports for Ontario citizens with Developmental Disabilities. Representing 149 member agencies we feel we have brought a strong, pragmatic voice to the sector. During the past few years OASIS has given much time and resources to assist MCSS with the development and implementation of the government's Transformation process. While we have not always agreed on the direction of Transformation we have appreciated and respected your government's willingness to consult in an open, honest and transparent manner.

Recent decisions by you and your Ministry has given OASIS pause to wonder at how truly honest and transparent you have been in your dealings with our member agencies. Four years ago you made a commitment to people supported by agencies with the promise of four years of base budget increases. Combined with your forced commitment to address the wage gap issue this brought a long overdue sense of service stability to Developmental Service agencies.

Unfortunately it is our contention and perception that you have betrayed our trust by breaking your promises to the sector. In 2009-2010 your base budget increase was offset by the Increased Community Capacity Initiative, further reducing agencies abilities to address external pressures. This year, hiding behind the veil of poor economic times, you have flatly refused to honour the final year of your commitment, thereby eliminating any semblance of stability for our member agencies. We are left to wonder why our counterparts in Health and the Children and Youth sectors are receiving base budget increases while Developmental Service agencies are left with their hands outstretched and empty.

In addition, the inconsistencies contained in the wage compensation freeze act will only add to the instability. This Act, in its current form, will exacerbate the existing wage gap issues for both front-line and management staff and add to the labour unrest that exists in our sector.

There is also the real possibility the remaining non-unionized agencies will now see themselves organized by unions through no fault or action on the part of management. This Act even eliminates the possibility of maintaining a relationship of respect and honour with our employees by not even allowing non financial recognition through creative solutions such as additional time off. The Act is quite simply heavy handed and discriminatory.

Over the years you have often remarked on the investment your government has made in the Developmental Services sector and we have no contention with that statement; however, this investment mirrors the corresponding investments made in other sectors such as education and health. The investment would be far less were it not for the monies put into the wage gap issue, monies your government was forced to administer due to its interference in the labour unrest issues in 2007. Please do not mistake these comments for a lack of gratitude, the money for hard working professionals in our sector, while long overdue and deserved, is very much appreciated. It is only the labour unrest circumstances that led to the wage gap investment that are unfortunate.

What is also unfortunate is how your allocation decisions with respect to this year's budget will impact services in Ontario. By not honouring your commitment to base budget increases agencies will be forced to make difficult decisions. These decisions are a result of pressures beyond the control of agencies such as Pay Equity entitlements, the increase in the minimum wage and inflationary costs. Addressing these pressures will result, in many parts of Ontario, in cuts and reductions to services.

Minister we, like most of the citizens of Ontario who labour at the privilege of the taxpayer, are painfully aware of the financial pressures facing our province. We have no issue with a compensation or budget freeze that is fair and equitably applied. We know we have a responsibility to do our part in bringing our province back to balanced budgets. Conversely your government also has a responsibility to apply your decisions fairly and equitably across sectors. We see no fairness and equity in your decisions of the past two years.

The words and points raised in this letter may seem blunt and unfairly harsh, but your treatment of agencies that do important work in our sector is no less harsh. We can assure your Ministry we will work with our member agencies in mitigating the impact of your decisions, but there will be fallout to your lack of commitment to our sector and it is most unfortunate that once again our most vulnerable citizens and their families are the ones who will ultimately suffer.

Respectfully,



Brian Young, President, OASIS

cc: Honorable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
Tim Hudak, Ontario PC Party Leader
Andrea Horvath, Ontario NDP Party Leader/MCSS Critic
Sylvia Jones, Ontario PC Critic-MCSS

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