



ONTARIO AGENCIES

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Agences Ontariennes de Soutien pour les Personnes qui ont des Besoins Speciaux

OASIS INFORMATION BULLETIN
TO ONTARIO MEMBERS OF PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT
March 2005

Dear Member of the Ontario Legislature:

As part of OASIS's ongoing efforts to communicate issues of importance for our member agencies, we have prepared this Information Bulletin for members of the Ontario Legislature, briefly outlining current topics of concern to the Developmental Services sector. OASIS agencies provide services to citizens with an intellectual handicap in your riding. We appreciate the positive feedback that we received from MPP's regarding previous issues, and look forward to continuing discussions with both MPP's and the Ministry of Community and Social Services on these matters.

Facility Closures:

As stated in an earlier press release and Information Bulletin, OASIS is pleased and supportive of the government's decision to close the three remaining provincial institutions. The experience and knowledge of OASIS member agencies will ensure a smooth transition into community based supports for those who will be moving from the institutions into the community. It is becoming clearly evident that our community's infrastructure will also need to be examined and augmented to meet the many and challenging needs of the returning individuals. Services such as Medical, Psychiatric and Specialized Treatment must also be in place to ensure a successful transition. OASIS is hopeful that this initiative will assist in developing and enhancing a range of services that will meet the needs of the thousands of individuals whose names remain on waiting lists for services in communities throughout Ontario.

Transformation Partner:

OASIS is pleased to sit at the "Partnership Table" with other service representatives assisting and advising the Ministry through the Transformation process. OASIS would like to ensure the Government and all MPP'S that we will continue to work in a collaborative partnership with all stakeholders, towards creating a new sustainable, more responsive service system. OASIS has prepared and submitted their views and recommendations in response to the Developmental Services Consultation paper on this matter. It is available for viewing at our web-site (www.oasisonline.ca). It is our opinion that supporting and strengthening the Transfer Payment Agency system, which we believe is the cornerstone of service provision throughout the province, and in collaboration with other service models, will produce "vital communities" and a more responsive, sustainable service system.

Funding:

Firstly, we would like to extend our appreciation to the Government for the recently announced increase to ODSP levels (3%) and agency Budgets (0.5%). Regrettably, these increases fall well short of what was hoped for, expected, and required. Developmental Service agencies in Ontario have worked in a constrained funding environment for nearly fourteen years. This means that with the exception of specifically targeted increases such as wages, which still remain significantly below the broader public sector wage levels, OASIS member agencies have not received any other increase in base budgets during this ongoing period of restraint. During this same time period there have been significant inflationary increases in most basic need items. These include but are not limited to: gasoline, heating oil, natural gas, electricity, food and supplies, insurance premiums, and building maintenance. For nearly fourteen years OASIS member agencies have absorbed these increases and created the necessary efficiencies to minimize the impact on services to those we support. Unfortunately many agencies are now to the point where efficiencies can no longer be found and there is a real possibility that agencies may be forced to reduce or eliminate essential community services. We respectfully request that the government examine its policies regarding restraint and look at how base budgets for agencies can be sufficiently increased to avoid the loss or reduction of services to Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. OASIS presented to the Standing Committee on Finances and Economic Affairs, and to the Minister of Finance at a consultation session in Ottawa. It is our hope that the Government will give our submission due consideration as the Budget is developed for 2005-06.

We hope that you find this summary to be of assistance as you assume or resume your responsibilities within the Legislature and debate issues of social concern to the people of Ontario. We encourage you to obtain further details on these matters from the OASIS website at: www.oasisonline.ca.

Sincerely,
George Braithwaite, President