



***OASIS INFORMATION BULLETIN – January 2004
TO ONTARIO MEMBERS OF PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT***

Dear Member of the Ontario Legislature:

On behalf of all OASIS members we would like to congratulate you on your electoral victory and wish you all the best in your work over the next few years. As part of OASIS's ongoing efforts to communicate issues of importance for our member agencies, we have prepared this Information Bulletin for the newly elected Legislature, briefly outlining current topics of concern to the developmental services sector. OASIS agencies provide service to intellectually handicapped citizens 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 Ministries of Community and Social Services and Children's Services on these matters.

Throne Speech:

The speech from the Throne has laid out an ambitious plan for change in the province of Ontario. OASIS and its member agencies were somewhat concerned by the fact that no mention was made of Ontarians with disabilities, including those with developmental disabilities, who can be considered some of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. While the developmental services sector has received an infusion of funds for wages over the last three years, we still lag far behind our counterparts in Education and Health. We would ask all MPP's to give strong consideration to Ontarians with developmental disabilities as the government moves forward with its agenda for change.

Funding Commitment to the Developmental Service Sector:

In 2001 the former government made a commitment to multi-year funding (five years) in the amount of \$197 million. We are hopeful that the new government will honour this commitment. In the past, OASIS has been consulted by the Ministry of Community and Social Services regarding the allocation of funds. OASIS would again be pleased to offer its assistance to Ministers Papatello and Bountrogianni and their respective teams in determining how best to allocate future funds for the developmental services sector.

While OASIS is appreciative of the new funds, we do worry that the prescriptive nature of the funding in the past has left those most in need still waiting for service. Decisions regarding service targets for communities were made without input or consultation from the communities effected. While this has meant many individuals have received services, it has also meant that many of those most in need have not received services due to the prohibitively high cost of their service requirements. Again, OASIS is willing to work with the government on this issue.

Ripple Effect:

OASIS member agencies are aware of the challenges that MPP's will be facing during the mandate of this new government. We ask you to keep in mind the ripple effect of your decisions. For example, it is the announced intention of the government to raise Hydro rates in the spring. This will have a direct negative impact on our member agencies. It has been over a decade since agencies have had an increase in their base budgets for operating expenses. This increase in electricity rates means agencies will once again be forced to find ways to meet financial pressures. After ten years of frozen base budgets, agencies have very little financial room to manoeuvre and many agencies may have to consider service cuts in order to balance budgets. We ask that you keep this in mind as you move forward with your agenda for change in the upcoming month and years of this legislature.

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,
Paul Wilson, President
