



ONTARIO AGENCIES SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
AGENCES ONTARIENNES DE SOUTIEN POUR LES PERSONNES QUI ONT DES BESOINS SPECIAUX

EFFICIENCIES

January 2013

The Ministry has recently requested that given the current state of the provincial economy, agencies take a look at possible efficiencies, presumably with a view to the reallocation of resources to alleviate some current pressures.

Background

Over the past three (3) fiscal years (April 1, 2010 to March 31, 2013), the Ministry of Community and Social Services has not provided any annualized increases to its Transfer Payment Agencies. During this time inflation has increased by an average of over 2.0% per annum (over 6% during period). In addition, agencies have been required to meet their legislative requirements, including but not limited to the payment of Pay Equity obligations. Agencies have also participated in the Ministry's "Increased Community Capacity Initiative." Further, some agencies have achieved negotiated settlements for the renewal of Collective Agreements – taking "reasonable risk" in order to achieve labour peace.

It is understood that no additional annualized funding will be available for the fiscal year from April 1, 2013 to March 31, 2014. Yet agencies are expected to continue to meet their legal and contractual obligations including the numbers of people supported.

Therefore, many agencies have undergone internal efficiencies. From the Operating Pressures Survey (OASIS 2012) this includes, but is not necessarily limited to:

- Increasing the congregate number of individuals served in programs (thereby reducing the number of programs/locations)
- Changing program delivery methods
- Shutting down programs for a specified period of time
- Permanently closing program(s)
- Reducing program hours of operations
- Not filling open positions (eg. maternity leave)
- Eliminating staff positions

In addition, some agencies are sharing "back office" supports.

Given all this, agencies are seeking to maintain the quality of existing supports and services. The Executive Summary of the OASIS Operating Cost Pressures Survey Results of July 2012 states in part: “Increased rigidity with respect to only providing ‘funded services’ is having a negative impact on wait lists and crisis situations across the province, as agencies are unwilling to assume the risk of taking on additional individuals with no corresponding funding.”

Service flexibility is being limited and innovation is being hampered by new legislative policies.

We request that the Ministry undertake “joint review/research projects” with regard to the possibilities of some **Efficiencies** within the Developmental Services (DS) system. This would be done with the expectation that any tangible benefits resulting from such Efficiencies be reinvested back into the DS Sector (and not go towards the provincial deficit!).

Possibilities

1. Inter Ministerial Relationships

It is not acceptable that when agencies bring an issue to the attention of its funder – for its funder to “wash its hands” of the issue and hide behind the fact that “all agencies with which MCSS contracts comply with all applicable laws.” This is not helpful.

For individual agencies to spend/allocate scarce MCSS resources on interpretations and inconsistent application of rules/regulations by other ministries is an inefficient use of resources.

Such issues include but are not necessarily limited to:

- a. The implementation of changes to the Fire Code and the inconsistent application thereof.
- b. The reporting of a critical injury to the Ministry of Labour and the inconsistent application of s 51(1) of OHSA in view of the Blue Mountain Case. In this case a guest at Blue Mountain Resort drowned in an unattended swimming pool. The Resort was charged by the Ministry of Labour for not reporting the death of the guest as a “critical injury” in a “workplace.” This has repercussions for the Developmental Services Sector with regard to people receiving supports through agencies.
- c. Working with the Ministry of Health on behalf of some people with significant ageing and health issues and/or for whom the opportunity to access Long Term Care funded services may lead to an improved quality of life. We would propose an MCSS/LHIN partnership to review accessibility of people with developmental disabilities into MOH/LTC funded home care services as well as placement where appropriate.

2. Technology

We request a review of the use of technology within and between MCSS and its transfer payment agencies for efficiencies.

The recent Data Migration project of information from agencies to the DSO was a boondoggle and to date is still not completed. Given that many DSOs had

database products and an understanding of the data needs for themselves and for the agency, it seemed very inefficient to then purchase an “off the shelf” product and seek to “make it fit.” The product still does not produce meaningful reports either for the DSO or for community planning tables. Notwithstanding investments made to date, we understand that it is still not possible for the DSO/Ministry to provide a Regional or Provincial Waiting List. Would it not have been possible to use, and enhance if necessary, for example, the CIMS system currently being used in the North?

It is our understanding that data provided by agencies to regional offices has to be “re-engineered” before forwarding to corporate. Are there not some efficiencies that could be found that would enable data to merely be forwarded after review?

Will there ever be a web-based budget process?

Would it not make good economic and ‘responsiveness’ sense to standardize technology for the purpose of accurate data collection – especially if such data is to be the foundation of appropriate evidence based decision making!

There needs to be clear Information Communication Technology (ICT) guidelines/expectations developed in a collaborative process which is affordable and effective for all the parties.

3. DSOs

It is understood that these organizations were established through legislation and that any changes would have to be within the existing legislation. However, after eighteen (18) months, it is becoming clear that while they may carry out the “letter of the law”, such organizations are in fact an “impediment to people.”

Agency flexibility to be creative on behalf of individuals has been lost. In fact if it is attempted, agencies have been chastised for not declaring a “resource,” although no definition of a “resource” for day supports has ever been forthcoming.

The staff within the DSOs have become nothing more than another level of bureaucracy and it is beginning to show in the lack of relationship with community agencies. This is not the fault of the staff, it is the system in which they have to work which provides for no flexibility whatsoever.

We would suggest that a joint review take place to consider alternative possibilities of complying with the legislation by using a collaborative approach. Such a collaborative approach may replace the current planning tables, which appear to be no longer required with the advent of the DSO.

With the appropriate use of technology and a collaborative approach, efficiencies can be generated which could be reinvested in supports and services.

4. Accruals

The government works on a “thirty (30) day modified accrual” basis, which effectively means that only those expenses paid by April 30 are able to be accrued for the year ending March 31. It therefore means that effectively there can be no provision for any contingencies. However, this policy is not applied consistently across all Ministries.

The best example is the 5% contingency that is not only allowed but also funded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services in regard to Dedicated Supportive Housing.

However, houses used for similar purposes (Group Homes) that have been purchased by other means are not allowed any contingency whatsoever.

Another example is with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) who have a policy for the accrual of wages and vacations earned but not paid within the following thirty (30) days.

At no additional cost to the Ministry, we would ask that consideration be given to allowing agencies to:

1. Accrue for known liabilities as of March 31, even if not paid within thirty (30) days.
2. Setup a contingency fund for properties based on no more than 5% of its original cost per annum.

Such accruals/contingencies would be subject to the agency’s audit and would be reflected separately on the Balance Sheet of the agency. Naturally, given the current economic circumstances and the financial situation of some agencies, not all will be able to take advantage of any changes even if they desired to do so. There is no annualized capacity available.

However, some years there may be fiscal capacity and such changes would make for better planning and go a long way toward eliminating the “silly spending” that happens in March of each year. In the longer term there would be a savings as agencies have a fund to meet their property infrastructure needs and not so reliant upon Ministry fiscal funding and arbitrary allocations. This would make for a more efficient use of scarce resources.

5. Pay Equity

Review the current impact of the Proxy Pay Equity method for agencies and implement changes that will correct the problem. We now have sufficient documentation that supports the Proxy Method is flawed and is creating ongoing financial hardship for many agencies.

Implementing changes to the Pay Equity Act specifically in the area of the Proxy method will result in the savings of tens of millions of dollars and prevent the increasing inequity that is occurring between agencies who have achieved Pay Equity using job to job and/or proportional value and those that were required to use the proxy method.

We request that a moratorium be placed on pay equity payments until such time that changes can be implemented to correct the problem.

6. French Language Services

Could the need to provide this service be standardized across the province? Multiple agencies working on similar paperwork and processes is somewhat inefficient.

7. MCYS/MCSS – Child and Youth/Adult

There would appear to be significant challenges with regard to transitional planning for people as they become 18 years of age!

There would also appear to be some duplication with those agencies providing children's services, as well as adult services, having to report to two (2) Program Managers, two (2) Program Supervisors and two (2) Program Specialists. We understand that in some Regional Offices new "bridging" positions have been created to assist with the problem.

Is there a possibility for some efficiencies?

8. Passport

Originally, families wanted two (2) things: more control over their funding AND full time day supports to replicate the school system hours of operation.

Passport as it currently stands only addresses one part of what they wanted.

Waiting lists are increasing in number – yet there is reduced possibility of providing additional supports because of the funding being individualized.

OASIS supports the concept of individualized funding – but in these difficult economic times some "pooling" of resources may be able to support more people.

Moving Forward

OASIS would welcome the opportunity to participate in any joint review/research of any/all of the above possibilities.

OASIS would also wish to work with the Ministry on providing definition and meaning to the current foundational principles. OASIS believes that in moving forward the mantra for all the services and supports in the Developmental Services sector should be:

Person Centered

Ministry Supported

Sector Driven

Respectfully submitted,
OASIS Business Resource Committee