



Sector Recognised in Government COVID-19 Budget

Yesterday, the Government of Ontario released its 2021 Budget, “*Ontario’s Action Plan: Protecting People’s Health and Our Economy.*” The Budget outlines the next phase of Ontario’s COVID-19 Response and Recovery Plan, including a major focus on the province’s vaccine distribution plan, as well as making significant investments in health care and other key sectors deeply impacted by the ongoing pandemic.

As part of the focus on responding to pressing needs created by the pandemic, yesterday’s Budget recognises the unique challenges and needs of the Developmental Services sector through increased funding for housing and children and youth with special needs.

“As we continue to respond to the extreme and unprecedented circumstances created by the pandemic,” said Geoff McMullen, President of OASIS, “the Government has demonstrated that it is listening to our advocacy in many areas and that it intends to build on last autumn’s budget commitments and continue to work across ministries to support housing for individuals living with developmental disabilities.”

Key initiatives in the Budget for the DS sector include;

- \$13 million over three years, beginning in 2021–22, to assist more people with developmental disabilities in accessing community housing and expanding the Adult Protective Service Worker program to support them to live independently;
- \$240 million over four years, beginning in 2021–22 to ensure that more children and families have access to critical services when they need them and build additional service capacity in early intervention rehabilitation and Preschool Speech and Language Program services. As well the building of two new Children’s Treatment Centres in Ottawa and Chatham- Kent
- A recommitment to the \$361 million in 2021–22 for Developmental Services announced in the fall 2020 Budget to continue to support clients currently in service and new high-risk clients, with more details to follow in the coming weeks.
- We also want to draw attention to and thank the Ontario Government for its previously-announced commitment to extend the Temporary Wage Enhancements for Personal Support Workers and Direct Support Workers in children, community and social services through to June 30th, representing an additional investment of \$239 million dollars.

The Wage Enhancement is something OASIS has been tirelessly advocating for, and we see this additional investment as continued recognition of the value of the work performed by DS agencies and of the significant contribution of the DS workforce on the frontlines. As the pandemic persists, maintaining this investment is critical, it will continue to help stabilize the sector and support delivery of high-quality care and services for the individuals we serve. We will continue to advocate that these enhancements be made permanent for essential frontline workers in the developmental services sector.

In particular, we would like to thank Minister of Children, Community and Social Service Todd Smith for his continuing support. Both the Minister and his staff have made it clear that they remain committed to listening to, and working with our sector. We look forward to continuing to work with them to build on some of the key changes introduced during the pandemic and the appropriately funded reform of the sector moving forward.

We are committed to keeping our member organizations informed as we learn more. Please feel free to contact our Executive Coordinator should you have any questions.

For your information, the Budget Documents in full can be found by following this link: <https://budget.ontario.ca/2021/contents.html>