

Key Messages: *These are meant as a guide for your engagement with candidates. Do not feel the need to include everything. Be sure to summarise and add your own local experience and individual pressures and challenges.*

Challenges Faced by the Developmental Services (DS) Sector

- The DS sector is experiencing a significant labour shortage, with low wages and limited training incentives. Developmental Services Workers (DSWs) often leave for better-paying roles in hospitals, schools, and other public sectors, resulting in a shortage of qualified staff to support people with developmental disabilities.
- Increased numbers of people are entering the system with complex needs, including health and mental health challenges, putting immense strain on service providers with already limited resources.
- **More than 52,000 adults with developmental disabilities in Ontario are on waitlists** for critical services and supportive housing. For many, this means waiting indefinitely for the services they need to live healthy, supported, and safe lives. For families, the wait is not just a number. It represents lost opportunities for early intervention, essential supports, and community inclusion.
- The current funding model has left service agencies struggling to meet demand, leading to programme closures and staff shortages.
- The lack of necessary financial support places organisations and staff at risk and ultimately **creates the possibility of fewer, and lower quality, services and supports for people living with developmental disabilities in Ontario.**
- In addition, the housing crisis has left tens of thousands without appropriate housing. People are often forced into inappropriate settings such as hospitals and long-term care facilities, which are both costly and unsuitable.

Funding History

- We appreciate that a portion of the **\$310 million outlined in the 2024 budget**, equalled an approximate **3%** increase for Developmental Services (DS) agency base budgets. This is a positive step toward supporting the sector.
- However, this investment means that over the past three decades, developmental service organisations have received **cumulative base funding increases of less than 7%**, though the cost of living, as marked by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), has **increased nearly 70%**.
- While any additional resources allocated to the DS Sector are always appreciated, the lack of necessary support places organisations and staff at risk and ultimately **creates the possibility of fewer, and lower quality, services and supports for people living with developmental disabilities in Ontario.**

- **If the investments made so far were enough, why are there still 52,000 people waiting for service?**
- Even with the announced increase, 80% of agencies surveyed are still projecting a deficit in 2025/2026; this means:
 - *Reductions in staff*
 - *Reductions in service and programming*
 - *Reduction in building repairs*
 - *Reductions in housing and housing supports.*
 - *And by extension, all of this represents a reduction in the safety and security of people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.*
- With increased demands, skyrocketing costs, and a profound human resource and labour shortage, the system of care that has existed to ensure the safety and well-being of Ontarians with developmental disabilities is **facing collapse**.

Urgent Need for Action

- Recent investments and efforts are appreciated but more support is needed to address the ongoing crisis in the DS sector. Cutbacks in response to underfunding are leading to increasing pressure on families, as well as on the health care, mental health, long-term care, and shelter systems. Adequate and appropriate funding is crucial to provide effective services and support that ensure safety, security, and quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities.
- We call for **a collaborative, comprehensive wait-list strategy to be developed to end waitlists for services**. This strategy should involve sustained funding and consultation with the developmental services sector, families, and people with developmental disabilities to reduce waitlists and ensure equitable access to services.
- Key Initiatives needed urgently include:
 1. ***A balanced funding model that provides both direct support to people and sustained funding to agencies.***
 2. ***Stabilisation of the DS workforce through educational and other incentives;***
 3. ***expanding community-based housing options and reducing wait times for supportive housing***
 4. ***Providing full Passport allocations to all people eligible for the programme;***
 5. ***Tying all ODSP benefits, including the Personal Needs Allowance and Special Diet Allowance, not just basic needs, to inflation; and***
 6. ***Committing to zero claw backs of the Canada Disability Benefit from people receiving ODSP.***
- These measures will help stabilise the DS sector, prevent the collapse of essential services, support people in need and ensure that no one is left waiting for a safe, inclusive, and supported future.