



**Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs
Agences ontariennes de soutien pour les personnes qui ont des besoins spéciaux**

***INFORMATION BULLETIN
TO ONTARIO MEMBERS OF PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT***

October 2008

Dear Member of the Ontario Legislature,

This Bulletin has been prepared to provide you, our provincial members of parliament, with topical issues and matters related to the Developmental Services sector. It is our hope that by keeping you informed about happenings in our sector, you'll be better informed to make decisions, ask questions, and support our collective efforts towards ensuring the highest quality of supports and services for all Ontarians with an Intellectual Disability.

OASIS member organizations provide services to citizens with an intellectual disability in your riding. We appreciate the feedback that we have received from MPP's regarding previous issues, and look forward to sustaining that dialogue.

Increased Community Capacity Initiative

MCSS has recently introduced a new initiative intended to force organizations across the province to increase their service levels with no new resources. As our sector has traditionally been under-funded and unable to meet existing needs, this new initiative presents a HUGE challenge for the sector to respond. OASIS believes that this initiative is an attempt by Government to offset the financial impact of their direct intervention in the settling of labour disputes in seven Transfer Payment Organizations during the summer of 2007, and subsequent payments to all agencies amounting to approximately \$125 Million. Unions are already strategizing for coordinated collective bargaining, and possible further disruption to the lives of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens. In response to the Increased Community Capacity Initiative, OASIS members will undoubtedly participate; however the Board of OASIS is concerned that compliance not jeopardize best practices, resulting in lower quality of services being available and the impact of this initiative on those individuals currently receiving services or those who continue to wait.

Strikes & Picketing of Individual's Homes

Our sector is extremely concerned about the potential for further picketing at people's homes in the event of any future labour disputes with our unions. The experiences of the seven organization's that experienced a strike in the summer of 2007 demonstrated the level of grief, disruption, torment and potential for violence that can occur when union members picket in front of the homes where individuals supported by these same workers live. Not only is it a terrifying experience for the individuals residing there, it is also hard to imagine how they can be expected to be comfortable to have those same workers return to provide their support and supervision at the conclusion of the strike. Our sector is determined to find a way to ensure the homes where people live are safe, secure and free of conflict from picketing.

OASIS is also concerned about the potential for collective labour unrest this spring when 58 CUPE contracts are due to expire on the same date. The risk is heightened by the fact that 12% wage increases have been announced for Education and for physicians, while we are being forced to do more with no additional funding. (see above related to Increased Community Capacity initiative).

Bill 94 – An Act to Amend The ODSP Act and the OW Act

Individuals in receipt of ODSP or OW benefits are presently penalized if they have any assets or income from the new Federal Registered Disability Savings Plan (RDSP). A private members Bill has been introduced to the House called Bill 94, an Act to amend the ODSP and OW Acts, whereby recipients of either of these benefits would not be penalized with a benefit reduction by virtue of holding or withdrawing from a RDSP.

OASIS supports this Bill. British Columbia, Newfoundland and the Yukon have already passed legislation exempting RDSP assets or income, and we strongly believe that the Ontario Government should adopt Bill 94 to ensure Ontarians are safeguarded as well, and encourage all MPP's to support this legislation as well.

Violence in the Workplace

The Ministry of Labour has recently produced a consultation paper on Workplace Violence Prevention. OASIS is concerned that there may be contemplation of expanding the Work refusal provision for our sector, related to potential acts of aggression towards workers, by individuals we support. OASIS does NOT support any changes to the work refusal provisions currently in place for the Developmental Services sector. The individuals that are supported at various organizations throughout the province are in great need for the support provided to them by workers. We are concerned that the nature of our client population may not be taken into consideration, and that their capacity to understand the repercussions of their actions is not understood by the MOL. If there is an incident of aggression and the employee refuses to provide support, the client would then be left in a crisis situation and would not only be at risk to peers and others, but also to themselves. All organizations have Joint Health & Safety Committees which are charged to look at this and other issues particular to their services and the individuals who receive those supports. As well, all employees who work in a residential setting are required to have completed training in Non-Violent Crisis Intervention methods for de-escalating aggressive behaviours and minimizing or eliminating the risk to themselves or others. If a situation becomes unmanageable for the worker (s), they are then directed to involve emergency community resources such as the police.

We hope that you find this summary to be of assistance as you debate issues of social concern to the people of Ontario. We encourage you to obtain details on these matters from the OASIS website at: www.oasisonline.ca

Sincerely,

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President

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