



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

INFORMATION BULLETIN
TO MEMBERS OF PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT

April 2010

Dear Member of the Ontario Legislature,

Welcome back to the Legislature. This Bulletin has been prepared to provide you, our provincial Members of Parliament, with information concerning topical issues and matters related to the Developmental Services sector. It is our hope that by keeping you informed about matters in our sector, you will be better informed to make decisions, ask questions, and support our collective efforts towards ensuring the highest quality of support and services for all Ontarians living with a Developmental Disability.

OASIS member organizations' provide services to citizens with a developmental 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.

2010 Ontario Budget

While we understand the fiscal constraints that the Government of Ontario is faced with in this economic time, transfer payment agencies are faced with challenges due to increased operating costs, requests to increase capacity within the developmental services sector, pay equity and labour unrest. In 2007, the Government announced a four year funding commitment to the developmental services sector which included a two percent (2%) increase to our base funding. We have been informed that this promise will be broken and that the two percent (2%) base funding will now not be provided to agencies but redirected to provide critical support and services for people in urgent need. Unfortunately, many organizations have committed the fourth year funding promises into collective agreements with their unions and into ongoing operating costs and so are now faced with potential deficits. While the 2010 Ontario Budget outlined that it would honour current agreements it is unclear whether agencies will receive funding to cover these commitments. It is also unclear if the Government of Ontario will provide funding to address the legislated requirements for pay equity or how this matter will be addressed in relation to the compensation freeze for collective agreements. If funding is not provided for pay equity, collective agreement commitments and increased operating costs, agencies will have no choice but to downsize services and lay off staff which will further impact the level of services received by this vulnerable population. We are also concerned that this legislation may have the unintended consequence of the unionization of non unionized employees up to and including supervisory position. This is the second time management positions have been unfunded in the wage settlements and compressions issues are becoming significant in this sector.

We commend the Government on recognizing the needs of individuals on Ontario Disability Support Program and committing to a one percent (1%) increase as well as the introduction of tax credits to offset the initial impact of the Harmonized Sales Tax.

Bill 77 – Services and Supports to promote the Social Inclusion of persons with Developmental Disabilities Act

OASIS remains committed to a continued collaborative partnership with the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS) as we move forward with the transformation process in the Developmental Services sector. We have had the opportunity to review the draft of the Lieutenant Governor's and Minister's regulations and provide feedback to the Ministry of Community and Social Services on these documents. We are appreciative of the Ministry's stated commitment to involve the sector and organizations like OASIS at every step of this very important work and we commit to working with the Ministry throughout this process.

The Act was intended to be forward looking but the language of the Act and Regulations does not reflect this direction and contains institutional language. For example in the Lieutenant Governor's regulation there is no recognition that people live in their own homes regardless of what supports come into the home, but rather, an attempt to divide these homes into service categorizations.

The Minister's regulation is entitled "Quality Assurance Measures" but the content is really about compliance and operational standards. While OASIS supports the introduction of a direct funding option to families and individuals, we need to have mechanisms in place to ensure continuity and quality of care not only for individuals receiving

supports through the Transfer Payment Agency system, but also for those individuals receiving direct funding and supports. The new Legislation and draft Minister's regulation are about services and supports for adults and often refers to the "notification of family" but does not address the matter of individual rights, consents, substitute decision makers, etc. Although the name of the Act stresses the desire to promote social inclusion, the content of the Minister's regulation treats adults as children!

The new Act appears to put more onus and responsibility on volunteer Board members of organizations. Attracting interested and knowledgeable members of our communities to govern our organizations is already a challenge for many. The Government must ensure that new regulations do not further frustrate this already difficult, yet important task.

Beyond the Minister's specific Regulations, we believe that there are some topics that require urgent and comprehensive discussion including the protocols and respective roles of the Application Entities and service agencies and especially how they will interact when direct funding is in place. Until some of these questions are answered, it is very difficult to envision how the system will be accountable to and supportive of individuals and their families. We would encourage the Ministry to extend the consultation period to allow for a comprehensive review in which alternative language and workable solutions could be found. We encourage the Members of Parliament to review our responses to the draft regulations on our website at www.oasisonline.ca.

Provincial Waitlists

Our members remain very concerned for the many families and individuals who remain without the required support in our communities. Often the Ministry are required to make difficult choices when faced with numerous initiatives and limited resources. This results in unaddressed needs by families and individuals in our communities who require intensive supports such as group living, while transitional aged youth or individuals who moved out of the facilities are given a priority. Similarly, individuals are now being moved out of dual diagnosis wards from mental health facilities and bypassing those on waiting lists in the community. Some families in every community have waited for many years for services for their loved one(s). We are encouraged by the announcement in the 2010 Ontario Budget to provide \$36 million for critical support and services for people in urgent need, and by a further \$20 million to continue to make progress on the transformation plan. In accordance with the foundational goals of transformation (i.e. equitable, accessible, and sustainable), we urge the Government to respond with service expansion initiatives on their behalf so as to stem the tide of ever increasing waiting lists and growing frustration.

Intergovernmental Relations

We continue to have concern over the lack of coordination and cooperation between Ministries of the same government. This will be especially critical when determining eligibility for developmental services under the new Act. There will clearly be a need for the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and the Ministry of Education to work together to ensure that appropriate assessments are completed, that assessments done in one system are acceptable to the other and that there are enough professionals available to provide those assessments in timely manner. Interface between these systems will be needed to ensure a seamless transition for families.

We are also concerned that this budget may be perceived to be promoting a double standard between Ministries. Why is it that Health will be provided a 1.5% increase when this sector's wage rates continue to lag significantly behind those holding similar positions in Health?

We sincerely thank you for taking the time to review our Bulletin, and hope that you will be able to support your local Developmental Service organizations by advocating on their behalf. We encourage you to obtain details on these matters from the OASIS website at: www.oasisonline.ca, or by contacting myself or your local agency representatives.

Sincerely,
Brian Young
President

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