



**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 2013***

**Dear Member of the Ontario Legislature,**

*Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs (OASIS) provides leadership through sharing ideas, information, knowledge and interacts with government and other organisations on issues affecting its members.*

Supporting thousands of persons with developmental disabilities and their families across Ontario OASIS member agencies employ over 25,000 and provide responsible stewardship to over \$1.2 billion of Ontario tax dollars. Our services, and the staff who provide them, ensure persons with developmental disabilities work, live and play as full citizens in our province.

**The One Hundred Million Dollar Question**

As you may be aware, the Developmental Services Sector is in the midst of a potential 6-year funding freeze. While we are aware of the financial pressures facing the province, the pressures facing our member agencies and the people we support do not just disappear in order to accommodate a funding freeze. There are significant short and long term implications to the current funding freeze mandate. To highlight a few:

- Families are in crisis. In Ontario there are hundreds of elderly parents supporting their aging adult children with developmental disabilities. Some of these families have become so desperate they have abandoned their children to agencies in the hope their children will receive service. Too often these vulnerable citizens are inappropriately placed in nursing homes or in some cases hospitals. These are expensive, inefficient and inappropriate placements for our fellow citizens.
- Pay Equity Pressures. Many of our member agencies have legislated pay equity commitments to their staff. These commitments *must* be honoured by law. In a frozen funding environment services will be negatively impacted in order to meet these legal commitments. Indeed some organizations have made the decision to not meet pay equity commitments as there are simply no ways to cut services without endangering the

people they serve and support. We have had positive discussions with some MPP's regarding this issue and are hopeful a policy change can be implemented to delay this pressure until such a time when provincial finances improve.

- **Collective Bargaining Agreements.** In spite of the government's request to freeze wages many of our member agencies were in the middle of existing collective agreements when this request was made. These agreements are legally binding and wage increases must be administered in spite of the wage freeze mandate. In addition unions have been loath to cooperate with the wage freeze request. To ensure essential services to vulnerable people were not disrupted many organizations felt pressured to agree to small increases.
- **Inflationary Pressures.** For OASIS member agencies this is the *One Hundred Million Dollar Question*. We estimate a funding short-fall of \$100 million by 2015/2016 fiscal year if there is no new funding. Our formula is based on a cumulative inflationary impact of 11.4 percent over a seven year period (2009-2016).

This \$100 million does not take into account the pressures related to pay equity or collective bargaining. Nor does it account for thousands of people currently on priority list for services across the province. The \$100 million accounts only for existing services. Services that are being eroded, reduced and eliminated each and every year of the funding freeze.

OASIS is working with our sector partners and with the Developmental Services Branch at the Ministry of Community and Social Services to find creative ways to accommodate the funding freeze to minimize the impact on the people our member agencies serve and support. Unfortunately due to the enormity of the problem service cuts are inevitable and priority lists for services will continue to grow. People in need of services are going without in the Province of Ontario. Do we want to pay now or pay later? That is the \$100 million question.

### **Your Local OASIS Member Service Provider**

With 170 member agencies across Ontario we encourage our representatives in the Ontario Legislature to take some time to meet some of the fantastic citizens served by our agencies in your community. Each and every day we are inspired and energized by the people we serve and support. We are sure you will be too. Please visit our website <http://oasisonline.ca/> to learn more about OASIS and your local Developmental Service provider.