

Consultation with People First Groups

about

Transforming Services in Ontario
for People who have a developmental disability -
Preliminary Discussion Paper

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The Process

People First of Ontario was given some monies to carry out a consultation process with as many members as possible. The members were given one month to organize meetings, complete a plain language version of the government document and to put together the ideas from these meetings.

People First had three meetings - London, Welland and Brockville. In all, the facilitators, Peter Park, Richard Ruston and Rose Barko were able to talk to seventy (70) people. These seventy people represented twelve (12) People First Groups.

The consultations consisted of having the groups answer fourteen (14) questions. The responses were collected and collated. They comprise this paper.

The general feeling of all the groups was that the process was too rushed. People did not have time to meet with their individual groups before attending the larger group. People did not have time to think about the paper and the questions. The first time people saw the plain language version was at the meeting. People thought that the government would not listen.

The Issues and Suggestions

Respect

People First would like to thank the Ministry for finding some money to allow the consultation process to happen. People were also pleased that there was membership on the advisory committee.

Most members were very concerned about the lack of respect shown towards people with disabilities. This lack of respect was shown in the way people were rushed to give input without enough time to think about the issues. The original paper was far too hard to read and understand. The plain language version was not put out at the same time.

Many people find the government papers very difficult. There was no picture version for people who could not read. There is a video version put out but it was not widely circulated.

People also talked about times when other people, like staff, talked about private information in public places. This told people with disabilities that they were not respected.

There is a general feeling that people with disabilities are not seen as fellow citizens. People feel their rights are not recognized in the same way other peoples' are.

Some Suggestions:

- 1) Remember "Never about us without us".
- 2) Give people the time needed to think through these complicated issues.
- 3) Give people the resources they need to fully participate
 1. Plain language versions
 2. Video tapes or pictures on ideas
 3. Dollars to do a proper job

Trust

Trust is a two way street. You must be trusted to trust. People feel that they are not trusted to be able to contribute. This has led to a general distrust of the government and of others. Many people felt that they have been lied to because they did not know that the rules had changed.

People have trusted that their basic needs for food, shelter and medical care will be taken care of. But it is very hard to do with the amount of ODSP. Many drugs, therapies and assistance have been taken away or there are charges for them.

Trust is a hard thing to talk about when you don't feel respected. The two seem close together.

Some suggestions:

- 1) Make sure that we get all the information in ways we can understand it.
- 2) Make sure that we are apart of all discussions that affect our lives.
- 3) Make sure that there is a way for us to have ample representation (more than one or two people) when we are asked to be a part of groups.

Listen

People First members wanted to make clear that not everyone uses verbal language as their means of communication. Most communication from government, agencies and organizations is written or verbal. This makes it difficult for some people. Often people who use other forms of communication find it hard to be heard.

Some Suggestions:

- 1) Please make sure that communications come in many forms - large print, plain language, visual, oral, pictorial, braille and sign.
- 2) Please accept many forms of communication in return as a response.

[More Practical Help](#)

Housing

People would like affordable housing of all types - houses, apartments, co-ops, condos. People would like to find ways to own their own homes.

It is difficult for people to find affordable housing.

Some suggestions:

- 1) Provide more government subsidized housing that is gear-to-rent.
- 2) Increase the rent portion of the ODSP for people that live in areas where the rent is high.
- 3) Give people information about ways to become home owners.

Education

People felt that their education was limited. It was important that people got to go to their home schools. It was important that children got a good quality education. A few people had gone on to adult education courses or college. It was important that more people got the opportunity to attend higher education.

Some suggestions:

- 1) Ensure that all children get a good quality of education that includes communication skills.
- 2) Ensure that education is inclusive and that children attend their neighbourhood school.
- 3) Increase the opportunities for higher education.

Jobs and Volunteering

People were very keen on getting and holding real jobs. These jobs should be paid minimum wage. People may not be paid minimum wage if they work in a workshop. Many people told of their jobs - some full-time, some part-time.

Some people prefer to volunteer. Some volunteer in their spare time. Many people were connected to community organizations and churches.

People had found that working at a real job or volunteering in the community was a good way to meet other people and find friends.

Some Suggestions:

1) Provide more training on the job, hands on job experience.

ODSP

Every one was concerned by the amount of money. People found it difficult to pay all the bills, buy food and pay the rent.

People have found that they have to pay for more things like drugs, wheelchairs, dental work.

Everyone would like more money.

Some suggestions:

1) More money that increases with the cost of living.

2) Higher rent portion where housing is expensive.

3) Cover drugs and forget co-payments.

4) More access to essentials like wheelchairs, dental care.

Support Services

People would like to direct their own support services. Some times this would be with the help of family and friends. People would like to hire and fire support workers. People would like to know who is coming into their home. Support workers should act differently when they are in some one's home.

Some people were concerned about the future. They did not want to have to leave their home and go to a nursing home. They wanted support in their own home.

Some people who rely on home care services have found these services are cut back. They wonder about the future.

Some Suggestions:

- 1) Services should be respectful of people using the service.
- 2) People need to pick their own support workers.
- 3) Services should provide more physical help.
- 4) Services need to make room for friends and family.
- 5) Services should listen to what people want.

Summary:

The most important issues for people were:

1) More money

2) More jobs

3) More affordable housing

Thank you for this opportunity to participate. We have included a book by the People First Groups of Stratford and St. Marys about services. We think this will help people to understand.