



Virtual Rally Toolkit:

In Support of

Community Living Day at the Legislature

Wednesday, 8th May 2024



OASIS Virtual Rally Toolkit: In Support of 2024 Community Living Day at the Legislature

Objective

Given the need for continued momentum to address the crisis in our sector, and in an effort to show solidarity and support for the crucial work being done in our sector, the Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs (OASIS) is broadening the Annual Community Living Day at the Ontario Legislature with a **Virtual Rally on Wednesday, 8th May**.

OASIS supports the goals of this important day of advocacy and hoped to co-sponsor a rally on the front lawn of Queen's Park, as a companion to the reception and meetings inside the Legislature. Unfortunately, new security rules at Queen's Park do not allow both an indoor and an outdoor event from the same sector on the same day.

Community Living Day at the Legislature represents an important advocacy opportunity for the *whole* sector to come together as one and send the message that the job's not done. This collaboration aims to strengthen our collective voice while respecting the diverse perspectives within our community.

Further, we believe it is crucial that the voices of families, agencies and those with lived experience are engaged in the events of the day. With this in mind, OASIS has worked to create this tool kit to facilitate a virtual rally through social media for those unable to attend the Day at the Legislature in person.

More information on the Community Living campaign and Community Living Month can be found here: communitylivingontario.ca/community-living-month/

THE VIRTUAL RALLY:

This kit includes:

- *Agenda for the Day (At Queen's Park & virtually)*
- *Virtual Question Period*
- *Ideas for Engagement and Crafting Messages*
- *Finding your MPP and their Social Media Handle*
- *Campaign Hashtags*
- *Social Media Message Suggestions*
- *Suggested Messages for self-advocates*
- *Background Messages*

Messages in this kit have been designed to be sent to MPPs on 8th May to turn the Community Living Day at the Legislature into a true **Day of Visibility** for our sector across the Province.

OASIS encourages all members to rally on social media on the 8th and tag their local MPP and ministers. Member agencies are uniquely positioned to provide a non-partisan local perspective to MPPs on the importance of the sector and individuals' needs. It is imperative that we all stand together to send this message, raise the visibility of our sector, and further amplify our voices.

AGENDA AT THE LEGISLATURE

May 8, 2024

Below is the agenda of what will be happening at the Legislature on the 8th. We encourage you to use this as a guide as to when and what you post to social media.

Time	Location	Agenda Details at Queen's Park	Virtual Rally
8:45 a.m.	Main Legislature, Queen's Park	Start of the day at Queen's Park	<i>As people arriving at Queen's Park, begin posting your messages on your hopes for the day. Be sure to tag your MPP.</i>
9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.	Main Legislature, Queen's Park –	Meetings with MPPs Begin	<i>Continue to Post your Messages and Monitor your feeds for what is happening at the Legislature and Post and Re-Post.</i>
10:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	Main Legislature, Chamber	Question Period	<i>VIRTUAL QUESTION PERIOD: Post your own "Question Period" (see above) What are your Questions to your MPP? If you Could Ask One Question to your MPP, what would it be?</i>
11.30a.m. - 5:00 p.m.	Main Legislature, Queen's Park –	Meeting with MPPs Continues	<i>Continue to Post</i>
5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.	Reception Rooms 228 & 230 Main Legislature, Queen's Park	Reception- Representatives of All Political Parties, including Minister Parsa will be present and giving remarks.	<i>Continue to post, always remember to tag Minister Parsa as well.</i>

QUESTION PERIOD: Your Opportunity to ask your Own Questions.

Question Period, or Oral Questions, is an important part of procedures in the Ontario Legislature. Question Period is a formal session held during each sitting day at the Legislature, where Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) have the opportunity to ask questions to government ministers. It serves as a critical aspect of the democratic process, allowing elected representatives to hold the government accountable for its actions and policies.

During the Day at the Legislature, participants will be attending Question Period in person. However, as part of our virtual campaign, Question Period, provides a valuable opportunity for your own advocacy and engagement.

We are encouraging everyone to create their own Question Period by recording short videos of their staff and, if possible, individuals receiving support, asking them to answer:

“If you could ask your MPP one question, what would it be?”

The videos can be short, 30 seconds to a minute, and then post them to social media during Question Period on the 8th. (*Timing of when Question Period occurs during the day can be found in the Agenda section of this kit*).

Crafting Your Question:

Encourage those asking the question to take the time to craft a clear and concise question that highlights the need for additional support and funding for agencies and for individuals with developmental disabilities. The question should be specific, relevant, and impactful. They should consider the following elements when formulating a question:

- *Clearly state the issue or concern you wish to address.*
- *Be respectful and professional in your language.*
- *Keep your question brief and to the point.*

Collaborate: Collaborate with agency staff and individuals with developmental disabilities on crafting their questions.

Practicing Delivery: Individuals being recorded should practice delivering their question to ensure clarity, confidence, and effectiveness. Consider rehearsing in front of a mirror or with a friend or colleague. Pay attention to their tone of voice, body language, and overall presentation. All that being said, coming off natural can also be impactful.

Recording the Question: When recording the question, ensure that those asking are well-lit, audible, and visually engaging.

Conclusion: When complete, be sure to upload the video and tag your local MPP and Minister Parsa when you do (*Please see attached chart for social media handles and tags*).

Our own virtual Question Period presents a unique opportunity to advocate for the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities and the agencies that support them. Recording and posting your own questions will help maximize our advocacy efforts and expand our visibility on the day.



IDEAS FOR ENGAGEMENT AND CRAFTING MESSAGING:

Virtual Question Period is just one way to participate during the day of advocacy. These ideas don't require elaborate planning or extensive resources. With a few simple yet impactful activities, individuals and agencies can make their voices heard.

Here are a few quick and easy-to-implement activities that can be completed during the day on the 8th to drive advocacy efforts forward and raise our visibility.

Agency Mini-Rally:

On Monday or Tuesday (6th & 7th), organise a short rally in front of your agency to raise awareness about the need for additional support and funding for individuals with developmental disabilities. Gather agency staff, individuals supported, and community members to participate. Create eye-catching signs and banners with advocacy messages. Record a brief video, or videos, featuring staff and individuals sharing their personal stories and advocacy messages and then post the videos to social media on the 8th with a short accompanying message.

Email to Your MPP:

Don't stop at Social Media on Community Living Day, send a quick email blast to your Member(s) of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) and other elected officials, urging them to prioritize support and funding for developmental disabilities. We know that most of you have already had some contact with your local MPP, so this might be as simple as a follow up message. Craft a concise message outlining the advocacy asks and emphasizing the importance of addressing these issues. If you've made one, include a link to the video recording from the agency rally to provide additional context and personal stories.

Community Engagement Challenge:

Challenge agency staff, individuals supported, and community members to share the social media posts and email template with their networks. Set a specific goal for the number of shares, likes, or retweets to achieve within the day. Provide regular updates and encouragement throughout the challenge to maintain momentum and engagement. Maybe come up with some prizes for who has the most.

Follow-Up and Thank Your MPP:

Follow up with elected officials and community members at the end of the day, during the evening reception at the Legislature would be good timing for this, to express gratitude for their support and participation in the advocacy efforts, respond back to them if they've sent you a message. If they've tweeted something related to the Community Living Day at the Legislature, retweet it. Send a thank you message via email or social media, acknowledging their contributions and highlighting the impact of their advocacy actions. Emphasize the importance of continued engagement and collaboration in driving positive change for individuals with developmental disabilities.



FINDING YOUR LOCAL MPP'S SOCIAL MEDIA

(SEE SEPARATE CHART)

Please use the attached chart to find the social media handle of your Agencies Local MPP. Remember to include the @ sign ahead of the username/handle and if the MPP doesn't have a Social Media username, use #MPP and their name. If **you don't know your MPP's name or your Riding / Electoral district**, to Find the most up to date information, **please enter the postal code of your organisation** on the Elections Ontario website, found here: <https://voterinformationservice.elections.on.ca/en/election/search?mode=postal> **Code** and it will tell you the name of your Member of Provincial Parliament and their contact details. Again, please remember to enter the Postal Code of your organisation.

Minister Parsa's social media handle is @MichaelParsa

CAMPAIGN HASHTAGS:

Please tag your local MPP in a social media post with the following hashtags.

#SupportDS *This is the hashtag to show OASIS' support for this Advocacy Day. Please use it for all social media posts.*

#InvestInInclusion *This is the Hashtag for the Community Living Day at the Legislature. Please use it for all social media posts.*

#ONpoli *This is the hashtag that covers all Politics in Ontario. Please use it for all social media posts as it will only further expand our visibility across the province on the Day.*

#CDNpoli *This is the hashtag that covers all Politics in Canada. Please use it for all social media posts as it will only further expand our visibility across Canada on the Day.*



SUGGESTED SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS:

We are encouraging all member agencies to post to social media throughout the day, highlighting the needs of the sector. Please monitor the Ontario Legislature, particularly Question Period, throughout the day and post anything relevant to you or the campaign. The below posts are just suggestions to use on the 8th. Please also add your own local experience and individual agency pressures and challenges to the posts.

- Highlight Urgency and Need: Post: *Despite recent Budget announcements, our needs grow faster. We're still catching up from decades of gaps. Speak up for those who need it most!* 🚩 #SupportDS #InvestinInclusion #ONPoli #CDNpoli

- Story of Impact: *Due to the need to cut costs, we've had to reduce crucial services. This affects real people, who rely on us for daily support. We must do better.* #SupportDS #InvestinInclusion #ONPoli #CDNpoli

Visual Suggestion: pictures or videos of your agency.

- Direct Call to Action: *The crisis in the Developmental Services sector is real and worsening. We need your help to ensure no one is left behind. Join us in demanding sustainable funding.* 🍌 #SupportDS #InvestinInclusion #ONPoli #CDNpoli

Visual Suggestion: A rally or group photo of individuals, supporters, and staff.

- Transparency and Clarity: *We appreciate recent budget commitments, but lack of meaningful communication has only made things worse. We need clarity to plan and provide effectively. Let's demand transparency.* #SupportDS #InvestinInclusion #ONPoli #CDNpoli
- *"80% of Developmental Service agencies face deficits next year, risking cuts to staff and safety. This is a call to action—help us secure the future of DS services.* #SupportDS #InvestinInclusion #ONPoli #CDNpoli
- *Supporting the DS sector is not just about funding; it's about ensuring the well-being and dignity of individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families. Together, let's make a meaningful impact in our community.* #SupportDS #InvestinInclusion #ONPoli #CDNpoli
- *We need sustainable solutions to ensure the well-being of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.* #SupportDS #InvestinInclusion #ONPoli #CDNpoli
- *We remain committed to working with government to provide a sustainable plan for DS Agencies, families, and individuals with lived experience in Ontario. Let's continue to engage and collaborate for a more inclusive future.* #InvestinInclusion #SupportDS #ONPoli
- *Urgent Call to Action: The developmental services sector needs your support now more than ever. Join us in advocating for adequate funding and sustainable solutions to address the challenges faced by individuals with developmental disabilities.* #SupportDS #InvestinInclusion #ONPoli #CDNpoli



Suggested Messages for Self-Advocates

These are only ideas and are meant as a jumping off point. Please also add your own as well as any self-advocates feelings.

Personal Story and Appreciation:

- Post: *"Thanks to the support from (Insert your Social Media handle), I've been able to achieve so much. Please continue to support us so others can have the same opportunities I did. 🌟 #SupportDS #InvestinInclusion #ONPoli #CDNpoli*

Call for Accessibility and Inclusion:

- Post: *More support means more opportunities for us to succeed. Let's make our community inclusive for everyone. #SupportDS #InvestinInclusion #ONPoli #CDNpoli*

Advocating for Future Generations:

- Post: *I want future generations with IDD to have even better opportunities than I had. Let's invest in our future now! #SupportDS #InvestinInclusion #ONPoli #CDNpoli*



BACKGROUND MESSAGES:

These are meant for you to keep in mind throughout the day. They can also be used to create additional Social Media Messaging and Posts (see specific social media messages below). Always be sure to add your local experience and individual agency pressures and challenges.

Challenges Faced by the DS Sector:

- Ontario's developmental services sector is confronting unprecedented challenges, primarily stemming from chronic underfunding of agency base budgets over the past several decades.
- Despite a Budget commitment in the 2024 Ontario Budget, lack of meaningful communication around it, and what it means, has only created more uncertainty and fear.
- To be clear, we are appreciative of the \$310M Investment, we know how hard Minister Parsa and his staff worked to get this, but this hard work isn't being seen by agencies or the sector as a whole.
- Now, more than a month after the budget was tabled, our sector has received no technical briefings or outlines on how the \$310M breaks down amongst the sectors mentioned in the Budget (i.e. D.S., children's, human trafficking, etc.)
- We have understood that it represents a one-time bump of **2%** to base allocations. Which would mean that whatever an agencies current base is, they would receive an additional 2% on top of that for this year. However, they would then receive that same amount for the next two subsequent years. Again, this is what we understand, but this has in no way been officially confirmed with us by either the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services or the Ministry of Finance.
- While any additional resources allocated to the DS sector are always appreciated, the lack of clarity at this crucial juncture, and so long after the tabling of a Budget, is deeply disappointing.
- These funds are not a luxury but a necessity for the survival of our sector and the well-being of those we serve.
- 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 individuals living with developmental disabilities in Ontario.**
- 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 those we serve.*
- 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.**



Funding History:

- Between 2005-06 to 2009-10, the DS sector was receiving annual base increases of between **1.67%** and **2%** to address rising costs of care (rising operational costs, individuals living longer with increasing complexity of needs, individuals being moved from institutions etc.).
- From 2010 to 2018, the sector received **NO** base increases for operational costs.
- In **2018**, there was a **2%** increase that was originally intended to increase year over year for the next three years after, however this did not move forward.
- With the assumed 2% in the 2024 Budget, it would mean that Between 2013 and 2024, the sector received base funding increases of just **4.2%**, while over the same period the cost of living increased by **30%**.
- The funding increase announced in this year's provincial budget is needed and welcome. However, it is not enough.

Financial Strain and Resource Management:

- Escalating demand, soaring operational costs, increased administrative and reporting burdens and stagnant funding has compelled organisations to resort to temporary revenue sources and fund raising.
- To help try and stabilize our workforces, agencies have needed to provide compensation increases for collective bargaining agreements and non-unionized staff, which have not been funded, further compounding the pressure, and creating additional budget deficits.
- **50%** of agencies have already cut direct support staff positions, and **63%** have cut management positions.
- **70%** have not been able to keep up with needed repairs and maintenance of capital assets.
- **54%** are concerned that people's health and safety are at risk.

Urgent Need for Action:

- Cutbacks in response to underfunding will lead to increasing pressure on families, as well as on the health care, mental health, long-term care, and shelter systems.
- We need adequate and appropriate funding for the sector to provide effective services and supports that ensure safety, security, and quality of life.
- There is an urgent need to address the base budget crisis which is necessary for a sustainable future for the system supporting individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.
- Adequate funding is crucial to provide effective services and supports that ensure safety, security, and quality of life for individuals with intellectual disabilities.



- Recent investments and efforts are appreciated but more support is needed to address the ongoing crisis in the DS sector.

Real answers on how and when the budget investment will roll out as well as concrete actions are needed to address the serious problems facing the DS sector.