

Focus Newsletter Winter 1999

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OASIS 2nd Annual General Meeting

[May 6th and 7th](#) promise to be two very special days for OASIS in 1999. In addition to treating yourself to the beautiful surroundings, fine food, and accommodations that the Elmhurst Inn has to provide, we are sure you will find the speakers entertaining, enlightening and informative. Here is just a sample of who is on the conference list:

James Kennedy - a motivational speaker that will bring a fresh approach to embracing change;

Leonard Domino - a lobbyist who will talk about how to effectively lobby to make a positive impact;

Doug Cartan - is a trainer and consultant with over two decades' experience. He will address the pros and pitfalls of moving clients in the community; and

Ron James - promises to be pure entertainment, providing us with his own unique brand of humour that will bring our conference to its conclusion.

Crisis of Confidence in MCSS Emerging

A recent poll conducted by OASIS identified that more than 80% of member agencies are feeling a crisis of confidence with respect to the policy directions of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

The implementation repercussions of "Making Services Work", "Levels of Support" and "Individual Support Agreements" are of concern to the membership and the families that are supported. The underlying methodology and motives of the above initiatives, after two years of utter confusion and acrimonious debate, are seriously suspect. The developmental services system has been through almost eight years of restraint/cutbacks. Through this period, the system has by necessity, been forced to restructure and downsize. It has reached a point where agency unions are becoming militant; staff morale is at an all time low; administrative infrastructures have been weakened; quality issues are secondary to survival; vulnerable disabled people are being denied access to group homes and more and more individuals are put at risk. The climate of uncertainty is exacerbated by two major developments. OASIS makes the points that, on the one hand, the policy directions alluded to above are seriously flawed ; and on the other hand, there is ample supporting data that not only are there no existing funds in the current system to pay for new admission structures and reinvestment strategies; the system is critically in need of new funds to address waiting lists and service gaps. There is no common sense to the MCSS move to develop costly new centralized admission bodies to a system full to capacity. It makes even less common sense to pay for another level of administration, taking funds from a system already crumbling. MCSS is doing to community services what Ministry of Health (MOH) has done to the health care system. MCSS is hiding behind a largely illusory facade that the system can be improved by extracting more money out of it. MCSS policy directions for children and people with developmental handicaps are primarily about saving money at the expense of vulnerable people. It is not common sense for government to create the illusion of a more accountable system with tools (LOS and ISA) discredited by virtually everyone in the service sector. Accountability must be relevant and real for the consumers of service.

Letter to the Editor

After reading submissions made by families to the government about their developmentally challenged children, that expressed concerns about this government's actions when it comes to helping the most vulnerable in our society, I felt I had to write my thoughts.

We, as a society before 40 to 50 years ago, allowed and encouraged a certain segment of our society to be institutionalized so that we wouldn't have to deal with people who were different. Finally, about 40 to 50 years ago, groups of parents banded together and enlightened the general population about a better way to treat people who are different, but just as human and dignified as the rest of us. Community living became the order of the day and parents embraced it.

Shortly thereafter, families and society wanted people who had been institutionalized, to come home.

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Many did. At the same time, new parents of these special individuals were looking after their children at home. Now these parents need help. They are elderly, tired and some are sick, and their children are adults and getting older. These people are asking for help. No matter which government is in power, can society turn their back on them?

The Ontario Government's policies are directed towards making everyone self-sufficient by cutting social programs, but we know that some people in our society need assistance. The majority of people who espouse human values do not want us to return to a society of poor houses, institutions and the devil take the hindmost type of society, which was the result of the industrial age.

Democracy and the right of adults to vote changed the rule of the elite and caused society to pool resources for health, education and the common good. We have been brainwashed into a "cult of impotence" as espoused by Linda McQuaig in her book. It's the deficit, it's our debt, it's globalization. There are many reasons given for the dismantling of social programs. Because most of us do not have a Ph.D. in Economics, we accept any of these answers as to why we can't afford our social programs. Miss McQuaig thinks otherwise and makes some compelling arguments that support her position. I'm inclined to agree with her and also to add that any political, economical, industrial, etc., organization that has been produced by humans can also be changed by humans. We seem also to be able to change the environment created by God himself, but there are always consequences to our endeavours. We must, in a democratic way, decide what consequences we are willing to accept, in ignoring the most vulnerable in our society. It only takes political will to become a caring society.

OASIS Accomplishments

Over the last year, OASIS has taken a leading role, on your behalf, on a number of issues.

They are:

WSIB (WCB) Rate Increases

- preparing material for MCSS regarding the impact and alternatives for agencies; held meetings with WSIB officials to search for solutions;

Benefit Package

- put together a package that can be tailored to meet your agency's needs and yet provides the purchase power of the larger group;

Fire Marshall Code

- raising the issue of the affect on our sector of the Fire Marshall Code in terms of increased costs;

Making Services Work for People

- identifying the inconsistencies and offering to work with MCSS to resolve the issues around "Making Services Work for People";

ISA

- Developed a legal book on the liability factors of signing Individual Support Agreements;

ISA Software

- developing software that will make filling out the ISA's easier and consistent between the 60+ agencies that have purchased this software;

First Conference

- held a very successful, information-packed first conference - thanks Collingwood!;

Administrative Costs

- established a Task Force re: Administrative Costs;

MCSS Representation

-representing our service sector with MCSS with respect to issues related to administration policy direction and ISA's; and

Supported Employment & Sheltered Workshop

- asked for input with respect to this funding.

It has been a busy year!

MCSS Update

The Ministry of Community and Social Services had been in arbitration due to a complaint from unionized workers at facilities that they had failed to make "reasonable efforts" to assist displaced employees to find new employment.

On November 24, 1998, the Arbitrator stated that there was no reason to conclude that the Ministry had failed to fulfill its obligation to make reasonable efforts as per the Collective Agreement.

Thus the delay in the current deinstitutionalization initiative should be over and planning will continue for community placement of residents from Schedule 1 facilities.

Featured Best Practice - Accessible Group Home Design

Over the past several years, Collingwood Community Living has been in a position to build or retrofit several accessible dwellings. Each project has provided its own challenges and triumphs in terms of project development, financing, search for appropriate site and coordination of construction. In one instance, we had less than three months between the time the project was approved and when three buildings had to be built, furnished and occupied (including finding large enough lots in small, rural towns).

The success and "not so greats" have helped evolve several ideas of what, staff find, are essential qualities in a homey, efficient accessible house:

- ceiling track systems
- thermal tubs
- non-skid floors with low maintenance
- a circular traffic pattern that allows staff to quickly access any area of the building
- open concept main living areas, but each room "defined"
- following section 3.7 of the building code re: ramps, passageways, exterior walks, doorways, grab bars, toilets, sinks, switches, handles
- accessible bathrooms include a wheel-in shower stall as well as tub
- handrails in main halls
- use colour and texture contrasts to assist visually impaired
- kitchen design
- carpets on walls below chair rail height to protect against damage to wall
- garden doors instead of sliding doors to decks
- non-institutional furniture
- use of Plexiglas in high risk areas
- window sills low enough for those in chairs to see easily out

We have developed checklists which outline everything needed to be done from purchasing sofas to waste baskets - from getting zoning approvals to phone hook-ups.

Member Agency Highlights

Kirkland District Association for the Developmentally Handicapped

There is a community-wide recruitment campaign in the Kirkland Lake area. The volunteer program has a new name. It is now called Motivated Volunteers in Partnership. The volunteers are not just for this agency but for the Children's Aid Society too. The program also prepares a newsletter designed by volunteers.

The Kirkland District Association for the Developmentally Handicapped has made a commitment to educate the public about disabilities and attempt to remove some of the fears and fallacies revolving around this issue. In speaking to different groups, one of the common themes is to create a community tree, indicating the participants personal commitment to the disabled population.

Lambton County Association for the Mentally Handicapped

CCL has recently redeveloped its client information management database with the expertise of the Campaign Coordinator of the United Way Sarnia-Lambton, coordinated a "Day of Caring". Projects were completed by a number of volunteers. These included demolition of an old two storey building, cutting down a tree at another property, repairing and painting lawn furniture, washing down eaves/soffit and fascia and siding, washing windows and painting a bedroom at a group home and staining a gazebo at a children's home. This sounds like a lot of fun and true community spirit to get some needed work done.

North Bay and District Association for Community Living

Hot off the press is the Second Edition of "Starting Point - A Resource Book for Persons with Disabilities in Nipissing". This bilingual manual lists all of the services available in the area for any type of disability. The book lists: Accommodations, Bulletin Board Systems, Education and Employment, Financial and Legal Services, Health Services, Hospitals, Licenced Child Care and Respite Services, Recreation, Support Group, Support Services and Travel. This book was paid for by the North Bay and District Association for Community Living in its response to the need in the community.

Niagara Support Services

The Board of Directors has highlighted membership and partnership as a priority in their work plan and has struck a small committee to suggest ways and means of encouraging membership/partnerships. While there is a need to encourage partnerships with families, the organization will also be very active with encouraging other potential partners to join them in operating services for people with developmental disabilities in Niagara Falls. Future endeavours involve corporate sponsorship and including funders in the process of planning. Membership and partnering is such an integral component of who this agency is and represents, and of their place in the community, that they will be requesting that families and individuals become members upon

request for service. It is their belief, that membership and partnership signals support and provides an organization with such pillar strengths in order to accomplish what it sets out to do.

Windsor Community Living Support Services

Windsor Community Living Support Services developed a wonderful partnership with the United Way, Project Green and Essex Windsor Solid Waste Authority as the Planet Partner Crew. One of the hottest products sold was the Rain Barrel Water Saver. It is made of 100% recycled plastic and features a childproof top, overflow and a filter screen. The sales team also sold the Earth Machine Backyard Composter, Blue Boxes and Mini Bins. WCLSS has become the local distributor of the Rain Barrels.

Featured Web Site- idealist - 16,000 organizations under one roof

idealist is a project of Action Without Borders. First called the Contact Center Network, Action Without Borders was founded in 1995 to build a network of neighbourhood Contact Centers that would provide a one-stop shop for volunteer opportunities and non-profit services in communities around the world.

To promote this idea, a Website was set-up that started generating a strong interest from individuals and organizations.

In turning this initial enthusiasm into action, there were consistent problems of how to assemble in one place in each neighbourhood, the information and resources needed to constitute a viable Contact Center. At the same time, it was noticed that there was no single directory that would make all the non-profit resources available on the Internet easily accessible to the millions of people who were already online.

Responding to this need, this group set out to find every non-profit site on the web and to arrange all of these resources by both topic and geographic location, thereby creating a 'Virtual Contact Center'. The new system, named *idealist*, was launched in the summer of 1996.

What does *idealist* offer?

- Search for Organizations
- Browse by Country
- Volunteer Opportunities
- Programs and Services
- Materials and Publications
- Upcoming Events
- Breaking News
- Non-profit Jobs
- Non-profit Internships
- Resources for Non-profit
- Conferences for Non-profit

There are a lot of links to other sites and to online resources for non-profit staff and managers. Check out *idealist* at:

<http://www.idealists.org>

Legislation - Tenant Protection Act

The Tenant Protection Act refers to care homes as having a unique nature. These include facilities such as retirement residences, homes for special care, group homes and boarding homes that provide care services. Tenants living in care homes are protected by the Act. There are also special rules which apply only to care homes.

The Care Home information package

- A landlord must provide a Care Home Information Package to a prospective tenant before entering into a tenancy agreement
- the package contains consumer protection information and includes details about the meals, care services and emergency procedures in the care home
- if the landlord does not provide the tenant with the information package, the landlord cannot raise the rent or increase the charges for meals of care services.

Written tenancy agreement

- a landlord and a tenant in a care home must have a written tenancy agreement, which details the rent, meals and care services
- a tenant has the right to consult someone about the agreement, and the tenant can cancel the agreement within five days of entering into it.

Rent control

- rent control only applies to the rent paid by a care home tenant, and does not apply to the charges for meals and care services
- the landlord can increase the charges for meals and care services by any amount, but must give the tenant at least 90 days written notice of the increase.

Bed checks

- a landlord can enter a tenant's rental unit at any time without notice to provide care or check on the condition of the tenant, if the tenant has agreed to it in the written tenancy agreement
- a tenant can cancel their approval for the landlord to enter their rental unit by giving written notice to the landlord.

Transferring and evicting a tenant

- a landlord can apply to the Tribunal to transfer and evict a tenant, if there is a change in the amount of care needed by the tenant.

Ending a tenancy

- a tenant can terminate their tenancy in a care home at any time by giving the landlord at least 30 days notice.

Additional Information

The Tribunal can be reached 24 hours a day by calling toll - free 1-888-332-3234. you can also visit the Ontario Government Website at:

<http://www.gov.on.ca>

Government Introduces Legislation to Enhance Public Protection and Improve Quality Standards in Social Work Profession

On November 2, 1998, Community and Social Services Minister Janet Ecker, introduced legislation that would regulate social workers and social services workers in Ontario. If passed, the Social Work and Social Services Work Act would aim to improve standards in these fields and ensure better quality service for the public.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would create a self-governing and self-funding regulatory College to govern both social workers and social service workers. College membership would be required for any person in Ontario wishing to use the title "Social Worker" or "Social Service Worker". Ontario currently has a voluntary body governing the field of social work with a membership of more than 3,000 but many social workers are not members.

The proposed new College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers would have responsibilities that include;

- establishing and enforcing professional and ethical stands;
- maintaining a public register of College members;
- setting and maintaining membership qualifications; and
- establishing formal complaints and discipline mechanisms.

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