

One Message, Many Voices

Together We Can Do The

Right Thing

Improving the Lives of Ontarians with a Developmental Disability



Provincial Network
on Developmental Services

Services and supports for people who have a developmental disability are under tremendous strain at present.

There is an unprecedented level of unmet need with more than 20,000 people waiting for supports and services. Funding for the sector has been largely stagnant for a number of years and there are threats of significant cuts to all government services with the exception of health and education in the coming year. Support agencies are struggling to implement changes to government policy, meet legislative obligations and address demands of their employees. The scale and quality of supports and services is being negatively affected by these pressures.

It is essential that government understand the harm being done to people who have a developmental disability and their families. In order to bring these issues to the government's attention, those concerned must deliver consistent and effective messages. The Provincial Network recently undertook to develop a government advocacy initiative called "One Message, Many Voices" aimed at finding a common message

that all member groups of the Network could deliver to government. This package contains the messages that are being recommended by the Network and information about how you and your group can help deliver these messages to government. The Network greatly appreciates the advice it has received from Will Stewart, a Principal with the firm Navigator, in designing these key messages and strategies.

Accompanying this document is a key message sheet containing the message the Network is recommending partner groups deliver to government. The sheet also contains information that backs up the key messages. This sheet can be used to guide your comments when speaking with government and is designed to be used as a handout you can leave with those you meet with. Following is an outline of the strategy for communicating with government that the Network has developed and advice on how to communicate with government and deliver the key messages.

Why this message?

The Network has adopted these key messages based on strategic considerations and expert advice. The key messages are designed to align with, rather than conflict with, the stated government priorities of education and health care. The government has been clear that these are the only two areas in which it will provide additional funding; all other sectors are at risk of funding reductions. We are seeking a long term commitment from government to address the unmet need in the sector with a short term commitment to particular investments. The Network was advised to identify a target issue around which it can form its ask for short term investment in the sector. Consistent with the strategy of focusing on the government's priorities of health and education, we chose to focus on an ask for investments in the developmental services sector in those parts of the sector's work which will help the government

manage health care funding (investments that will reduce the incidence of inappropriate placements in long-term-care and other health funded programs and otherwise help streamline health spending).

Given the critical needs in the sector around administrative and labour issues, some might argue that the ask to government should be focused on these issues. Expert analysis of current public attitude shows that the public is at present willing to see cuts to government funded services as a means of addressing fiscal pressures. A direct ask for investment in administrative or labour costs would get no traction as present. The Network was advised however that the government is sensitive to the need to continue to address legislatively required costs and the key messages do contain a particular ask pertaining to such matters.

Delivering a coordinated message

This initiative of the Networks strategy is intended to have an impact in two areas, influencing the upcoming provincial budget and providing a key focus for the sectors response to the Drummond Report on government cost cutting expected to be released shortly.

As a first step, we are asking that groups work to deliver the key messages to MPPs in your area. We are waiting to see what opportunities are created for providing input into the budget process and the Drummond report and will advise people about these opportunities as they emerge.

Here are some things to consider when planning a meeting with your MPP to deliver these messages:

- To the greatest degree possible, have the messages delivered by people who are affected by the government's actions (people with disabilities or members of their families).
- Communicate with other developmental services groups in your area so that you all know what contact you are each having with your local MPP(s). You may choose to coordinate a meeting with others, but there is nothing wrong with multiple groups and individuals contacting their MPP with the same message, in fact, that is strategically what we are hoping for.
- Encourage people with disabilities and their family and friends to be in touch with your local MPP about these issues as individual citizens – this can be done by meeting, phone, letter, email, or whatever other means is preferred by the individual.
- Do not adopt an angry tone when delivering the messages or attempt to shame the government. It is recommended that the message be one of sadness, expressing the deep regret we feel that so many people are not receiving the support that they need.
- Do not use the term crisis in your presentation. At present, every sector is working to convince the government that it is in crisis (which in fact may be true in many cases). We must seek to find language that differentiates us from others.
- Remember to emphasize the role that the developmental services sector plays in controlling health costs. Explain how services in your area work to help people connect appropriately to health services and provide the support that is needed to efficiently maneuver health services. Emphasize as well the risk that exists for people inappropriately ending up in long-term care, hospitals and other health services when the more affordable developmental services are not available.
- Reinforce your message with local facts and stories about people in your community who are being affected by the government's actions. It will be particularly helpful if the people who are meeting with the politician have their own personal story to share.
- Leave the key message handout that has been provided with the MPP for his or her information.
- Make sure to ask the person you meet with to take action on the issues that you are presenting. If they are a member of the Cabinet, ask them to speak with the Minister of Finance (or better yet, send him a letter) about these issues and also discuss the issues with Cabinet colleagues. If they are a back bencher or member of the opposition, ask them to raise the issues in their caucus and with senior people in their Party.
- After the meeting, follow up with the person you meet with to thank them and ask what action they took on your request.

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Our message:

People who have a developmental disability, their families and those that support them are saddened to see the huge numbers of people who are not receiving the support they need to live in the community. Without such support, people are being placed at great risk. We know that the government is considering cuts to funding for all but health care and education. We know that the people of Ontario value the support they provide to its most vulnerable citizens. Developmental Services cannot sustain further reductions without causing harm to people by further eroding their

support. Reductions to Developmental Services would result in a significant increase in health care related spending as people would be forced into inappropriate health services such as hospitals and long-term care facilities to get the support they need. It is time for bold new action to address the huge unmet need for services and supports for people who have a developmental disability. We call on government to work with us to develop a comprehensive plan, with clear timelines and targets that will ensure that people receive the support they need.

We urge the government to ensure the following:

That \$64 million be invested this year in supports and services, to alleviate added stress on health and long-term care systems, including supports to:

- People being inappropriately admitted to facilities such as long-term care, hospitals, psychiatric wards, etc. because appropriate community supports are not available.
- People living with senior parents who require assistance in providing support.
- Caregivers accessing healthcare due to stress and illness.
- Staff experiencing workplace injury due to service and staff hour reductions to meet operating expenses.
- People seeking modest amounts of individual support funding who may otherwise end up in more expensive health services.

That government commits to ensuring that by April 1st of 2020, and thereafter, every person who has a developmental disability and their family has access to the support they need to live in the community, free from poverty and in a manner of their choosing.

That community support organizations receive the help they need to meet legislative obligations and ensure a stable, professional and responsive system of supports for the future.

That the government work with people who have a developmental disability, their families and community organizations to establish the plan needed to meet these goals.

\$64 million investment to include:

\$20 million to support 250 people living with senior families or at risk of inappropriate admission to a health facility;

\$18 million to support half of the 3,000 people waiting for passport funding;

\$10 million to Children and Youth Services to support half of the 6,657 families waiting for Special Services at Home;

\$16 million (1% of current sector funding) to stabilize and strengthen existing sector in order to ensure future capacity to provide excellent supports and services and to meet legislative obligations

Facts

Facts about Individuals and Families Needing Support:

- The government has announced that in the current year it will provide some new funding for the Passport and Special Services at Home programs, yet the combined wait lists for both programs, even after this new funding is available, will remain at close to 10,000 individuals, including 6,657 families of young children.
- Waiting lists for residential supports have risen to 12,000 people in a sector that currently provides residential support to 16,000 people.
- Families continue to wait for appropriate supports for their son(s) and daughter(s) and in Toronto alone, there are 100 people who have been on a waiting list for appropriate support for more than 20 years.
- In 2008, the government passed a new Social Inclusion Act aimed at providing people who have a developmental disability enhanced support to live in the community. Without appropriate investment, greater social inclusion will not be achieved, but rather, further isolation and segregation will result.
- According to a recent study by the Institute on Disability and Human Development, chronic health conditions, including arthritis, high blood pressure, obesity, and activity limitations are on average 10% higher for older caregivers of adults with developmental disabilities than in the general population.

Facts about Pressures on Support Agencies:

- In 2010, the government canceled a commitment made 3 years earlier, to provide a 2% increase in funding to the sector leaving service providers scrambling to find resources to pay for commitments made based on the promised funds.
- Support agencies continue to have legislated obligations such as Pay Equity adjustments which are required to be given to employees. Without new government funding, meeting these obligations can only result in a reduction of existing supports and services.
- Numerous labour negotiations are currently underway within the developmental service sector at a time when the government is providing no funding, has frozen non-union wages but has not restricted the unions ability to seek an increase in wages.
- In 2009, the developmental services sector completed the task of closing the government operated institutions in Ontario, with community support organizations assuming responsibility for providing supports and services to 1,000 individuals with some of the most challenging support needs.
- Increased government imposed accountability measures being implemented at a time of severe fiscal constraint has significantly increased liability to community support organizations resulting in challenges to the attracting and retention of volunteer board members.

Did you know?

The level of unmet need for community supports and service for people who have a developmental disability and their families has never been as high as it is today.

People who have a developmental disability are often inappropriately placed in long-term-care facilities and hospitals because appropriate community supports are not available.

Older parents who have supported their son or daughter with a disability at home are now facing critical issues related to adequacy of support as they and their children age.

Making matters worse, the organizations that provide supports to these individuals and families are under tremendous stress as they attempt to meet legislative obligations and respond to changing policies and regulations, while addressing ever increasing demands for support.

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