

Key Information for People with Disabilities & Their Families

Asking Questions & Making Decisions for Election 2014

The 41st Ontario general election will be held on June 12, 2014 and the candidates have hit the campaign trail running. It is imperative to keep the Developmental Service Sector issues at the forefront.

As a first step, Family Alliance Ontario has compiled the numerous issues and questions included below. Our next step is to determine the top three issues and develop template letters with concise questions constructed to gain responses that will reveal the position of each party and raise overall voter awareness. Together we will ramp up and make an impact on this campaign by being prepared when the candidates come knocking; contacting candidates through their websites; utilizing print, broadcast and social media; attending campaign events and all-party debates

Letters have been sent out to each party asking for details of their plans for the following issues -

- Ending the waitlists and delivering adequate, sustainable, individualized funding to ensure people with developmental disabilities experience an everyday, ordinary life with choice and control for the supports required to go about their daily lives with access to housing, employment, leisure, transportation, education and participation in family life.
- The urgent need for inclusive, innovative, sustainable housing options.
- Allowing Ontarians the benefits of a diverse province with authentic social inclusion for everyone by changing the current welfare model of developmental services to a model that is rooted in economic growth. Individuals with disabilities are vastly under-utilized in the employment sector due to significant lack of understanding on the part of many employers and a lack of employment supports and training opportunities.
- Respecting the dignity of people with disabilities by providing an adequate ODSP income that enables a healthy, poverty-free, inclusive life.
- Correcting the introduction paragraph in the MCSS guide "Hiring a Support Worker" suggesting that individuals use their already insufficient ODSP and employment income to pay a wage to a worker for the supports necessary to enable them to participate in community.
- The 2014 budget proposal, "Streamlining Employment Benefits" that merges 7 separate employment benefits into one consolidated benefit structure; 3 benefits from ODSP and 4 benefits from Ontario Works. These benefits include the Employment Start Up Benefit (ESUB), Work Related Benefit (WRB- the \$100 per month benefit for those who report income) and the Employment Transitions Benefit (ETB). This consolidation will result in annual loss in income for those already living in poverty.



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- Intervention to develop a transparent, trusting, accountable, accessible developmental service system. At this time individuals and families cannot ascertain why some people receive supports and others do not, who makes the decisions, the criteria for those decisions or the priorities used to determine those decisions.
- Acknowledging that disability does not change when you turn 18 years old. People with developmental disabilities are subjected to repetitive assessments before they turn 18 years old and then required to confirm eligibility and apply for adult services. The intrusive, deficit-based assessment and SIS which enters them onto a rapidly growing waitlist instead of transitioning into the adult support is unacceptable.
- Ensuring the mental, physical and financial health of primary caregivers.
- Preventing the negative economic impact for Ontario and the instability to the family unit by loss of income, benefits and future pension income when primary caregivers are forced to leave the workforce to provide care for a family member with a developmental disability.
- Entitlement to Independent Facilitation and Planning which provides the exploration of the potential of the individual. The direct results of effective Independent Facilitation and Planning provides the opportunity to move forward with a real, actionable plan based on the strengths, choice and control of the individual.
- Discontinuing the use of the CCAC Adult Services, deficit-based RAI-HC Assessment Tool which may lead to the unacceptable placement of a young person with complex needs in a nursing home instead of acknowledging their rights to live a valued life and participate in their community by providing adequate, sustainable, individualized supports.

According to the Select Committee on Developmental Services Interim Report -

"The Committee heard that, across the province, families of people with developmental disabilities are in crisis. Many parents appearing before the Committee broke down in tears as they described their failed efforts to access services and supports, and the toll taken by exhaustion and constant anxiety about what will happen to their developmentally disabled child when they die or are otherwise unable to continue caring for them. The toll on families includes a high frequency of marriage breakdown and stress-related illnesses. Siblings too pay a price for these difficulties, sometimes at the expense of their own education and future. Parents described how their state of constant uncertainty about the future led to feelings of "terror," "panic," and a "paralysis of worry and fear." They emphasized that they love their children, and want to care for them at home, but in the absence of adequate funding and supports, feel overwhelmed.

The Ontario Ombudsman's investigation into the province's services for adults with developmental disabilities has drawn close to 500 complaints at its halfway point and, he said, has tried his staff emotionally. These cases are very difficult. Heart-wrenching," Marin said. "Accounts from people of desperation with the system, where you have a child who then reaches the age of majority and is basically abandoned by the system."

c/o Durham Family Network

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With respect to invaluable presentations from individuals, families and advocates; the remarkable cooperation of all three parties and the tremendous cost to taxpayers; it is deplorable that the results of Developmental Service Select Committee are at risk.

Will your party commit to reinstate the work of the Developmental Service Select Committee and provide the results that are crucial to provide an inclusive, healthy Ontario for all?

The Select Committee on Developmental Services and Ontario's Ombudsman investigation convey the critical need for action and significant financial investment in the developmental services sector.

Will your political party commit funding to eliminating the wait lists for SSAH and Passport in two years as opposed to 4 years?

Will your party commit to the additional investment necessary to address the urgent need for sustainable housing?

Will your party make a priority of looking at individuals who are inadequately funded to be sustainable long term?

Yours truly,

Cindy Mitchell, President

On April 11th, 2014 the Liberal party announced a proposed new \$810 million investment in services and supports for people with developmental disabilities that would significantly expand direct funding to serve 21,000 more individuals and families, eliminating the waitlists for SSAH in two years and Passport in four years. Provide more residential supports and expand their response to adults who have urgent needs and help people better during important life transitions, such as when they leave school or enter the job market. Promote innovation and greater community living partnerships and provide more funding for agencies and front-line workers in the community services sector.

Budget Proposal 2014 Information –

- One per cent increase for adults receiving Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits effective in September 2014.
- \$810 million in the community and developmental services sector over the next three years, beginning in 2014–15. This includes \$485 million over the next three years in an action plan to build stronger services and supports for individuals while encouraging new approaches, collaboration and partnerships to advance the government's transformation of the developmental services system.
- \$200 million to support the continued professionalization of the community and developmental services sector and support salaries and wages for front-line workers.
- An additional \$5 million annual investment in Children's Treatment Centres. This would reduce wait times for core rehabilitation services for children and youth up to age 19 with special needs.

Additional information –

The proposed \$810 million included the \$42 million announced in last year's provincial budget (\$42 million x 3 years = \$126 million). The actual new funding is \$685 million over 3 years. \$485 million



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May 23, 2014

(add MPP candidate's name)

(add MPP candidate's address)

Dear *(add candidate's name)*,

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(name, address, phone)

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