

Community Living Toronto

20 Spadina Rd.

Toronto, ON M5R 2S7

Primary contact: Matthew Poirier

Manager, Policy & Stakeholder Relations

416-319-7016

matthew.poirier@cltoronto.ca

“Where choices change the lives of people with an intellectual disability.”

Introduction

For 70 years Community Living Toronto has been a source of support for thousands of individuals who have an intellectual or developmental disability and their families. Formed in 1948 when a group of parents came together to find alternatives to placing their children in an institution, Community Living Toronto is one of the largest non-profit organizations of its kind in Canada.

We know Ontario values a strong social and Development Services sector, and through Ministry of Community & Social Services initiatives such as the Employment and Modernization Fund, the Housing Task Force and Multi-Year Residential Planning, attention has been given to some of the critical issues the sector has been experiencing.

We are pleased that the closure strategy for sheltered workshops has been given a manageable timeline and includes the creation of an individual plan for each person. We are hopeful that the financial support needed to assist individuals to transition to an alternative of their choosing is forthcoming. Funding to offset costs associated with Bill 148 and pay equity are a good start, but we know that Ontario can do better.

Ontario needs a long-term plan that addresses the current and future generations of individuals with a developmental disability and their families that ensures full inclusion, healthy communities with adequate supports for a sustainable sector. Community Living Toronto is a member agency of OASIS and Community Living Ontario and we are pleased to support their respective pre- budget submissions.

1. Recognize the Importance of Social Profit Organizations in a Thriving Ontario

Inclusion, innovation and healthy populations are a few of the things that set Ontario apart from other jurisdictions. Social profit/not-for-profits are a significant part of Ontario’s economy and contribute to this goal. Annually, Ontario’s non-profit sector generates \$50 billion in GDP, with less than half of those revenues coming from government.

There is a multiplier effect with money that goes to not-for-profits with all of every cent of each dollar we spend going back into our local communities, through salaries, local businesses and supporting individuals who are vulnerable. We would strongly encourage government to view not-for-profits as a key part of a thriving economy and part of the attraction of Ontario as a great place to do business.

In addition to contributing to a healthy economy, investment in social services also leads to a healthier population. Former Minister of Community and Social Services and current MPP, Ted McMeekin shared

an article on Twitter on January 22, 2018 that outlines a study conducted by University of Calgary's School of Public Policy. The study examined government spending on health care vs. spending on social services and their respective impacts on population health measures such as premature death and life expectancy. The study concluded that if governments spent just one cent more on social services per dollar spent on health that life expectancy would go up, and the number of potentially avoidable deaths would decrease. Most beneficiaries of increased social spending are those with the lowest incomes, and thus the shortest life expectancies, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Community Living Toronto believes that good health begins where people are born, where they grow, where they work and where they age. The social determinants of health are just as important as health care and should be treated as such. Health care is crucial to society for those who **are** sick, but why not set people up for a successful, healthy life from the beginning?

It is recommended that:

- Non-profit organizations are recognized as vital government partners that are crucial to the province's economic growth. Transfer Payment Agreements and support must encourage us to be part of making Ontario a great place to invest.
- The government continues to prioritize the transfer payment modernization process to reduce administration costs for non-profits which will free up resources for program planning/design and service delivery.
- The government recognizes and invests in social services as a mechanism for promoting a healthy population.

2. Sustainability of Community Agencies

The Developmental Services Sector has not seen an increase to transfer payment agreements for 9 years. For 9 years the over 4000 people supported by Community Living Toronto and other agencies have squeezed budgets, reduced services and looked for alternative revenue sources just to stay afloat. There have been some targeted wage enhancements and a recent commitment to address some of the pressures of Bill 148, but no funding to address inflationary pressures and increased services expectations and changing needs.

This is not a sustainable approach to operating a sector. While it is understandable that government expand services for Ontarians through programs like all day kindergarten, OHIP+, college tuition, and other programs, we need to remember and see as valuable those citizens who have already had a commitment from government, but who feel left behind.

We commend the Ontario government for recently stepping up and providing funding to offset Bill 148 costs to DS sector agencies, but there is more to be done. This funding will not begin to address the growing waitlist in Ontario, and will certainly not be a solution to helping individuals with disabilities thrive in their communities. The government must continue to invest in those who are receiving support, in new programs. Agencies have the experience, the expertise, the creativity and the drive to make it happen, but we need government investment and commitment.

It is recommended that:

- The government makes a commitment to predictable, transparent incremental increases to transfer payment budgets to help build a sustainable and relevant sector. Bill 148 guarantees increases to the minimum wage – Ontario should provide the same to its transfer payment partners to allow us to be the type of employers we expect of other sectors.

3. Universal Coverage for all Ontarians with Developmental Disabilities

Ontario is a trailblazer in many ways for other provinces and territories in Canada. The Ontario government took the lead in national discussions for enhancing the CPP. Working collaboratively with the federal government and other provinces, Ontario advocated for a national solution for retirement security that benefits all Canadians. With OHIP+ Ontario opened the door for free medicine to youth under the age of 25. The government has shown time and time again that they are capable of making the lives of Ontarians better and easier, especially for those who need it most.

In the area of Developmental Services, Ontario has fallen short. We can and must do better. Ontario should take immediate action to address the significant wait lists for service in the province.

Ontario has an opportunity to once again take the lead, this time with **Every Canadian Counts** to ensure everyone with a disability has the supports they need to thrive and contribute as productive citizens of Ontario. Every Canadian Counts is a coalition that is calling on Canadian provincial governments to work together to develop a national program to ensure essential supports are available to all Canadians living with chronic, long-term disabilities. Some people are born with disabilities, and some acquire a disability later in life. Disability can and does touch all of us, and we should be proactive in our planning.

Our current system is broken; waitlists for services are long and getting longer, with needs not being met. Families are in crisis and Ontario can and should take the lead, as we have on CPP and OHIP+, on **Every Canadian Counts**.

We are not the first to do this. We can look to others who have already paved the way. Australia in 2013 established the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), a nationwide insurance program for people with severe disabilities. It provides people with guaranteed lifetime support, financing all of the essential services they require (including housing) as determined by an assessment. The program was developed and implemented in response to challenges similar to what Canada's DS sector is now facing. It is a consistent, effective and responsive solution to a national crisis, and Ontario should lead other provinces in establishing a Canadian equivalent.

It is recommended that:

- The Ontario government recognizes that the current system of services for children and adults with developmental disabilities is inadequate and in dire need of transformation.
- The Ontario government takes a lead role with other Canadian provinces in committing to and implementing the vision of **Every Canadian Counts**, including fair access to portable, individualized supports, adequate funding, the elimination of waitlists, improved public awareness and greater efficiency.

Summary of Recommendations

To ensure the sustainability of quality supports and services, and achieve the vision of transformation for the sector, it is critical that a long-term plan be developed to stabilize the developmental services sector and increase the opportunities for inclusion and participation of people with developmental disability in our communities. This plan needs to start with the Ontario government recognizing and investing in the non-profit sector as an economic partner, and setting up agencies for sustainable success. The following is a summary of our recommendations:

- Non-profit organizations need to be recognized as vital government partners that are crucial to the province's economic growth. Transfer Payment Agreements and support must encourage us to be part of making Ontario a great place to invest.
- Government needs to continue to prioritize the transfer payment modernization process to reduce administration costs for non-profits which will free up resources for program planning/design and service delivery.
- Government needs to recognize and invest in social services as a mechanism for promoting a healthy population.
- Government makes a commitment to predictable, transparent incremental increases to transfer payment budget to help build a sustainable and relevant sector. Bill 148 guarantees increases to the minimum wage – Ontario should provide the same to its transfer payment partners to allow us to be the type of employers we expect of other sectors.