

Standing Committee

on

Finance and Economic Affairs

2020 PRE-BUDGET CONSULTATION

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our VISION: a community that celebrates inclusion and inspires possibilities.

On behalf of Community Living Essex County, thank you for the opportunity to share with the Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs important issues for people with a developmental disability and their families in Essex County. Our purpose is to highlight urgent matters and propose solutions to the ongoing crisis confronting people with an intellectual disability, families, direct support professionals and community based service providers. We ask your consideration to include these recommendations when preparing your report on the 2020 pre-budget consultations. The recommendations included herein are imperative to ensure the provision of quality supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability and their families.

Background

Community Living Essex County is an established, proactive, innovative non-profit charitable corporation supporting adults, youth and children who have an intellectual disability and families since 1961. We are governed by a knowledgeable Board of Directors composed of family members, advocates and community leaders. Supporting over 700 people, services include 24-hour accommodation and independent supported living, Host Family, community participation, employment, Enhanced Specialized Services, and short break (respite).

Our grassroots beginnings were when a few families came together to keep their sons and daughters at home, rather than sending them to live in institutions, which was the common thinking of the day. Today, the agency is the largest developmental service provider in the West Region of Ontario.

Our unique beginning sets the organization apart from other service providers in Ontario that were formed directly or indirectly by government. An illustration of this philosophy is our Together One Dream model. It is a unique, longstanding partnership with Ensemble (family leadership) and New Day (advocate leadership) that ensures the work we do is so much more effective and impactful. This collaborative support model provides for exchanging ideas and developing solutions, assistance with implementation and builds awareness so that together with people receiving services and families our voices are stronger and person-directed supports are realized.

The organization consistently achieves the best possible independent risk assessment rating by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), annually meets all Ministry compliance and Children's licensing requirements; demonstrating sound governance, financial and operations management and efficient use of resources to achieve objectives. Our commitment to continually modernize and improve supports and services to people and families throughout Essex County lead us in 2014 to seek accreditation by applying to Focus Accreditation. We were successful and sought reaccreditation for another 4 years in 2018. Again we were successful, achieving a score of 98.4%.

In addition to our role as a transfer payment agency, we also hold a very important responsibility to our community. The agency is a major economic driver given we are the largest non-profit employer in Windsor/Essex County. The majority of our workforce is direct support professionals and members of CUPE Local 3137. They are professionals, graduates of post secondary institutions whose jobs are complex. Members are dedicated employees, who fulfill their responsibilities with respect, compassion and attention to detail; all while supporting the person to develop skills to overcome any barriers encountered to gain greater independence and self-determination.

The demographics of the people receiving services include:

- many who previously lived in institutions – thankfully closed by the Province of Ontario in March, 2009,
- a growing number of transitional aged youth with severe autism and complex multiple needs,
- many who have been supported for years, either in their own homes or in service, whose needs are increasing due to the effects of aging
- numerous people with an intellectual disability living at home whose parents are aging and are one fall or medical crisis away from no longer being able to support their family member.

This submission focuses on 4 areas where opportunities exist to positively address the crisis facing the DS sector in our community and throughout Ontario.

1. Agency Stability

a) Community Agency Base Budget Increase

The agency is thankful for the stabilization funding received in the 2019/20 budget. This funding is vital and helps to keep people safe and secure, assists in responding to the growing need while enabling the next steps to modernize the sector.

The DS sector has a long history of being underfunded. Over the past 16 years, the vast majority of funding for developmental services was spent on expanding supports and services. For 11 years there have not been any annualized increases to agency budgets – Yet the demand for services increases.

There is less money to serve the growing need as demonstrated by the rising waitlist for services. There is less money to respond to the changing needs of the people we support and their families who are aging rapidly. As a rural service provider with no public transportation services available, our vehicle operational costs continue to increase and the people we support are 100% dependent on us to get them where they need to go. The cost to keep the lights on and a host of everyday cost of living expenses has increased year after year. Added to these financial pressures is the serious disconnect between the Ministry's ever increasing accountability processes and their lack of understanding of the negative impact to the agency's administrative costs.

To ensure the provision of quality supports, to incorporate new approaches in service delivery and the growing availability of technology applications, a highly trained workforce is essential. Employees are eager to learn and as any professional, deserve recognition and support to access opportunities to acquire new skills and remain current on emerging research based strategies. Given the growth in our workforce, training costs have escalated such that the agency can no longer stretch training budgets any further.

We have a demonstrated history of working together with our employees (CUPE Local 3137) to ensure that employees are adequately compensated and trained without sacrificing service delivery. We continue to see the negative impact of the many years of underfunding. The result – after stretching our resources year after year the agency has gone as far as it can possibly go.

During the last few years Ministry promises of annualized funding have without warning changed to one time fiscal payments. This repeatedly jeopardizes corporate commitments that were based on the annualized funding commitment.

Efficiencies and modernization alone will not ensure agency stability within the current environment of financial pressures service providers are facing. The ability to realize the agency's goals and objectives is dependent on sound financial planning. The uncertainty regarding stabilization funding - will we receive it in 2020 as annualized, fiscal or not at all, prevents us from maximizing resources.

Recommendation: That the Government keep funding levels at the current 2019-2020 level and implement multi-year annualized funding commitments to enable service providers to adopt long-term financial planning practices to achieve their strategic goals and objectives.

b) Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017/Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018

The agency has incurred several hundred thousand dollars in expenses resulting from Bill 148, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017, and subsequent changes pursuant to Bill 47, Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018. Promises by government to provide annualized funding to offset the direct costs of Bill 148 and Bill 47 have not been committed by the current government. As a result the organization is forecasting a \$350,000 shortfall in this budget line. Government must fund its legislation, not turn a blind eye to the devastating financial challenge these laws created.

Recommendation: That the Government commit to annualized funding for community agencies to offset the direct costs of the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017 and Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018.

c) Reduce Red Tape by Coordinating Quality Assurance Compliance Reviews with Accreditation and Children's Licensing

The agency is annually subject to Quality Assurance Compliance Reviews (QAM) and Children's Licensing. This means that Ministry employees spend approximately 3 weeks onsite reviewing support services to confirm our operations comply with a range of provincial legislation and policy directives. Each year, there are new rules enacted such that the resulting level of bureaucracy is significantly diverting agency resources from supports. Further, the duplication of processes reviewed and the attention to seemingly unimportant detail, such as how a policy is worded rather than whether it meets the intent of the inspection indicator, does nothing to improve service or ensure safety.

As stated previously, Community Living Essex County is an accredited organization. To attain accreditation, the agency is subject to a comprehensive examination of its supports, services and business operations. This includes a document review, a 4 day onsite inspection by validators, plus interviews with people receiving services, families and community stakeholders to confirm we do what we say we are doing.

Cheryl Whiteman, Executive Director of FOCUS Accreditation said "Community Living Essex County is described by stakeholders both internal and external to the organization as one that continuously seeks growth, improvement, and progress not only for themselves and the people they support, but also for the developmental service sector as a whole".

Janet Menard, Deputy Minister said in her congratulatory letter . . ."accreditation demonstrates the hard work and commitment of you and your staff towards continuous learning and quality improvement in supporting people with developmental disabilities".

Currently, accreditation is voluntary; this agency has chosen to seek accreditation by an independent 3rd party as this comprehensive, rigorous review uses a holistic approach that assesses legislative requirements together with an in-depth judgement of the culture of the organization and level of satisfaction of the people receiving services. It increases our accountability and provides the people we serve and the community confidence and trust in our agency.

Since 2013, our agency has been advocating with the Ministry to review the necessity for annual QAM compliance reviews for agencies accredited by third parties. The annual frequency for Children's Licensing is an accepted process.

Recommendation: That the Ministry recognize accredited agencies as an option to satisfy the to Quality Assurance Measures compliance process, reducing compliance reviews to once every 3 years.

d) Rationalize Detail Codes and Infrastructure Surveys

Virtually everything the agency does comes with a specific detail code used to report to government. This means that agency staff resources are tied-up in reporting on regular operations when they could be focused on delivering efficient and high-quality services.

The agency is encouraged that the Ministry has heard the sector's concerns and is responding by undertaking a review to simplify this process including exploring a reduction in the number of detail codes from 13 to 7.

In 2018 the Infrastructure Survey reporting format changed. Previously the report was divided by category which allowed all issues for each location to be listed together, providing a comprehensive list of all required improvements. The new process, through Grants Ontario, mandates that each issue be listed separately, with its own reference number. To manage our reporting duplicate records are needed to ensure updates are accurately reported an additional layer of bureaucracy.

Recommendation: That the Infrastructure survey format is amended to allow agencies to search by property address as well as by reference number.

2. Waitlist, Passport and Housing

a) Waitlist

The number of people on the Developmental Services Ontario's (DSO) waitlist is extraordinarily large and continuing to grow. Following are the number of people on the waitlist per category for Windsor/Essex County as reported in the DSO's Data Summary Report dated July 16, 2019:

- Respite in and out of home: 1,396
- Community Participation: 2,455
- Residential Supports: 1,373

The number one reason for contacting Ensemble (family leadership) is in regard to funding and indirectly the waitlist. Families are desperate for government-funded supports and services to allow their loved one a meaningful and productive life. Funding currently goes to the most urgent cases sending families the message that unless they go into crisis they will not receive any services.

Examples of how the waitlist impacts people with disabilities and families are:

- Accommodation supports are unavailable for many individuals with significant challenges whose parents have become too old to care for them.
- People with extremely complex needs must wait many years for any support funding, community participation and/or accommodation supports placing ongoing stress on families and caregivers and often forcing the situation into a crisis!
- Many families waiting for help receive it only after going into crisis or when a vacancy is created after the death of someone currently receiving services.
- People in crisis are sometimes moved to long term care facilities. These facilities are extremely inappropriate for most adults with an intellectual disability. Unfortunately, short-term placements at these facilities often turn in to much longer stays, due to the shortage of adequate resources in the DS Sector.
- Support needs of many people currently receiving services are increasing as they age without any increase in their funding.
- People with a dual diagnosis (intellectual disability and mental health diagnosis) remain in hospital for months or years after a crisis occurs waiting for an appropriate residential placement.

Recommendation: That the Government provide the necessary funding to eliminate the lengthy and growing wait lists for all developmental services.

b) Passport - Loss of Services at 18

When a young person with an intellectual disability turns 18 it is not a celebration. It is a time of desperation for families. All their services, supports and funding just disappear. The person's diagnosis has not changed; yet there is more paperwork to complete, again, to qualify for services. Adults who have an intellectual disability apply to the DSO undergoing a very thorough assessment of need (just prior to their 18th birthday) and for most, are placed on an already very, very lengthy waiting list for services.

Adding to this frustration - it used to be a seamless transition for families when Special Services At Home (SSAH) funding continued into adulthood. In April, 2013 it all changed. The program that had for over 20 years supported people living at home with their families (regardless of age) ended at 18, with no replacement. Families were left without any financial support, essentially abandoned. Families wonder why it had to change.

The person has lost their day to day routine (school), etc. Families are often left scrambling to provide a meaningful day and supports for their loved one, often at their own cost, to great financial hardship to themselves, and sometimes resulting in a parent quitting their job to provide care for their adult son or daughter.

It just doesn't make sense...with support, most families are able to keep their child at home and care for them without asking for significant amounts of support. However, take away that support and things change for many families. Crisis situations develop resulting in much higher support costs and greater pressure on an already over-stretched system of support.

A solution is to merge SSAH funding with Passport into one streamlined program that adapts as needs change. The government currently operates these two direct funding programs which are very similar. With the integration of children's and adult services into the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, the government has an opportunity to break down the artificial barrier between the two programs and redesign a new program that adapts to the person's needs as they change.

Another solution is to further streamline access to services by eliminating the second eligibility test when the person turns 18. Constant reassessments of people means that scarce resources are being directed toward confirming what has already been confirmed, rather than providing services. This is exacerbated by inefficient assessment tools and a very limited number of professionals who are permitted to administer these assessments.

Recommendation: That government takes advantage of the opportunity the new Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services presents to merge SSAH funding with Passport into one streamlined program that adapts as needs change.

c) Housing

There is an affordable housing crisis in Windsor/Essex County. The Central Housing Registry – Windsor/Essex County waitlist grew in 2019 to over 5,500 people. Rents have increased over the last 5 years from less than \$700 for a one-bedroom apartment to more than \$1,000. The lack of affordable housing in our community is a huge barrier preventing people with an intellectual disability from securing stable, supportive housing, which would allow them to lead fulfilling adult lives.

The DSO's waitlist for Windsor/Essex County documents the crisis in residential supports for people with an intellectual disability. The following chart shows that the growth over 2 years in the DSO list for people waiting for a group home placement was 77 and for SIL was even more at 94.

Date	Service Requested	
	Group Windsor/Essex	SIL (Supported Independent Living) Windsor/Essex
July 16, 2019	491	451
July 10, 2017	414	357

It is devastating for them and their families. Many remain at home living with aging parents who constantly worry about what will happen to their son or daughter when they pass. Others are living in accommodations away from their communities, far from family. Still others are placed in long term care facilities, with people twice their age and with staff untrained in the needs of people with an intellectual disability.

There is hope. Canada's National Housing Strategy is focused on "the next generation of housing" making "sure Canadians across the country can access housing that meets their needs and that they can afford". Locally, the goal of the Windsor Essex 10 year Housing and Homelessness plan is "an inclusive community where everyone has a safe, affordable, accessible and quality home and everyone lives where they can actively participate".

Supportive housing is a blend of housing assistance and supports that enable people to live as independently as possible in their community. Our innovative Smart Support, Technology Enabled Services has also increased capacity. This strategy is enabling people to come off the DSO's waitlist.

However, government must be willing to enact programs that are flexible to promote housing solutions that address the need of the thousands of Ontarians waiting for affordable housing, including people with an intellectual disability who have complex and unique needs. Funding is needed, and it should be tied to developments that include solutions to our affordable housing crisis.

Recommendation: That the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing establish flexible housing programs with funding tied to outcomes that increase the supply of affordable housing.

3. Third Party Review of the DS Sector

On November 10, 2019 The Canadian Press reported that the government:

"seeks a management consultant to find ways to "streamline" the delivery of services to 40,000 adults living with developmental disabilities, with an eye to the "savings targets" in the spring budget. The government has identified the need for system changes to improve outcomes and financial sustainability in the developmental services sector," the project tender says."

To ensure the voice of people with an intellectual disability, families and Developmental Service providers are heard, the consultant must undertake a process of inclusion, seeking input from all members of the sector. No one understands the challenges of the DS sector better than those who provide and receive supports. Issues are regional. The person placed on the growing waitlist, where they remain for years, cannot be asked withstand the impact of further cuts.

Recommendation: The consultant's review includes reaching out to gather information from people with an intellectual disability, their families and the DS sector in a meaningful way as part of the review and further includes these stakeholders in the decision making process.

4. ODSP rate increases

The vast majority of people with an intellectual disability receive their income from the Ontario Disability Support Plan (ODSP). The maximum a single person can receive is \$1,169 per month, or \$14,028 annually. Compare this to the Statistics Canada's report that the poverty line in 2011 for a single person in Ontario was \$20,676 or that the medium income for a single Canadian is \$22, 133.

Included in the monthly payment is the shelter allowance of \$489 per month. A one bedroom apartment or even a bachelor flat in Windsor/Essex County is virtually unattainable at that price. Food, transportation, clothing etc. are choices as there isn't enough money to purchase them all each month.

The November 22, 2018 announced Social Assistance plan will be taking a "Coordinated multi-ministry approach to reduce red tape, eliminate unnecessary rules and support individual action plans to establish self-reliance and ease off the system". This is encouraging. However, we wonder if the person who will not be able to obtain employment and subsequently leave the system - will they always live in an ever-increasing state of poverty?

Recommendation: That ODSP benefits be determined by the average market rents as set by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the average cost of a nutritious food basket as determined by municipal boards of health, utilities and basic transportation fees, adjusted annually for inflation.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation: That the Government keep funding levels at the current 2019-2020 level and implement multi-year annualized funding commitments to enable service providers to adopt long-term financial planning practices to achieve their strategic goals and objectives.

Recommendation: That the Government commit to annualized funding for community agencies to offset the direct costs of the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017 and Making Ontario Open for Business Act, 2018.

Recommendation: That the Ministry recognize accredited agencies as an option to satisfy the to Quality Assurance Measures compliance process, reducing compliance reviews to once every 3 years.

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Recommendation: That government takes advantage of the opportunity the new Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services presents to merge SSAH funding with Passport into one streamlined program that adapts as needs change.

Recommendation: That the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing establish flexible housing programs with funding tied to outcomes that increase the supply of affordable housing.

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