

Community Living Ontario 2022 Provincial Budget Recommendations

January 26, 2022

Founded in 1953, Community Living Ontario is a non-profit provincial organization that advocates for people who have an intellectual disability to be fully included in all aspects of community life.

In Brief

The provincial government has made substantial contributions to the well-being of people who have intellectual disabilities over the course of the pandemic. This has included wage enhancements for front-line workers, changes to Passport and Special Services at Home funding, the COVID-19 Residential Relief Fund (CRRF), and \$361 million in additional funding for the developmental services (DS) sector.

Despite these contributions, life for people who have an intellectual disability has been very difficult over the past two years. Many have had to trade their freedom of movement for increased safety, and many people and families have lost access to essential services and supports. Moving forward, the developmental service sector will continue to struggle to meet the needs of the population, given ongoing staffing shortages and growing levels of need.

To help address these issues, Community Living Ontario is recommending the following:

1. Make permanent the \$3 per hour wage enhancement for workers in developmental services.
2. End the waitlist for full Passport and Special Services at Home funding.
3. Enhance the Ontario Disability Support Program to enable dignity, health, and wellness.
4. Allow secondary school students to stay in school until age 22.

In Depth: [Invest in the Health and Well-Being of People who have an Intellectual Disability](#)

Over the past few decades, Ontarians who have an intellectual disability have experienced substantial social and quality of life gains:

- From the 1860s through the 1950s, most were effectively imprisoned in large, inhumane residential facilities.
- Starting in the 1960s, fewer and fewer were institutionalized, and the last large institution was finally closed in 2009.
- Now, most people are living in the community with other Ontarians, often in homes of their own with many of the supports they need.

- Many are included in the regular life of our schools and colleges, and some are also earning a living through employment in the mainstream workforce.

Throughout the pandemic, people who have an intellectual disability and their families have been incredibly resilient, despite facing serious barriers to getting the healthcare and social supports they need. Nevertheless, the population continues to face serious risks to their health and well-being. For example, [35,000 people](#) are waiting for at least one service that they need and are eligible for – things like physical rehabilitation, nursing care, support with activities of daily living, and respite care. More than 20,000 of those waiting are receiving no provincially funded services at all.

The population's vulnerability leads to negative outcomes at both the individual and social levels. [People](#) who have an intellectual disability:

- Are nearly twice as likely to have frequent repeat Emergency Department visits;
- Are more than twice as likely to be readmitted to hospital within 30 days of an initial discharge;
- Are more likely to be inappropriately placed in long-term care facilities, even when they are relatively young. Currently there are more than 2,000 younger adults who have an intellectual disability living in long-term care facilities in Ontario.

These and other issues create an unnecessary burden for people, for families, and for our support systems. People are not getting the supports they need when they need them, and we all pay for it later in downstream health and social costs.

The bottom line is that people who have an intellectual disability desperately need access to resources and supports that will increase their quality of life and decrease their need for emergency services:

- They need ODSP benefits to increase – now more than ever, with inflation running at 5%.
- They need ODSP asset limits to increase. We recommend eliminating the \$10,000 limit on voluntary gifts and payments, and increasing the asset limit to \$100,000 for single-person households.
- They need access to the full amount of funds to which they are eligible through the Passport program and Special Services at Home. People and families are losing out on thousands of dollars per year in supports to which they were promised, based on their diagnosis and their assessed level of support needs.
- In order to increase service access and promote stability in the sector, we are also calling on the provincial government to make the \$3 pandemic wage increase in developmental services permanent, so that agencies can hire quality staff and effectively meet service needs.

- Lastly, in light of the disastrous experience of people who have intellectual disabilities in the education system over the course of the pandemic, we are recommending that students be allowed to attend school for an additional year, up to the year in which they turn 22.

Things have moved backward for so many over the past two years – and this is doubly the case for people who have an intellectual disability. We are strongly recommending that you make this population a central part of your considerations and recommendations for the 2022 provincial budget.

For more information, please contact Shawn Pegg, Director of Social Policy & Strategic Initiatives, shawn@communitylivingontario.ca.