

November 13, 2023

Jess Dixon
Member of Provincial Parliament, Kitchener South-Hespeler
260 Holiday Inn Drive, Unit 11
Cambridge, ON, N3C 4E8
519-650-9413

Subject: Urgent need for 5% Sector Stabilization Funding for Developmental Services

Dear MPP Jess Dixon,

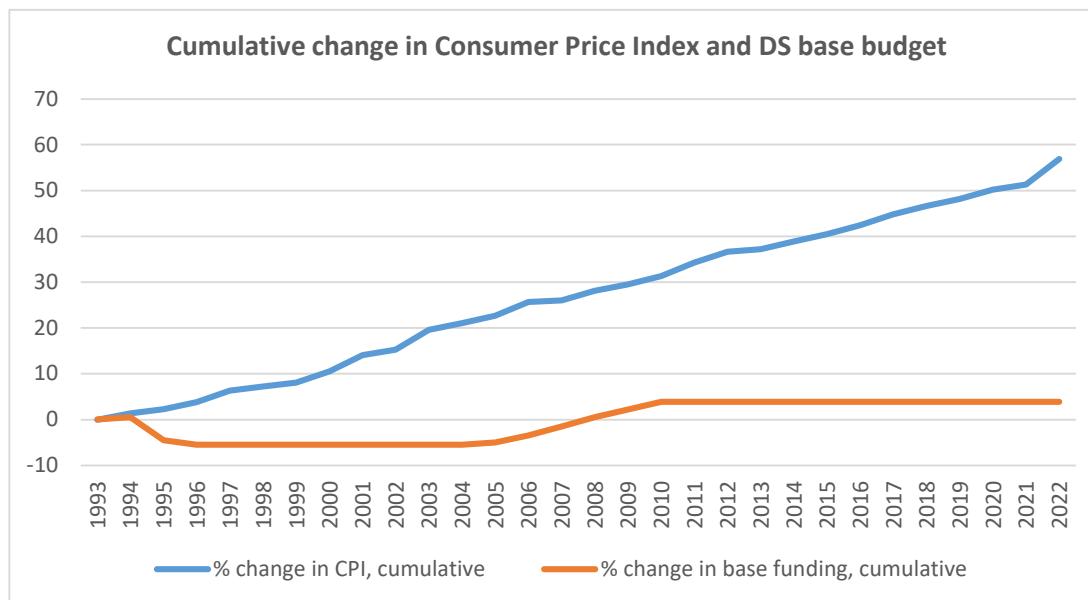
Much of the content of this letter comes from a united group of advocates from the Developmental Services (DS) sector comprised of people who have an intellectual disability (self-advocates), families, and DS agencies. We have joined together to advocate for essential changes in the funding and support provided to developmental services.

The DS sector, funded by the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), is facing critical challenges. Instability in the sector requires the government's immediate attention.

Key Issues

Risk to staffing levels

As the below graphic shows, the DS sector has not benefited from any significant cost-of-living increases in MCCSS funding over the past thirty years:



Historic funding disparities have led to significant wage discrepancies in Developmental Services, as compared to health, education, and long-term care. Developmental Services simply cannot compete with these other sectors, which are offering higher wages and consistently drawing workers away from people, families, and agencies in DS.

Fewer staff to respond to growing needs has impacted working conditions. With a province-wide human resource shortage, declining working conditions, and wage disparities, the DS sector is reaching dangerously low staffing levels.

Wage disparity threatens staffing levels, making it increasingly difficult to meet the growing demands for our services.

Risk to sustainability

Funding is not based on actual costs. With inflation, the cost of operating an agency has increased, while funding has not.

Funding inadequacy jeopardizes the sustainability of developmental services.

Risk to vulnerable Ontarians

There is a risk to vulnerable Ontarians due to the pressures noted above. With increased demands, skyrocketing costs, and a human resource crisis, we no longer have a sustainable model for our provincial system of care that ensures the safety and well-being of Ontarians. In fact, some agencies have already been forced to reduce or withdraw services in the face of budgetary pressures.

People with intellectual disabilities bear the greatest risk in the face of a sector in crisis.

We seek the following solutions to the funding shortages:

1. Sector Stabilization Funding: 5% increase

We request an immediate 5% increase in Developmental Service agencies' base funding to respond to a sector in crisis. We seek a base funding adjustment that is unrestricted, allowing agencies to address their unique pressures and risks to sustainability.

And we request an immediate corresponding increase in Passport Funding as well as Special Services at home (SSAH) such that people with intellectual disabilities and families can continue to access cost-effective, community-based services. We also request a 5% increase in funding to expand capacity to address the 27,000 people on the residential waitlist in Ontario. This increase will not sufficiently address the waiting list, but should be the start of a multi-year plan to provide services for those people and families who have been waiting desperately for years. Prevalent in our sector are issues of care-giver burnout, aging parents who need to consider their own health & support needs, and the high cost of crisis response services. Services that are well-planned, proactive, and engage with families are more cost-effective. We have attached a chart

demonstrating the Waterloo Region residential services capacity within DS as well as the waiting list for each of the three primary forms of residential services. It has been years since the province invested any money in the essential expansion of services to address this list.

2. Task Force for a Sustainable Funding Model

We recommend the establishment of an inter-Ministerial task force to develop a long-term, sustainable funding model for the Developmental Services sector.

3. Increase ODSP to alleviate provincially mandated poverty

We have attached a motion recently passed by the Kitchener City Council. People who rely on ODSP are unable to afford the basic necessities of rent and food in the same month.

Conclusion

To further discuss these concerns and solutions in detail, we'd be happy to meet with you at your earliest convenience. We are eager to collaborate with you to ensure the well-being of Ontarians who rely on the services we provide.

We appreciate your attention to these critical issues. Together, we can create a brighter, more inclusive future for the 100,000+ Ontarians who have an intellectual disability and their families.

Sincerely,



Allan Mills
Executive Director, Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region



Devon Fernandes
Chair of the Board of Directors, Extend-A-Family Waterloo Region

CC: Brian Riddell, Catherine Fife, Mike Harris

September 25, 2023

Motion to Kitchener City Council

ODSP rate increase advocacy:

WHEREAS social assistance recipients are living in extreme poverty and food insecurity and are at great risk to develop associated health issues; and,

WHEREAS the Ontario Works (OW) program is meant for people who have financial need; and,

WHEREAS the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) is meant for persons with a disability who are in financial need; and,

WHEREAS OW and ODSP rates are below Canada's Official Poverty Line and since social assistance rates were reduced by 21.6% in 1995, rate increases have been nominal, representing an approximate 10% increase over 26 years; and,

WHEREAS OW rates have not been increased since 2018 and are not indexed to inflation causing further income inequality, poverty and housing unaffordability; and,

WHEREAS a single person can receive up to \$1,308 a month on ODSP which is well below the average rent for a one bedroom apartment in the Region of Waterloo; and,

WHEREAS a single person can receive up to \$733 a month on OW which is well below the average rent for a one bedroom apartment in the Region of Waterloo; and,

WHEREAS rental rates in Kitchener, along with other communities, have risen dramatically in recent years, with average one-bedroom rental rates of \$2,132 per month according to a July 2023 RBC report; and,

WHEREAS provincial programs for affordable housing are based on rent at 80% of market rates so a one bedroom apartment with "affordable rent" is \$1,705 in Kitchener; and,

WHEREAS Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation defines housing as "affordable" if it costs less than 30% of a household's before-tax income. Based on this definition, a single person on ODSP can afford rent of \$392.40 per month; and,

WHEREAS a shelter allowance for an ODSP recipient living on their own is up to \$556 per month which is intended to help with rent/mortgage, utilities and other housing costs; and,

WHEREAS there are over 12,852 ODSP recipients in Waterloo Region and over 500,000 across the province;