



*Friday, August 13, 2021*

***Re: Meeting 08/09/2021 between The Ontario Disability Coalition (ODC) and The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS):***

Attention: The Honourable Dr. Merrilee Fullerton,  
Minister of Children, Community, and Social Services

email: [merrilee.fullerton@pc.ola.org](mailto:merrilee.fullerton@pc.ola.org)

Mr. Mason Saunders,  
Director of Stakeholder Relations

email: [mason.saunders@ontario.ca](mailto:mason.saunders@ontario.ca)

On behalf of all Ontarians living with Disability, The ODC extends gratitude for coming together to discuss Urgent and Priority Services that are necessary to create a Barrier Free Ontario.

We discussed many Urgent Needs as there are currently many barriers that 25% of Ontarians live with every day. Your sincere conversation and honest feedback regarding current government focus is appreciated.

The ODC met with Liberal Minister MPP Michael Coteau when he was MCYS. It was said that we were 'too late' to be inclusive and they were still developing his version of the OAP in 2017.

The ODC met with Minister Lisa McLeod, Chief of Staff, Ms. Susan Truppe, Minister Todd Smith and his Senior Staff, as well as numerous other PC MPPs to raise awareness of the discrimination effects on children with CP, Down Syndrome, (Rare) Genetic disorders and other disabilities.

***Each person acknowledged that it was a worthy ask and would be addressed 'later' (as the single diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder was the sole source of focus at the time).***

***It is the Hope of many Ontarians*** that are represented through The ODC that it will be Your Honourable Merrilee Fullerton Minister Children, Community, and Social Services to stop the discrimination in our Public Policy and truly embrace Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion to ensure ALL Ontarians with Disability have access to Direct Funding Needs Based Therapy.

We truly hope the PC Government is the Party to address these Barriers...  
and it is possible before the next election!



The ODC requests your approval/review over the Minutes from our Meeting on August 9, 2021.

In addition to the Minutes, follow up questions are enclosed.

The ODC is asking for written response (within 7-10 business days) via email.

This is a matter of *Life and Death*.

If Ontario is a 'place to grow' then we must choose life and work *together*.

The ODC looks forward to working with the Ministry, the Media, and with other Disability Organizations to create a Barrier-Free Ontario.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sherry Caldwell'.

Mrs. Sherry Caldwell  
Co-Founder  
Ontario Disability Coalition  
[OntarioDisabilityCoalition@gmail.com](mailto:OntarioDisabilityCoalition@gmail.com)  
416-903-5067

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Anthony Frisina'.

Mr. Anthony Frisina  
Director of Media Relations,  
Ontario Disability Coalition  
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CC: Hon. Christine Elliott [christine.elliott@pc.ola.org](mailto:christine.elliott@pc.ola.org)  
CC: Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho [raymond.cho@pc.ola.org](mailto:raymond.cho@pc.ola.org)



*Meeting Between The Ontario Disability Coalition (ODC) and The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) on August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 (1:00 pm)*

**FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How will the transition from the Child to Adult Sector be improved and what accountability measures will be in place?
  
- 2) What are the details regarding Accessibility improvements for existing Public Transit Systems?
  
- 3) Can we work to move forward with changing building codes for new housing and ensure a sufficient supply of accessible housing together?  
(This would greatly benefit PWD and our aging population -and could it be something that can be done without budgetary measures?)
  
- 4) What can be done to eliminate discrimination in public policy that leaves other disabilities without Life Changing hands-on Therapy?  
(Children and Youth with developmental disabilities such as CP, Down Syndrome, Genetic and Rare Disabilities are continually left out of OAP and our equally worthy of receiving Direct Funding Needs Based Therapy).
  
- 5) Is it agreed that Income testing and Poverty are Cruel and unacceptable Barriers that People with Disability face in our Province?



**Minutes from the Meeting between:**

**The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS)**

**and**

**The Ontario Disability Coalition (ODC)**

***From MCCSS:***

The Honourable Dr. Merrilee Fullerton  
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

Mr. Mason Saunders  
Director of Stakeholder Relations  
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

***From ODC:***

Mr. Anthony Frisina  
Director of Media Relations at Ontario Disability Coalition, Self-Advocate

Mrs. Sherry Caldwell  
Ontario Disability Coalition Co-Founder, Disability Advocate

Miss Ashley Caldwell  
Ontario Disability Coalition Founding Member. Youth Self-Advocate

***Location:***

Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

***Date and Time:***

Monday, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021, at 1:00 PM



***Introduction:***

***Brief Summary of The Ontario Disability Coalition and Mission:***

The Ontario Disability Coalition (subsequently referred to as ODC) is a Grassroots Coalition that was established in 2017 to be the voice of Disabled Individuals (Children and Adults), Parents, Caregivers, and Health Service Professionals. The ODC's primary goal is to advocate for Health Care Services to live an independent life.

The ODC's second primary goal is to ensure that all publicly funded services have minimal wait times, are fully accessible, and flexible enough to meet the needs of ALL Disabled Individuals. The ODC is willing to assist with Policy development related to issues pertaining to Children, Youth, and Adults with Disabilities.

***Brief History of The Ontario Disability Coalition:***

A list of Advocacies over the past four years was provided since inception of The ODC. Additionally, it is imperative to always ensure an Inclusive AND Accessible Ontario for ALL People with Disabilities. Regardless of age, these Individuals can live their BEST Lives in a Barrier- Free Ontario. All people with disabilities need access to therapy and support. Regardless of type of diagnosis, diagnosis must NEVER interfere as a barrier to access both relevant and necessary life changing therapies.

***Brief Summary of The Ontario Disability Coalition Key Members:***

Mr. Anthony Frisina created the organization [Above & Beyond](#), bridging the gap to Accessibility and Inclusion. Mr. Frisina is proactive about creating positive change that is accessible, inclusive, fun, and always in a Person-First message.

Mrs. Sherry Caldwell has been a loyal, dedicated volunteer as Co-Chair of The Family Engagement Council at The Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe York (since 2008 to 2018). Additionally, Easter Seals Ontario has benefitted from Mrs. Caldwell's role as a Member of The Special Education Advisory Committee with The York Region District School Board since 2014.

Miss Ashley Caldwell has been volunteering with The ODC for four years, including attending meetings with MPPs to share her story and experience.



***The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services:***

The Honourable Dr. Merrilee Fullerton and Mr. Mason Saunders provided their history with both The Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and The Ministry of Long-Term Care.

**KEY ISSUES: *LACK OF RESOURCES:***

***Public Transportation is Inaccessible:***

Mr. Frisina shared experiences with painful barriers regarding Public Transit Systems and Persons with Disability.

***Solution:***

It is imperative that our Public Transit System is People-Centred over System centred. Inaccessible Public Transit can NOT be an option.

***ADP/Equipment Repairs:***

Can One imagine being stranded for months or years as a Canadian Citizen living in the Province of Ontario? Wheelchairs, Lifts, Elevators, and Ramps, and other equipment break down and are NOT prioritized as Urgent and Accessible Care for those living with Disability. These can leave people stranded in their home with no access to Medical Appointments; Family and Friends; Work; CARE.

Mr. Frisina has been waiting over 1095 days (over 3 YEARS) for Urgent, Necessary, and Immediate Repair. When we as a government, choose to not be a part of the immediate solution then we are wrongfully choosing to confine and condemn Mr. Frisina, and thousands of other Ontarians to one place simply because Ontarians require tools to help access freedoms that are required for ALL of Ontarians.

***Solution:***

The Province of Ontario requires a “CAA” for Assistive Devices that offers Timely On-Demand Repairs and, when required, Access to new equipment.



***Response:***

The Honourable Minister Fullerton expressed that People with Disability NEED Compassion and Inclusion.

My Frisina agreed and pointed out that PWD (Persons with Disability) should not be handcuffed to Policy such as ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program). The many rules support the actual Program of ODSP and not the People of Ontario with Disability. ODSP, in the current state, robs people of Dignity, Marital Relationships, Choice, and Control over their Lives.

The Honourable Minister Fullerton asked The ODC why we think Policy has evolved to the state that it is in today:

Mr. Frisina states, "***ABLEISM*** is the Cause...

*... Ableism is the discrimination against People with Disabilities.*

*Ableism is essentially the cause of many disparities faced by our Youth and faced by People of all ages in Ontario's (and Canada's) Disability Community.*

*There are many different examples of ableism such as Discrimination and 'able privilege', which refers to the way Ontario (and Canada) is structured in favor of abled people".*

***DISCRIMINATION: NEITHER DIRECT NOR NEEDS BASED FUNDING:***

Mrs. Caldwell,

**" People with Disabilities are not valued as is reflected by our Public Policy and are segregated to this day.**

***Much of the funding creates jobs rather than provide necessary hands-on support".***

***Issues:***

The funding to support Miss Caldwell's Rehabilitation and Education is not following the Person but instead given to the bureaucracy school or CTC with no accountability.



***The funding should follow the Individual to ensure it will directly benefit the Individual verses funding lost in bureaucracy.***

No Accountability measure for CTC (Children Treatment Centre) ...

***Possible Solution:***

Provide funding when a Service is provided... such as for a doctor.

For example, if Miss. Caldwell has a visit with a PT, OT, or Speech Therapist, they would bill for Services. The Children Treatment Centre would then have incentives to see clients - right now there is no accountability, so they offer a hands-off consultation service for school age children and youth.

***Ideal Solutions:***

A Direct Funding Needs Based model as it gives control back to the Individual as is offered to ASD community for ABA/IBI, OT, PT and Speech on a need's basis.

Ontario must END Discrimination based on diagnosis and recognise that ALL disabilities are worthy of this type of hands-on intensive support. Pediatric Physiotherapy, Occupational and Speech therapy are just too expensive for the average family to access.

School age children with physical disabilities, rare and development disabilities across Ontario are going without life changing therapy.

***INCOME TESTING IS FORCING PEOPLE INTO POVERTY:***

Mrs Caldwell,

"Raising a child with a physical disability cost \$40 000.00 a year, as determined by Easter Seals Canada (back in 2012).

Source: <https://easterseals.ca/english/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Disability-in-Canada->

[Facts-Figures.pdf](#) The ODC asked,

"Why are Disability Supports ***Income*** tested in Ontario?

All of the other Health Services provided *regardless of income* such as:

Education, Emergency Care and Medical Care are *offered universally and free of income testing.*

OAP is also free of income testing.



Necessary Support for Disability such as [accessible van & home modification](#) / and Assistive Devices are ALL income tested.

Therapy is provided for only *one* high incident diagnosis.

These policies push families further into poverty or a lower social economic position.

This is especially felt by women and lone parents.

***These Caregivers (many) experience loss of income, pension, and benefits with no compensation.***

### ***POVERTY, FOOD INSECURITY and ODSP:***

There is a pressing and immediate need to lift people out of Poverty and match CERB rate to end food insecurity and ensure everyone living with Disability *can afford housing and food*. Several members of The ODC have been reaching out stating that they have lost all hope of improvement in quality of life and are sadly considering Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) due to loss of dignity, control and living in sub poverty.

The ODC is partnering with ODSP Action Coalition to raise awareness and share stories of poverty faced by people with Disabilities. The ODC will engage the Media to ensure the public is aware and would help create the political will to support ODSP funding increases.

The Honourable Minister Fullerton said The ODC should continue to work with The Ministry of Community, Children, and Social Services and stay in touch with The Honourable Minister as well as Mr. Mason Saunders via his cell phone and email address which has been provided. The Honourable Minister Fullerton also stated that there is work being done are on Transit Issues that were previously raised by The ODC, Transitions (DSO/Youth to Adult) also shared that there is no funding available at this time for other issues that have previously been addressed.

### ***LACK OF ACCESSIBLE HOUSING:***

Mrs. Caldwell,

“One thing that could be done that will benefit the Disability Community is to ensure there is accessible housing supply without any budget by ON GOV rather simply change building codes to ensure 25% of all new housing is accessible for PWD and for Seniors as current housing supply does not allow people to age in place and retrofitting is very expensive”.



Further details for policy makers: <https://www.accessiblehousingnetwork.org/accessible-housing>

**Results from Australia** - Lived experience and social, health and economic impacts of inaccessible housing

[https://disability.unimelb.edu.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/3492686/RIA-Report-SurveyFindings.pdf](https://disability.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/3492686/RIA-Report-SurveyFindings.pdf)

### ***ACCESS TO COMMUNITY, WORK and HOME:***

The Honourable Minister Merilee Fullerton believes in EDI (**E**quality, **D**iversity, and **I**nclusion).

EDI ensures fair treatment and opportunity for ALL. EDI aims to eradicate prejudice and discrimination based on an individual or group of individual's protected characteristics.

Mr. Frisina said,

**“We need to add an A...**

IDEA - Inclusion, Equity Diversity and ACCESS.

We need to work at bridging the gaps for 25% of Ontarians with Disabilities. Disability is the only group that does NOT Discriminate based on Age, Race, Religion, or Income.

Anyone can become Disabled at any time and be in immediate need of a ROBUST Disability Support Plan.

### ***HOME CARE:***

Mrs. Caldwell,

“We raised the barriers in Homecare: the need for (many) more nurses.

This nurse shortage greatly impacts the Children and Adults that are severely Disabled.



The Honourable Minister Fullerton was happy to share that they added additional nursing spots in Universities across Ontario for the first time in decades.

The new spaces will be available for Fall 2021 and Winter 2022 cohorts and will introduce approximately 1,130 new practical nurses and 870 registered nurses into the health care system. - <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1000132/ontario-adding-2000-nurses-to-the-health-care-system>

***SHORTAGE OF PT, OT and SLP:***

Mrs. Caldwell,

“There is also a shortage of PT, OT and SLP for Children and Seniors in Ontario. There is a need to increase University Programs in these categories to meet the need of our aging population.

The Honourable Minister Merrilee Fulton asked if we had any positive models from other geographies:

Australian NDIS positive economic and social results found here:

<https://www.ndis.gov.au/news/4413-ceo-address-council-economic-development-australia>

***Next Steps:***

The Ontario Disability Coalition will follow up with Minister Dr. M Fullerton and Mr. Mason Saunders for further discussion.