

#We are Not Red Tape

The Future of Children and Youth with Disabilities across Ontario are at Substantial Risk

Policy Briefing – July 2019

“Start by doing what’s necessary; then do what’s possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”- Francis of Assisi

Key Facts:

- There are an estimated 97,000 to 235,000 children and youth with special needs in Ontario.¹
- 97% of children with complex needs are on lengthy waitlists for rehabilitation services.²
- 65% of families surveyed spend over \$8K annually on private therapy.
- 29% of shelter users are on ODSP³
- The Ontario Ombudsman received 1,436 complaints that individuals with developmental disabilities were being abused and misplaced in long term care beds, mental health units and the criminal justice system due to lack of appropriate community services and supports.⁴

(A) The Issues

- Children and youth with physical and developmental disabilities are going without life changing therapies.⁵
- Children Treatment Centres have no directives and no accountability.
- Youth “age out” of the system and lose all supports.
- There is a complete lack of housing and funding supports for people with disabilities over the age of 18.
- Disability is very expensive.¹⁰
- The Assistive Devices Program is not fully funded or efficient.¹⁴
- Accessibility and ongoing barriers is a major concern for Ontarians living with disabilities their families¹³
- Caregivers are locked out of the workforce and require financial support as they are critical to Ontario’s health care system.⁵
- Barriers, gatekeepers and roadblocks are at every turn which causes cruelty and hardship for Ontario’s most vulnerable members and their families.
- Ontario’s current discriminatory policies result in the loss of independence, risking life, dignity, health and wellness, and costing the province more in the long run.¹³

We are not Red Tape!

We all know that disability does not discriminate - it affects all races, all regions, all economic backgrounds and all ages. Disability will touch everyone in Ontario in their lifetime. Yet persons with disabilities are told their needs are **RED TAPE**⁷ and are put last by the Ontario Government. This is not only a human rights violation, it is also deeply problematic in a time when the *Accessible Canada Act* has just received royal assent.

Everyone has a right to reach their potential, whatever their abilities. We are asking you to right this wrong. Voters expect Ontario’s vulnerable citizens to have a safety net. Supporting them is a human right - it is not charity.



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Young people with special needs are young people first, whatever their challenges. These youths need the same opportunities to complete their education, gain employment and participate in their communities.”

YOUTH AMPLIFIER ⁸



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About Us

The Ontario Disability Coalition (ODC) was established in 2017 to be the voice of parents, caregivers, health service professionals and individuals with disabilities (children and adults). The goal of the ODC is to advocate for health care services that a person needs to find their way towards achieving as normal a life as possible. The second goal of the ODC is to ensure all publicly funded services have minimal wait times, are fully accessible and flexible to meet the needs of ALL individuals with disabilities.

www.odcoalition.com

(B) The Solution

Ontario's Disability Program

We ask the Government of Ontario to stop ignoring the needs of over ¼ of Ontarians with disabilities, many of whom are children and youth with complex and developmental disabilities, and start developing an equitable fully funded, needs based *Ontario Disability Program*. It is imperative that you make an investment in a future everyone can participate in. By creating a robust and comprehensive *Ontario Disability Program*, the provincial government can lift the disability community up in a Barrier Free Ontario and include the following:

Inclusive Needs Based Therapy for ALL disabilities

Put a stop to discrimination based on disability. The Ministry of Children Community and Social Services should extend direct funding for therapy to children with ALL disabilities. All parents, caregivers and adults with disabilities need access to ongoing and hands on therapy with choice and control over their therapy funding.

End to the Wait Lists

From Special Services at Home, the Assistive Device Program, OAP to Passport Funding, individuals and their families are left in purgatory, waiting to either receive much needed supports and services or to receive payments for funding that has already been approved. Applications that should take 6-8 weeks to be processed are taking months due to chronic program underfunding and understaffing.⁹ There should be smooth transitions from childhood to adult and adult to senior funding and services. Disabilities do not and should not have age cut offs.

Provide Adequate income for people on ODSP

Currently, many disabled people are living in poverty, are homeless, or on the verge of homelessness. Often people with disabilities must choose between food and costly medication or other essential treatments/services.⁽¹²⁾

Fully Fund the Assistive Device Program

Improve the ADP program to provide 100% coverage for people with permanent disabilities and expand the number of assistive devices that will receive funding (i.e. ramps, porch lifts, toileting, vehicle modifications, repairs etc.).¹⁴

Provide Caregiver Funding

Family caregiving is typically at the core of what sustains children, youth and adults with complex needs, yet caregivers often make major sacrifices to help loved ones remain in their homes. When they do seek assistance, many community agencies cannot provide adequate supports due to funding constraints and outdated policies.⁵

Conclusion Don't be short sighted like your predecessors. Develop a legacy you can be proud of. One that ensures that every single person in Ontario can be a contributing member now, and into the future.

Ontario Disability Coalition – We are Not Red Tape
July 2019

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