



Submission by Family Alliance Ontario The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs January 2011

Executive Summary

Family Alliance Ontario (FAO) represents children and adults with developmental disabilities whose rights to full citizenship are challenged by insufficient financial support, lack of inclusion in the community, segregated programs and inaccessible buildings and services.

Family Alliance Ontario links families of people with developmental disabilities across the province through family network organizations, which are family directed groups in local communities.

We are members of the Partnership Table established by the *Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS)* to address policies transforming the way support services are delivered to adults with developmental disabilities and their families (the Social Inclusion Act 2008).

We provide the important perspective of families who directly support their loved ones.

FAO believes that the most critical areas of need for people with developmental disabilities in the 2011-2012 Ontario Provincial Budget are:

1. **Elimination of waiting lists for support**

Today, thousands of people with developmental disabilities languish on *MCSS Developmental Services* waiting lists for support. The only two direct funding programs available have long waiting lists and leave families stranded with no alternatives and nowhere to turn for help.

The underfunded programs are **Special Services at Home** for parent respite and outcome-based activities with a waiting list of 7,000 families and **Passport** for adult daytime activities and community participation with 4,000 people on the waiting list.

***Family Alliance Ontario* requests that the 2011-2012 Ontario Budget includes an additional allocation of \$80 million for Developmental Services, funded through the Ministry of Community and Social Service, directed to the SSAH and Passport programs.**



2. Implementation of Social Inclusion Act

The Social Inclusion Act allows greater self-determination through the choice of direct funding of disability supports for adults with developmental disabilities. However, with over 90% of the Developmental Services budget tied to traditional agency-led services, there is no financial scope to begin implementation of this critically important legislation. Financial support for direct-funding applications, is required to enable effective implementation of the Social Inclusion Act.

Family Alliance Ontario requests that the 2011-2012 Ontario Budget includes an additional allocation of \$50 million for Developmental Services, funded through the Ministry of Community and Social Services for direct-funding applications under the Social Inclusion Act.

3. Increased ODSP Income Support

Investigations into poverty in Ontario inevitably cite that people with developmental disabilities are among the most disadvantaged individuals in our society. Despite recent small percentage increases, the meager amounts of support condemn adults with developmental disabilities to lead impoverished, inadequate lives at the lowest rung of the economic ladder.

Family Alliance Ontario requests that the 2011-2012 Ontario Budget includes an additional allocation \$100 million for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to increase income support, provide appropriate residential supports and help alleviate the lifelong poverty specifically experienced by adults with developmental disabilities.

These three areas of need are further described below using data supplied by the *Ministry of Community and Social Services*.



1. Waiting Lists for Services and Supports

Special Services At Home

More than 7,000 families have no support while waiting for **Special Services At Home** funding. This successful direct-funding program provides money for parent respite and outcome-based activities.

- The **Special Services At Home (SSAH)** program has become the most successful direct-funding program ever offered by Developmental Services.
- The program currently serves over 25,000 individuals.
- In March, 2010, 7110 individuals were on a waiting list for support.
- The average SSAH allocation is \$4,200. This sum buys only **5 1/2 hours** of support or respite each week (at \$15 per hour).
- SSAH funding is capped at \$16,000 for children under 18 years of age and \$10,000 for adults irrespective of need or medical condition.

Using the average allocation, additional funding of \$30 million is required to eliminate the waiting list for Special Services At Home.

Passport Program

The **Passport Program** was originally introduced in 2006 as a funding program for daytime supports for young adults leaving school. However, with so many adults with developmental disabilities living with no support, the program has been swamped by applications.

- There are 4,000 people on the waiting list for **Passport funding**. **There are no alternative supports for these individuals.**
- Approximately 2,500 people currently receive **Passport** funding.
- This program has received little additional support since its inception, despite the growing waiting list.
- The average **Passport** allocation is \$12,400 to those fortunate enough to be selected from the waiting list. Note that this sum buys only **16 hours per week** of support (at \$15 per hour).
- **Passport** funding is capped at \$25,000 per year, a sum awarded to only the most compromised individuals with complex medical needs and/or behavioural challenges.

Using the average allocation, additional funding of \$50 million is required to eliminate the waiting list for Passport.

Note that the issues of long waiting lists and inadequacy of support under **SSAH** and **Passport** were taken up by the Provincial Advocate and ARCH, the Disability Law Centre in 2010.



2. Transformation with the Social Inclusion Act

The list of challenges faced by people with developmental disabilities – poverty, lack of access, exclusion, discrimination – are faced by no other such marginalized group

We applaud this government for several measures taken to support these individuals' rightful place in society. These include closing down the large, provincial institutions that warehoused people with developmental disabilities until their final closure in 2009.

A most important piece of legislation, the Social Inclusion Act 2008, is slowly being proclaimed. This much-awaited Act recognizes the rights of adults with disabilities to self-determination through direct funding and opens the way to a more just and fair society. Though this Act, people with developmental disabilities will finally have the right to choose how and with whom they live **and** the support to realize those choices.

However, the direct funding sections of this Act cannot be implemented without new transitional funding. The current distribution of MCSS Developmental Services funds directs more than 90% towards the 250+ traditional agency programs and services. Without interim funding, it will be extremely difficult to even begin effective implementation of this Act and provide supports to the thousands of individuals who are outside the agency system.

An allocation of \$50 million of transitional funding is required to support direct-funding applications under the Social Inclusion Act.

3. Increased ODSP Income Support

The supports provided by the Ontario Disability Support Program condemn adults with developmental disabilities to lead impoverished, inadequate lives.

- Approximately 10% of ODSP recipients have a developmental disability and the program is not designed to meet their unique needs, especially in terms of residential supports.
- The 1% increase in November, 2010, brought the basic needs amount to \$584 per month. This amount is supposed to cover all food, clothing, transportation, and living expenses.
- The shelter allowance of \$469 for rent is entirely inadequate for even a basement, especially in major cities like Toronto. People with developmental disabilities also must have safe and secure living accommodation, accessibility, environmental and safety controls, communications supports (e.g. emergency buttons), none of which is taken into account in housing supports.
- Families supporting their adult children at home receive a lower amount of \$219 for shelter. This is discriminatory towards families supporting their adult children at home. The models of lodgers vs. renters must be eliminated in favour of uniform income support.

An additional \$100 million is required for the Ontario Disability Support Program to increase income support, provide appropriate residential supports and help alleviate the lifelong poverty specifically experienced by adults with developmental disabilities.



Economic Justification for Supporting People with Developmental Disabilities

It is often assumed that adults with developmental disabilities are simply consumers of benefits and not contributors to the economy or society.

This distorted and unacceptable view has been challenged in many European countries where new policies and programs are designed, and supports provided, to obtain the maximum societal contribution from each individual irrespective of ability.

In Ontario, thousands of adults with developmental disabilities spend most of their time at home watching television with no community participation, employment or social life. Their contribution is wasted with far-reaching negative economic impact:

- **Parents are forced to give up work**
Without any funding for support workers, a parent has to give up work to support their loved one, with the consequent loss to the economy of their contribution.
- **Support workers remain unemployed.**
With no funding for support, potential support workers also remain unemployed. The economy loses even more potential tax revenues – payroll taxes, HST, EHT etc.
- **Continued reliance on ODSP**
The reliance on ODSP of people with developmental disabilities remains absolute. Without support they cannot be employed, or make a meaningful contribution through volunteerism.
- **Negative impact on small business**
Funding for community inclusion also makes a difference to small businesses operators who provide activities that people with developmental disabilities might attend, like massage therapy, music therapy, art classes, physical fitness programs and sports etc. Today, many programs are not viable through lack of dollars to pay membership fees or monthly costs.

In short, supporting people with developmental disabilities should not be seen as a charitable effort, but as an investment in the economic engine of our society. Support dollars create employment, boost small business and reduce dependency

When support is provided, parents can go back to work and support workers find jobs. Both pay payroll taxes and sales taxes. New programs become established allowing small businesses to flourish and employ more people.

If a support worker can help an individual with a developmental disability hold a job, that individual's reliance on ODSP is reduced. They may even begin paying payroll taxes themselves. At minimum, they will now have some spending power with its consequent economic boost.

Those individuals for whom work is not possible can join the volunteer community and contribute in many different ways. Volunteering with support workers of their choice can be possible at food banks, Meals on Wheels programs, grocery shopping for homebound seniors and at many other venues.

Most importantly, this approach engages adults with developmental disabilities in the community at large and allows them to participate as full, valued citizens who contribute to society in whichever ways they are able.



Economic Justification for Supporting People with Developmental Disabilities

Case Study

The following is an example of how support funding for adults with developmental disabilities has a positive economic impact.

Mary is 23 and has Down Syndrome. She is cheerful, enthusiastic and able to look after herself in terms of eating and hygiene. However, Mary needs help with food preparation and household chores and may make unsafe choices. She is vulnerable, dependent on emotional support and frightened to be left at home alone. Mary cannot be left unsupervised for long or go out unaccompanied into the community.

Mary’s mother, Patricia, is a single parent who stays home to take care of Mary. She was forced to give up her job as an office manager earning \$39,000 a year when Mary left school at 21 and received no Passport funding for day activities. With little income beyond Mary’s ODSP and Patricia’s welfare cheque and \$3,000 in spousal support, their lives are very restricted and mostly spent at home.

Mary applied for Passport funding before she left school but remains on the waiting list of 4,000 people. However, she and her mother have already planned what they will do should funding become available.

	Economic Impact
Given Direct Funding Support of \$25,000 for daytime activities:	
1. Patricia returns to work with a salary of \$39,000	\$6,000 Payroll taxes
2. Patricia makes HST taxable purchases on approx. \$15,000 @ 13%	\$1,950 HST
3. Patricia no longer receives a welfare cheque	\$10,000
Patricia employs a support worker, Jane, to be with Mary for 20 hours a week.	
1. Jane is paid \$18,000 a year (self-employed)	\$3,000 Payroll taxes
2. Jane makes HST taxable purchases on approx \$8,000 @ 13%	\$1,040 HST
Mary works in a supported setting for 16 hours a week at \$10 per hour	
1. Mary’s income \$8,000 per year	
2. Reduction to Mary’s ODSP cheque	<u>\$2,000</u>
Total return to government	<u>\$23,990</u>

Mary also attends a program for two days a week for which she pays \$7,200 per year. Employees of these programs are also tax payers and consumers. For-profit ventures may also pay corporate taxes.

Summary

Of the \$25,000 invested in providing Mary with support, the government (federal and provincial) could easily generate a similar amount back in taxes and reduced benefit payments. This analysis does not count the additional economic impact on business in general.

Note: This scenario assumes that Federal government payments are returned to the province through the provincial transfer payment mechanism.