

June 3, 2010

Dear Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario (via Premier website)
Hon. Madeline Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services
Hon. Deborah Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hon. Leona Dombrowsky, Minister of Education
Hon. Laurel Broten, Minister of Children and Youth Services

This correspondence has been written on behalf of the families of the Toronto Family Network. These families have a family member with additional needs ("disability"). We are including the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, Minister of Education and Minister of Children and Youth Services in this correspondence because currently there is a tri-ministerial review taking place regarding the provision of school health support services to students with disabilities across the province.

On June 1st, many of the families we serve and support attended the "Developmental Services Day" press conference and question period at the Ontario Legislature. It was most upsetting to discover that after having the plight of our children -- the most vulnerable citizens in this province -- raised in the Legislature that MCSS Minister Madeleine Meilleur responded with merely a prepared statement that she read. This statement did not address the matters of concern which directly affect our families that were raised by the Opposition. Minister Meilleur obviously doesn't get it. She does not seem to know what is really happening out there -- what real life experiences are affecting the constituents she is to serve. If she did understand how the quality of our children's lives have been compromised, she would have shown far more sensitivity and compassion. Knowing the statistics, she would have recognized that there is a crisis in support services to individuals with disabilities in this province. She would have known that at least one-third of the population is underserved and at risk. Minister Meilleur is responsible for this. The Liberal Government is responsible for this. The Liberal Government made a commitment to transformation and then did not provide the necessary funds in the Developmental Services budget to meet its obligations (Special Services at Home, Passport, etc.). The Liberal Government has denied equity in access to funding for support services.

The families we support believe that the Liberal Government has treated their children with disrespect. The entire approach by the Liberal MPPs during question period was appalling. To watch members of the Liberal caucus laughing while these matters were being discussed was a slap in the face to our children and our families. This demonstrated to us that our children are not perceived as worthy and valued citizens.

The Premier of Ontario refers to himself as the Education Premier. Education begins at home. It would be advisable for the Liberal Government to educate

themselves on circumstances faced by persons with disabilities in this province. This is essential because these are the very individuals whom the government is supposed to serve and protect.

Families will continue to advocate for their children. They will continue to fight for their rights which are protected not by this government but under the Ontario Human Rights Code, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Liberal Government may continue to create barriers and attempt to create conflict by separating different stakeholder groups, however, as this crisis worsens ---

no further funding for Special Services at Home

no further Passport funding

lack of creative housing and support combinations

lack of inclusive transitional movement through life with direct funding

increase in inappropriate placement of young adults in senior's long term care facilities (MCSS & MOHLTC "Home Access Protocol")

decrease in services from Community Care Access Centres

decrease in types of services provided and time allowed for services

longer waiting times for access to supports and services

greater tax burden

--- more and more groups are rallying together to determine how to get their voices heard by those who are supposed to be representing them. It is time to make investments in families that truly reflect the principles of Transformation. Partnership and problem-solving is facilitated through respectful and thoughtful sharing of information and discussion. This was not evident during question period. What little exchange there was seemed to be downright shameful to those who witnessed it.

This letter may seem harsh but what our children are facing is far more harsh.

Sincerely,

Janis Jaffe-White, Coordinator Reva Schafer, Resource Parent

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