

# CUPE FACTS

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## Sweeping recommendations proposed for the Ontario Developmental Services Sector

*July 2014*

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In its final report, the Select Committee on Developmental Services recommended that all waitlists for developmental services and supports be eliminated within 12 months. At the same time, the report failed to question whether individualized funding is meeting the needs of supported individuals and their families or call for a comprehensive review of services and supports.

The Committee, which was struck in late 2013 to make recommendations on a comprehensive developmental services strategy, tabled their final report in the Ontario legislature on July 23, 2014. This is in the context of the 2014 budget, which includes \$810 million for the developmental services.

The report identified the need for an injection of funding into the sector and the creation of a new Inter-Ministerial Committee on Developmental Services to follow-up on the recommendations made in the report. This committee would include representatives from ten departments with a role in the sector.

### **Residential supports recommendations**

The committee made a number of recommendations regarding residential supports and services; however they failed to address a key issue—fair compensation for direct support workers. This issue has resulted in difficulties recruiting and retaining qualified

staff, which has ultimately had an impact on the quality of services and supports. On staffing ratios, they recommended creating best practices rather than mandated minimum ratios as CUPE had proposed in its brief.

The committee recommended that a plan be developed to ensure that legal pay equity obligations are met, which is positive given that most agencies do not currently have the funding to meet these obligations. Another recommendation was that the Ministry of Community and Social Services implement a long-term multi-year funding commitment to services agencies, which should help in providing some financial stability for workers and agencies as long as the funding is adequate.

A real problem CUPE identified in its brief is that many individuals with developmental disabilities are living in inappropriate settings including long-term care facilities, mental health facilities and prisons. The committee partially addressed this issue through a recommendation that data be collected annually on the number of people with developmental disabilities who are inappropriately housed, such as in hospital or long-term care beds. They didn't specify whether this information would be made public.

The report makes some recommendations for the Housing Task Force, which was appointed in early 2014 to seek solutions for individuals with

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developmental disabilities. It recommends the task force look at short-term and long-term supporting housing models; support and capital funding for purchase and maintenance of existing residences and developing pilot programs. It will be important for CUPE members to be active in this task force to ensure the not-for-profit community agency system remains a key component of this picture where trained and qualified staff provides a range of quality public services and supports.

### **The failure to address systemic issues**

Unfortunately, the report did not address many systemic problems in the sector such as the direct funding model or age-appropriate services in the context of an aging population of families and parents. The committee did not evaluate the extent to which Passport and Special Services at Home (SSAH) funding meet the needs of supported individuals and their families. Approximately 12,000 of the 23,000 individuals on waitlists are waiting for residential supports. Approximately four thousand individuals are on the waitlist for Passport funding. The majority of supported individuals and their families in the province prefer a residential support option rather than a direct funding arrangement through the Passport program. Many parents turn to direct funding because there's no other option available.

The report focused on person-directed planning and individualized life plans, which CUPE agrees are critical to the dignity and human rights of individuals who have developmental disabilities and their families; however, it is difficult to have the freedom to choose in a system that by its very nature constrains choice due to underfunding. The committee failed to assess whether supported individuals and parents are

genuinely able to choose and access supports that meet their needs.

The report also failed to address a demographic shift occurring in our society and in this sector. The parents of supported individuals are aging and many can no longer care for their loved ones due to failing health. At the same time, many people with developmental disabilities are living longer and have complex health needs. As our population continues to age, there will be an increasing demand by families of supported individuals for timely access to residential supports for their loved ones. The requirements for residential supports are growing not receding in this overall shift. Investing in assisted community living facilities is vital given this context. Unfortunately, the committee did not analyze the impact this systemic shift would have on service and support needs.

CUPE recommended redirecting the \$12 million spent annually on Developmental Services Ontario (DSO) toward reducing the waitlists for services and supports. While the committee acknowledged that changes were required, they called for reform of the DSO's: mandate toward system navigation, connections and information dissemination; role regarding young adults and transitional support and quality assurance measures on efficiency and client-focus.

### **What you can do**

- Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper about developmental services issues in your community;
- Connect with the parents of individuals receiving support about how the committee recommendations may affect them; and
- Find out more about the issue:

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- CUPE's brief to the committee:  
[http://cupe.on.ca/a6084/DS%20Brief%20\(FINAL\)\\_CUPE%20Ont%20%20Submission%20to%20Select%20Committee\\_20Jan14.doc.pdf](http://cupe.on.ca/a6084/DS%20Brief%20(FINAL)_CUPE%20Ont%20%20Submission%20to%20Select%20Committee_20Jan14.doc.pdf)
- The final report of the Select Committee on Developmental

Services:

[http://www.ontla.on.ca/committee-proceedings/committee-reports/files\\_pdf/SCDSFinalReportEnglish.pdf](http://www.ontla.on.ca/committee-proceedings/committee-reports/files_pdf/SCDSFinalReportEnglish.pdf)

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