

Mom fears worst; Don't cripple care facilities, parents and union beg legislature

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For the first time in a long time, Patricia MacFarlane is uncertain what the future holds for her daughter, Paula Campbell.

Both mentally and physically challenged, Paula is unable to care for herself and requires around-the-clock care.

MacFarlane was forced to place Paula in a care facility a number of years ago after the task of raising her and her two siblings became too much.

She says her daughter has shown dramatic improvement since going into a care facility and is now doing "extremely well."

But MacFarlane fears the province's proposed changes to developmental services legislation will change all that.

MacFarlane was one of about 50 parents, workers and other interested onlookers at Queen's Park yesterday when the Ontario legislature's standing committee on social policy began public hearings into Bill 77.

CHANGES URGED

She described proposed changes to the original bill put forward by the Canadian Union of Public Employees as exceptional and implored the government to include them in the laws.

Sid Ryan, president of CUPE Ontario, told the committee he feared the problems currently plaguing home care in Ontario would spread to developmental services should the laws pass as they stand. The union claims adults with a developmental disability will face longer waiting lists and uncertain services should the laws pass through parliament.

Among its demands, CUPE wants the government to delete any reference in the bill to waiting lists and ensure any public money go only to not-for-profit service providers.

"Instead of adequately funding the existing, decades-old, community-based infrastructure, the province wants to entrench waiting lists in legislation and divert money to central application centres," Ryan said.

MORE BUREAUCRACY

That will only create another level of bureaucracy, he said, and "suck" money out of the system. People are waiting up to five years for 24-hour care, Ryan said.

But the government says the laws will modernize and improve service delivery for adults with a mental disability.

It claims services for people with developmental disabilities have changed dramatically since the current laws were written 35 years ago.

Ryan reacted angrily when he was cut off by the committee chairman while answering a question from Liberal MPP Khalil Ramal.

He was told the 15 minutes he had to address the committee had elapsed.

There are more than 40,000 adults with a developmental disability living in Ontario.

Illustration:

- CUPE Ontario president Sid Ryan and union researcher Kathy Johnson appear before a committee examining Bill 77.