

## Planned changes to provincial legislation worries CLA workers;

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Byline: BY ELAINE DELLA-MATTIA, THE SAULT STAR, FILES FROM MICHAEL PURVIS.

Canadian Union of Public Employees members are concerned that proposed provincial legislation designed to revamp the Developmental Services Act could be detrimental to those who need it most.

Workers from Community Living Algoma, **CUPE** Local 1880, travelled to Timmins earlier this week to tell politicians that the proposed legislation, which has passed second reading in the house, could mean longer waiting lists and decrease standards of services those with developmental difficulties or their families could receive.

The standing committee on Bill 77 held public hearings on the bill all week.

Community Living Algoma has had meetings with its members to provide them with information about the bill, said Dina Guido, the organization's public relations co-ordinator.

"We've interpreted the bill for our members and we'll let people make up their own minds and do any lobbying on their own," she said.

Staff at Community Living Algoma have also met with ministry personnel to offer their feedback on the bill.

Bill 77 fails to guarantee supports and services for adults with developmental disabilities, said Cindy Hertz, a Sault Ste. Marie CLA worker representing Northern Ontario at the public hearings.

Workers argue the bill will entrench waiting lists in legislation and divert money to central application centres, creating more bureaucracy and less services for those who need it most.

"In Sault Ste. Marie, our agency is working to provide more supports to people in their homes. We are having challenges finding people who will stay in this program but we are working together to make it work. There is a large training component as there are unique challenges presented when working in some-one's home," Hertz told the standing committee.

MPP David Oraziotti defended the legislation, saying the government is trying to enhance an "outdated," act that has lay unchanged since 1974.

He said by making wait times publicly available, the Liberal government hopes to do the same kind of benchmarking it did with health care when it began posting how long it takes to have medical procedures done at each of the province's hospitals.

Bill 77 focuses on providing direct funding to families, who in turn will be forced to seek their own services for their needs, **CUPE** says.

Oraziotti said the government wants families and individuals to play a bigger role in order to be "effective and responsive to the needs of Ontarians with disabilities."

Union officials who represent those in the field say there has always been a struggle to fund programs and services and maintain standards and quality programming and that the direct funding method will only further reduce those standards and increase waiting lists.

It's feared the process could also lure for-profit brokers into moneymaking ventures that don't offer the supports and standards those with developmental disabilities need.

Recruitment and retention issues have also been an ongoing problem in the field and **CUPE** argues the legislation doesn't address that issue.

**CUPE** wants the bill to delete references to waiting lists and mandate the provision of services and supports for any eligible individual.

They also want the bill to require the use of a common assessment tool to determine eligibility and consistency across the province.