

Introduction:

Local 2191 of CUPE represents 1200 front line employees working for Community Living Toronto in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Our Local union is also the largest in the developmental services sector in Ontario. CUPE Local 2191 members deliver a large variety of services, including early childhood education, vocational counseling, employment supports, training and skills development, residential and vocational supports as well as semi independent living, maintenance for our facilities, individualized supports and respite services.

Our members are committed to delivering services within a holistic and integrated approach, which includes individual person planning, advocacy, empowerment and community participation. Working closely with individual's family members, whenever possible, is an important part of our work. However, individual with intellectual disabilities must be provided universal access to needed services to ensure full citizenship of Ontario. These supports services are best provided within a fully accountable public sector framework.

Despite the challenges faced by developmental services sector, including underfunding, Community Living Toronto has come a long way since the days when parents and advocates were meeting in church basements and funding the supports needed for their loved ones with their own resources and/or charity. Services and supports have been put in place, but there are still systemic barriers, such as lack of universal access, chronic underfunding, long waiting lists, inadequate training, and high staff turnover.

CUPE 2191 Concerns Regarding Bill 77

Bill 77, the Services for Persons with Disabilities Act, as it is being proposed, will not address these central problems which are negatively affecting the people we support in the developmental services sector. Access, consistency in staffing and accountability which is so important to the individuals and families we support is not addressed. In fact the bill will compound problems such as inconsistent access and wait lists. In addition staffing issues such as casualization of our jobs, chronic underfunding, low wages, recruitment and retention of staff, WSIB protection, lack of pensions and benefits and health and safety issues in the workplace will become more prominent.

- Over the last decade, for example, as a direct result of chronic underfunding (cuts) of our sector we (CUPE Local 2191) have seen a shift in our membership from full time workers comprising more than half of our membership to full time staff now numbering less than half of our membership. Consequently, there is an increased number of casual workers. These casual workers have no benefits, no pensions or other protections afforded to full time workers but face the same challenges, including health and safety concerns and employment instability, which have a negative impact on the quality of services we deliver. This hurts workers, services we provide and most importantly the individuals and families we support.

The conditions under which we provide services will be compromised with the new services model entrenched within this Act:

- Many Associations for Community Living (ACLs) workers do not have pension plans or benefits. In our local (CUPE 2191), all part-time and relief (casual workers) which are the majority of our membership, have no benefit or pension plans. As a result of their low wages, they are unable to afford private pension or retirement plans.
- Our members as well as ACL workers across the province make significantly lower wages compared to other social service sector workers who do similar work. It is estimated, based on a survey by KPMG (January 28, 2000), that workers in the developmental services field earn 25% less than other social workers doing essentially the same type of work. Despite the government's recent allocation of additional funding for wage enhancements, salaries remain low. Chronic underfunding of this sector has forced employers to do more for less, which has had a negative impact on staff retention and recruitment as well as on the quality of services.
- Services and supports for persons with intellectual disabilities have always been lacking. Bill 77 does not safeguard against for-profit service providers setting up shop and financially benefiting from the scarce and minimal funding dollars that persons with developmental disabilities receive. This will impact on the quality and quantity of services delivered. There is little or no accountability in the proposed legislation for these third party brokers. There must be amendments to Bill 77 to safeguard against service providers profiting from people with disabilities.
- Long term stable and consistent funding for this sector is the only way to deal with the issues that affect developmental services. Waiting lists have continued to grow despite the introduction of individualized funding some years ago. This approach to funding service delivery has not improved the lives of persons with developmental disabilities as the funding often falls short of the individuals true needs. Individualized funding has also created a number of additional challenges for parents and families who wish to manage their own funding. It has forced them to become employers – recruiting, hiring, firing, disciplining and paying (making the appropriate tax deductions etc) for staff to support their loved one. This individualized approach to funding has opened up liability to the individual themselves or family to be legally responsible for their staff. We support the need for families to have support of their loved ones at home, but making them employers will not make this happen.
- Families should be able to rely on a level of support from the province regardless of where they live. Access to service should not depend on how many resources are being used in any given area. If there is a specific identified need for support then parents should not be left dangling on a waiting list for years. Our members are heart broken when they witness the only way some

individuals get off the wait list is for their parents/caregivers to die. Then not only are they dealing with the grief and loss of the people who they loved and have always provided their care but they must also move into a new living environment without the support of family as they have died. It is not right!

- We are very concerned that the bill does not explicitly state that no one who is currently receiving services will have those services decreased in any way. If the intent is for no existing supports to individuals and families be lost then section 40 must be rewritten.
- We believe that not-for-profit agencies should receive the necessary funding to sustain and expand on the supports and services that they provide. There needs to be an increase in the number of supports and services available to persons with intellectual disabilities to address the serious shortfall and the ever-growing wait lists. Staff must be paid decent wages with benefits including pension plans and WSIB protection. Quality of supports and services must be maintained.

Conclusion

Bill 77 will dramatically impact the way services and supports for people with intellectual disabilities have been provided in Ontario, particularly forcing non for profit agencies to compete for scarce funding dollars, failing to legislate universal access and a mandated level of service for all persons with developmental disabilities in our province as well as failing to legislate a consistent assessment tools to address their needs. In addition to the main concerns underlined by our Local, CUPE 2191, we fully support the recommendations outlined in the CUPE Ontario brief submitted earlier today for your consideration.

Thank you.

Submitted By:
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