

## Community Living Dufferin in crisis

A recent Ontario Ombudsman Report, entitled 'Nowhere to Turn? an Investigation into the Ministry of Community and Social Services' response to situations of crisis involving adults with developmental disabilities, states in its summary that 'The present demand for services far outstrips the supply, leaving thousands stranded on waiting lists.' The main reason for the lack of available services is due to inadequate funding to enable service providers like Community Living Dufferin to maintain present service levels, never mind dealing with the issue of wait listed individuals.

For those unfamiliar with CLD let me explain who they are and what they do. Community Living Dufferin (CLD) is a service agency that provides residential and support services to individuals and families of individuals in our community who are living with a developmental disability. They are primarily funded and regulated by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. They have come to rely recently on other sources of funding and fundraising in an attempt to sustain their services. They have been very successful in fulfilling their mandate of supporting these individuals over the years, but it is becoming more difficult to maintain vital services at the current MCSS funding levels. Base funding has not been increased enough in the past few years to even keep up with inflation which has resulted in service cutbacks.

As our population ages the ability of families to care for their dependant adults in the home declines as well. There have been cases in Ontario where family caregivers, out of desperation, have actually abandoned their family member as the only means to have a placement for their loved one. Does this sound like a system that is working? There have been other cases within our local community where individuals have been placed in nursing home care which is totally inappropriate. This is also burdening the system by taking spaces that should be allocated to elder care. Maybe you know someone who is on that wait list as well. It is essential that MCSS step up and increase their support of the front line service providers and the agencies that employ them. Funding at the present levels will not allow these organizations to have the sustainability that is required to allow special needs individuals to continue to grow and participate in our communities. Being wait listed is not the definition of inclusion.

As a parent of an individual supported by CLD I am deeply concerned that the delivery of services to these individuals within our community has been placed in jeopardy by the very ministry whose responsibility is to ensure that they are supported and allowed to live as full participants. If we cannot support these individuals within our community are we then looking at a return to the days of institutions? This situation would be absolutely unacceptable. With over 12,000 people on wait lists for residential services now is not the time for cuts to services. The outcome for some individuals waiting for services will range from inappropriate placements, homelessness, incarceration or simply remaining in a family home with aging parents who can no longer properly care for them. Is this the way we want our most vulnerable members of society to be treated?

Ken Huntley,

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