

Investments that will Make a Difference!

Investing in System Changes that are Responsible, Accountable, Equitable, and Financially Feasible will have Great Outcomes for People with Disabilities

As the Ontario government considers its priorities and budget for 2006-07, it is our hope that the needs of citizens with disabilities will be a major part of that consideration.

Earlier this year, the Ministry of Community and Social Services released a paper entitled *Opportunities and Action: Transforming Supports in Ontario for People who Have a Developmental Disability. This is an important document that deserves attention and financial investment.*

URGENT

OPPORTUNITIES AND ACTION

The developmental services sector is in urgent need of transformation. Most disability and family groups in Ontario support the new direction of this government. *Opportunities and Action* calls for investments that support citizenship and individualized supports.

The time is now for the Ontario government to invest in two key priorities of Opportunities and Action:

- Adequate amounts of **Direct Individualized Funding** for people who choose that approach, AND
- **Independent Planning and Facilitation** support locations in order to inform, strengthen and support people and families in a transformed system.



These directions are considered positive by many people and families because they will:

- 1) enhance the well-being, participation, and contribution of citizens with developmental disabilities, AND
- 2) NOT cost more money overall than the traditional means of support (those supports that have historically been the option for government investment)

DIRECT INDIVIDUALIZED FUNDING: WHAT IS IT?

• Direct individualized funding means that individuals and families receive annualized funds for disability supports based on a detailed application and plan. This is already happening very successfully with the Special Services at Home Program (SSAH) in Ontario.

• The auditor general has said that the SSAH Program is highly accountable.



History has shown families can be trusted.

INDEPENDENT PLANNING AND FACILITATION: WHAT IS IT?

• Independent planning and facilitation means that individuals and their families have ongoing access to an independent facilitator who can help them to build a life in the community and reach their goals.

• Independent facilitators work for the person and family. As such, structures for this support are not located within an organization that provides direct services because that would take away from the neutrality of support and loyalty to the person and family.

• When facilitation is independent of direct service delivery people can focus on their own strengths, capacities, ideas and the potential of community, not just on existing services. They can follow their own path.

Many people want independent planning and facilitation.

It supports real transformation.



Important Considerations for Investing Tax Payer Dollars in Direct Individualized Funding and Independent Planning & Facilitation

Equitability and Fairness

It is possible to allocate funding dollars fairly. The use of a common application form and a respectful prioritization process for deciding allocations, one that people and families have faith in, would strengthen the notion of fairness and equity. People and families would feel they were being treated fairly in a process they understand and support.

Accountability

- Systems with direct individualized funding and structures for ongoing independent planning and facilitation are highly accountable. *There is more accountability when an independent facilitator is involved.*
- Individuals, their families and/or the people they trust create a plan with the facilitator, and are accountable to the plan, which would get approved by a community panel in the prioritization process
- As people implement their plan, a mechanism for yearly cost summaries, signing off on contracts, and monthly invoicing provides tracking and accountability for the dollars.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is greatly enhanced through family and facilitator feedback, as well as outcomes related to participation and satisfaction. This became clearer in recent research done in Ontario by John Lord and Associates entitled: *Moving Toward Citizenship: A Study of Individualized Funding in Ontario.*

ABOUT COST . . .

Research shows that these directions are cost neutral for government but have a huge cost benefit for those being supported in terms of an improved quality of life. In addition, when an independent facilitator is involved, allocations of money can be less than what is needed through a more traditional means of support by exploring more community options. In Ontario, 58% of those studied requested less than \$35,000 for their plan / disability supports, with very positive outcomes related to quality of life and participation in community.



WHERE TO FIND MONEY FOR IMPROVING THE SYSTEM?

Transformation in other jurisdictions has always included some re-allocation of current resources and new money. This is what happened in British Columbia. What could the Ontario government consider doing? This government could:



1) Re-allocate existing resources toward system change

- Re-structure the coordinated or central points of access and use some of this funding for independent planning and facilitation support structures. *Locate these outside the direct service part of the system and the access centres.*
- Streamline direct individualized funding by breaking down current funding 'silos'. Funds for different programs, purposes, age groups, categories and parts of the day result in duplication of administrative paperwork. Some families are utilizing as many as five different streams/pots/programs of funding with five different methods of applying and reporting on the use of the funding.
- Create incentives for agencies to move planning support dollars to new independent planning structures where needed through a community development process.

2) Assign new money to develop:

- A cost-effective province-wide direct individualized funding option, AND
- Support structures/locations for independent planning & facilitation outside the current direct service system in some communities in Ontario to begin staging things in.

It is important that independent planning and facilitation structures be developed NOW to coincide with the option of direct funding. It is also important that those who choose direct funding have enough support dollars for their whole life. *Adequate funding is crucial.*

Changes will save money for tax payers by supporting adults with developmental disabilities to become involved, contributing citizens. Direct individualized funding and independent planning and facilitation will benefit people and communities! *We urge the government to support genuine transformation! People are waiting!*