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For Immediate Release

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**An Urgent Plea for Help from People with Developmental Disabilities  
and the local agencies that serve them  
Increase funding and address chronic waiting lists**

People living with developmental disabilities and the local agencies that serve them are issuing an urgent appeal for help directed at all candidates running in the 2025 provincial election. Over 52,000 people in Ontario are currently waiting for critical support and services due to serious funding shortfalls within the sector, with an estimated 5,000 of them living right here in the Ottawa region.

Equally distressing for local individuals and developmental service (DS) agencies, is the fear that even continuing to provide current services is becoming extremely challenging.

“More than 30 local board chairs and senior managers have been meeting to try and find solutions that don’t include closing residences and canceling programs because we know the people we serve have nowhere else to go,” said Al Roberts, volunteer board Vice Chair of the Ottawa-Carleton Association for Persons for with Developmental Disabilities (OCAPDD). “Struggling to keep the doors open or the lights on leaves no room to bring in new clients or initiate new programs. We are starting to feel like the system is on the verge of collapse if significant steps aren’t taken.”

Since 1993, Ontario governments have only increased core funding to support agencies by less than 7% even though the cost of living has soared by over 60% during that same period.

“Imagine living on the same amount of money you earned in 1993,” said volunteer board Chair for L’Arche Ottawa, John Rietschlin. “Food, transportation, residential maintenance and upgrades, not to mention staff costs have all increased while funding hasn’t kept pace. All of the board chairs we’ve met with have said their organization would love to support additional individuals and families, but everyone agrees we’re at the point we’re not even sure we can keep the people we currently serve.”

People with developmental disabilities, and the boards of the organizations that support them, are asking that immediate action be taken to ensure they are not forgotten. They would like all parties and candidates to provide a proposed solution to address the long waiting lists and funding shortfalls that have plagued the developmental services sector for decades.

As a group, the local board chairs and senior managers appreciated that a portion of the \$310 million outlined in the 2024 budget, provided an approximate 3% increase for DS agency base budgets. This was a positive step toward supporting the sector. While any additional resources allocated to the DS Sector is always appreciated, the lack of necessary support places organizations and staff at risk, and ultimately creates the possibility of fewer, and lower quality, services and supports for people living with developmental disabilities in Ontario.

“It hasn’t been funded properly,” points out Community Living Ontario CEO Chris Beesley. “You can create a vision and be aspirational but unless you put the resources behind it, it’s meaningless.”

Robert Walsh, CEO of Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs (OASIS) agrees. “This chronic underfunding leaves agencies struggling to provide the critical services on which people with intellectual disabilities and their families depend. The gap forces families to shoulder more of the burden—financially, emotionally, and physically—just to meet basic needs. Is this the Ontario we want to live in, where families are left to bridge the growing divide between what’s needed and what’s funded?”

People with developmental disabilities, and the local agencies that support them, have a message for voters in the upcoming provincial election.

“Please keep families in mind when casting your vote. Lead with your head and vote with your heart”.

#WaitingToBelong

[www.waiting2belong.ca](http://www.waiting2belong.ca)

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Community Living Ontario and OASIS