

Community Living Ontario's 2022 Provincial Election Strategy: *Advancing health and well-being for Ontarians who have an intellectual disability*

Ontario's next provincial election will be held on June 2nd, 2022. It is happening in very unusual times, when the divisions in our society have become plain for all to see. If we don't act to contain these divisions, there is a real danger that they will continue to expand. This will negatively affect people who have an intellectual disability in profound ways.

Community Living Ontario is looking to Ontario's political parties to reinforce the fundamentals that enable people and families to achieve financial, physical, and mental health: income security, affordable housing, and equitable access to health and social services.

We are calling on Ontario's political parties to commit to the following key recommendations, as the minimum requirements to address the historic dangers faced by people who have intellectual disabilities:

1. Strengthen the Ontario Disability Support Program

- Increase Ontario Disability Support Program benefits by 7% per year until payments surpass the Market Basket Measure of poverty.
- End the \$10,000 limit on voluntary gifts and payments to ODSP beneficiaries, and increase the asset limit for single people to \$100,000, and for couples to \$200,000.
- Commit to zero provincial clawbacks from the proposed federal Canada Disability Benefit (CDB). If the CDB is successfully introduced, maintain existing provincial health benefits, transportation allowances, adaptive equipment programs, employment supports, and other in-kind benefits for people who receive the CDB

2. Invest in affordable, accessible, supportive community-based housing

- Invest in the development of truly individualized, non-congregated and non-segregated supportive housing, bolstered by a home care infrastructure that supports people to stay in place over their lifetime.
- Expand and increase portable rent subsidies for people who have intellectual disabilities.
- Grow access to deeply affordable rental housing, i.e., 50% of average market rent, in municipalities across the province.

3. Mandate the provision of appropriate, adequate, and accessible supports and services for children and adults who have an intellectual disability, per the 2014 [all-party report on Developmental Services](#).

- Increase resources for developmental services to ensure that all adults who have an intellectual disability receive the services and supports that are reasonable and necessary to ensure equitable access to the community, in a timely manner.
- Implement a program of direct funding to allow people who have an intellectual

disability and their families to control and direct all aspects of their own support and care.

- Eliminate waitlists for access to full Special Services at Home (SSAH) and Passport benefit amounts.

Why we need to strengthen the Ontario Disability Support Program

There are more than 100,000 adults aged 18 to 65 who have an intellectual disability in Ontario. The grand majority are unemployed or underemployed, in large part because of bias, stigma and stereotypes among employers and the general public. This means they must rely on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to cover their housing, food, transportation, and other needs.

ODSP levels are [drastically insufficient](#) to cover even basic needs. In 2020, a single person with a disability could count on just \$14,028 from ODSP, with provincial and federal tax credits increasing their income to \$15,731. This puts people in deep poverty: nearly \$9,000 below Canada's official poverty line.

Most people who have an intellectual disability in Ontario do not receive substantial additional funding through Developmental Services Ontario. While the Passport program offers some extra assistance, these funds cannot be used to cover housing, food, and other basic needs.

People who have an intellectual disability will not be able to achieve even a basic quality of life without substantial increases to ODSP.

Why we need to invest in affordable, accessible, supportive community-based housing

There are more than 15,000 people who have an intellectual disability on the waiting list for supportive housing in Ontario. For the most part, only people in situations of great crisis are able to access provincially funded housing and support. Many will languish on the waiting list for decades because of the shortage of funding, appropriate spaces, and support staff. People and families facing quite similar challenges may receive very different levels of funding for housing and related supports.

One consequence of the shortage of appropriate housing is the fact that there are more than 2,400 people who have a developmental disability living in long-term care facilities; surprisingly, more than 500 people in this situation are under age 60. Older adults who have developmental disabilities are often poorly served in these facilities, and younger people simply do not belong in the long-term care system.

There are several thousand more people who have a developmental disability living in under-regulated, privately-run domiciliary hostels across the province, and unfortunately an uncounted number living in the province's shelters, rooming houses, and hospitals.

To address these interconnected problems, Ontario needs a dedicated, long-term, adequately resourced plan to create quality, non-segregated, non-congregate supportive housing in the community for people who have an intellectual or developmental disability.

Why we need to mandate the provision of appropriate, adequate, and accessible supports and services for children and adults who have an intellectual disability

In 2014, the Ontario [Select Committee on Developmental Services](#) – co-chaired by members of the Liberal and Progressive Conservative parties – recommended that “the provision of developmental services and support should be mandated and waitlists eliminated,” and that “the elimination of waitlists should be the top priority for government.”

Despite this recommendation, the Auditor General of Ontario reports that the number of people waiting for supportive services has grown by 80%, from almost 19,000 in 2015/16 to nearly 34,200 in 2019/20. More than 20,000 of those waiting are receiving none of the services for which they are eligible.

The number of adults waiting for their full allocation of Passport funding has grown by 32%, from over 14,800 in 2016 to almost 19,500 in 2020. The number of children waiting for their full allocation of Special Services at Home funding now stands at nearly 10,000.

The lack of access to adequate and appropriate services has negative consequences for people and families, and for our broader system of health and social care. People’s health, freedom, and dignity is compromised on a daily basis when they don’t have the supports they need. While family members step in to fill the gap when they can – often with negative effects on their own physical and mental health – not everyone has access to this kind of support.

For more information and additional recommendations on developmental services in Ontario, please see our recent report, [Building a Full Life + A Home of One’s Own in the Community](#).

About Community Living Ontario

Founded in 1953, Community Living Ontario is a non-profit, provincial confederation that advocates for people who have an intellectual disability to be fully included in all aspects of community life. For more information, visit www.communitylivingontario.ca.

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