

Community Living Ontario

2024 Pre-budget Submission

December 2023

Executive Summary

Community Living Ontario is pleased to provide our pre-budget submission to Ontario's Ministry of Finance.

Community Living Ontario is a non-profit provincial association that has been advocating with people who have developmental disabilities and their families for 70 years. We proudly work alongside people, family networks, and more than 115 local agencies operating in communities across the province, to ensure that people's personal, health, and social support needs are met.

This submission is focused on the needs of people who have a developmental disability, their families, and front-line service organizations, and has wide support across the developmental service sector. It is part of the **#5toSurvive** campaign, a collective effort to address historic underfunding of developmental services in Ontario.

Over three decades, developmental service organizations have received cumulative base funding increases of less than 4%, though the cost of living has increased by nearly 60%. While the system has expanded and new programs have been added, the lack of attention to core operational funding has led to a crisis that is unfolding in real time. Organizations are being forced to cut programs and crucial operating expenses, despite the fact that the need for their services continues to grow.

At an individual level, people with developmental disabilities and their families are besieged by the skyrocketing cost of living, and particularly with the cost of hiring support staff. They are losing

ground in the competition for qualified staff, and too often losing out as workers move into the education, health care, and long-term care sectors.

Informed by these perspectives, we are calling for the 2024 Ontario provincial budget to include stabilization investments for developmental services Transfer Payment Agencies across Ontario, with an immediate base budget increase of five percent and a commitment to sustainable and ongoing annualized funding. Additionally, we are calling for a five percent increase to Passport and Special Services at Home budgets.

A five percent increase is equivalent to \$110 million for Transfer Payment Agencies, \$30 million for the Passport program, and \$5 million for Special Services at Home. These measures will work to offset historical underfunding of the sector, reduce the risk of harm among people with developmental disabilities, and help to address the human resources crisis being faced across the sector.

The case for **investing** in developmental services

People who have developmental disabilities in Ontario are at very high risk of negative health outcomes. While some recent investments have been made to improve support and care, we are still far from fully addressing the serious issues that people, families, and organizations are facing on a daily basis.

A few key indicators offer a stark picture of the current situation. Adults who have a developmental disability:



- Account for between 12% and 34% of people experiencing homelessness, despite making up less than 2% of the population.¹
- Have been disproportionately affected by the opioid crisis, with a higher risk of opioid use disorder and overdose.²
- Are more likely to experience repeat emergency department visits.
- Are more likely to be readmitted to hospital within 30 days of an initial discharge.
- Are at higher risk of becoming ‘alternate level of care’ (ALC) patients while in hospital.
- Are more likely to live in a long-term care facility – incredibly, one in every ten adults aged 50-65 with a developmental disability in Ontario resides in a long-term care facility.³
- Are over-represented in correctional institutions – the prevalence of developmental disability in Ontario correctional institutions is three times the rate in the general population.⁴
- Experience much more frequent admissions to forensic psychiatric facilities, stay there longer, and tend to get stuck there even when they are ready for discharge.⁵

While Ontario has made great strides in supporting people with developmental disabilities to achieve good health and quality of life, these facts make it painfully clear that, on the whole, they continue to be among our most marginalized and vulnerable citizens. This presents an unacceptable burden for people themselves, and creates significant avoidable costs for Ontario’s health and social service systems.

An urgent need to fill growing gaps

It is widely recognized that people with developmental disabilities face pervasive economic and social barriers, and deserve public funding to address and overcome those barriers.

To this end, nearly ten years ago the Ontario Progressive Conservative and Liberal parties jointly recommended that “the provision of developmental services and support should be mandated and waitlists eliminated,” and that “the elimination of existing waitlists must be the top priority for government.”⁶

"We have been forced to sell properties and liquidate investments to meet our costs. We recently took out a line of credit to be able to meet payroll. We are teetering on the edge, and I know we're not alone."

Unfortunately, we are far from achieving this recommendation. While there are more than 100,000 people who have a developmental disability in Ontario, only about 25,000 receive provincially-funded residential support. In 2020, there were more than 34,000 people officially waiting to access needed supports and services.⁷

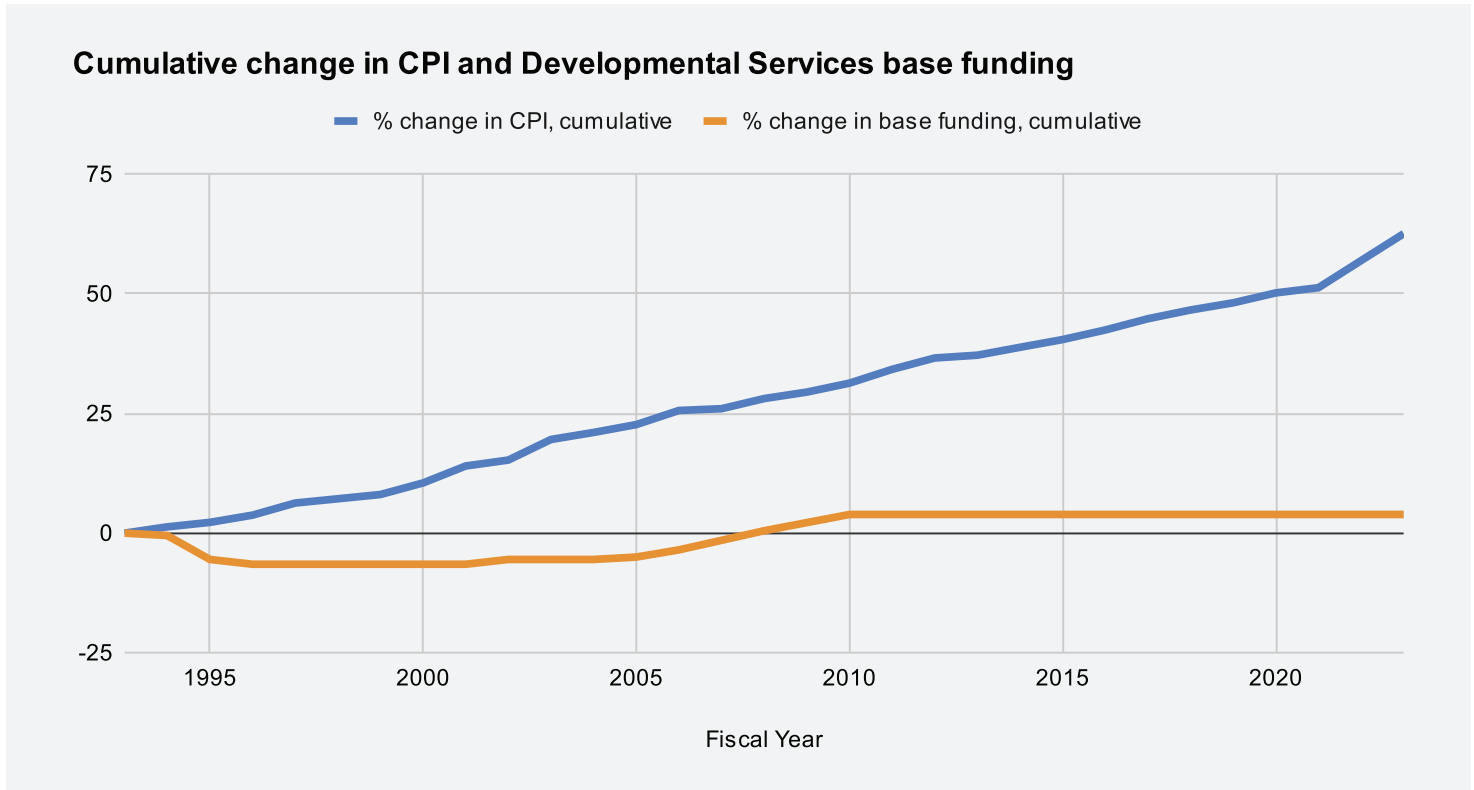
The sector's waitlist issue is well-known. What is less well understood are the specific pressures faced by people, families, and organizations in the face of the soaring cost of living. While these pressures are affecting everyone in Ontario, they are leading to worrying risks in developmental services.

There is a habit within the Government of Ontario of ignoring the effect of inflation on purchasing power in social services. For example, there are many hundreds of people (and possibly several thousand) who were assessed for developmental services funding in the 1990s and 2000s who have not seen a single inflationary increase since their first assessment.

This inattention to inflation has now decidedly caught up with the sector. Developmental service organizations have seen a cumulative base funding increase of less than 4% over the course of thirty years – a period during which the cost of living increased by nearly 60%, as shown in Chart 1.



Chart 1



Increasing base funding empowers organizations to adequately cover the rising cost of food, fuel, transportation, heating and cooling, maintenance and repair of capital assets, and other related costs. This has direct and indirect effects on the quality of life of the people who need support and care.

Over the past twenty years, most agencies have restructured and reduced management and administrative positions, and have restructured their direct care workforce to reduce costs. They have lowered operating costs in every way imaginable – taking vehicles off the road, cancelling outside contracts, cutting service coordination, relocating or closing administration offices, etc. – and have creatively found ways to deliver services more efficiently – but now they are at a breaking point.

"Unfortunately we had to make the very tough decision to close some of our day support services. It was the only non-essential program left to cut, and we had to find resources to pay staff in residential supports. I know that this has been really hard on families."

"We have not renovated any of our buildings in over 20 years unless we had specific grants to do so. At this point, there are no more efficiencies to be found. We will need to cut 10% to 15% of our support hours to balance the budget."

In reviewing the specific history of base funding in developmental services (which includes a 6.5% budget cut imposed in the mid-1990s) we do not mean to ignore other investments made in the sector over the years. It must be noted that the Government of Ontario's 2013 apology for the harms inflicted on residents of the province's regional centres marked a period of increased spending. This resulted in more people being able to access needed services, and increased the amount of funding people and families were able to access via Passport, Special Services at Home, and other direct funding programs. Increases to wages (including the recent \$3 per hour increase for front-line workers) have helped agencies stay relatively competitive, though gaps with other sectors remain.

The irony of these investments is that developmental service organizations, including the collective membership of Community Living Ontario, have been pressed to support more people without the ability to expand crucial organizational infrastructure, or even to keep up with the normal costs of doing business. The sector has responded by cutting or reallocating expenses, and by increasing grant-based and non-government fundraising. However, it has been very difficult for a relatively small sector, supporting people who continue to be widely stereotyped and misunderstood, to compete in a tight fundraising environment.

People and families are struggling to make ends meet

It is well-established that people with disabilities face increased direct and indirect costs stemming from the barriers they face in gaining adequate incomes and meeting their health and medical needs. Likewise, parents of children with disabilities must cover a range of out-of-pocket disability-related costs while often forgoing maximum employment income.⁸

In Ontario, direct funding programs including Passport, Special Services at Home (SSAH), Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities, and Enhanced Respite acknowledge and partially address these additional costs. While they are limited in the amount of funding they provide, these programs are valued across the board.

When the Government of Ontario made the \$3 pandemic-era wage enhancement permanent for front-line Personal Support Workers and Direct Support Workers, it was also announced

that Passport and SSAH amounts would increase by 10%. We noted that this 10% increase would be more valuable than the \$3 wage increase in some cases, and less valuable in others. In particular, people who use most of their funding to hire staff and who live in lower-wage regions (i.e., where average hourly support worker wages are less than \$33 per hour) would have seen a decline in funding (and thus their ability to access needed support) compared to the pandemic period (when everyone was allotted an additional \$3 per hour).



Ontario in Context

In 2022-2023, the Government of Ontario spent just under \$3.2 billion on developmental services. This included \$2.1 billion for residential services and supports, \$630 million for Passport, and an estimated \$100 million for Special Services at Home. Altogether, this spending accounted for 1.6% of a \$200 billion dollar budget.⁹ This falls below comparable Canadian provinces, and is far lower than many leading jurisdictions in the United States, as shown in the table below.

Spending on Developmental Disability Programs as a Percentage of Total Budget¹⁰

Jurisdiction	Spending on developmental disability programs	Total spending	Percent of jurisdictional budget	Year
Pennsylvania	\$4,320,000,000	\$89,600,000,000	4.8%	2019
California	\$9,420,000,000	\$208,900,000,000	4.5%	2019
New York State	\$10,090,000,000	\$238,407,000,000	4.2%	2021
Vermont	\$239,700,000	\$5,800,000,000	4.1%	2019
New Jersey	\$2,420,000,000	\$64,200,000,000	3.8%	2019
Oregon	\$1,570,000,000	\$42,600,000,000	3.7%	2019
Arizona	\$1,360,000,000	\$38,700,000,000	3.5%	2019
Colorado	\$797,800,000	\$30,000,000,000	2.7%	2019
Alberta	\$1,305,723,000	\$64,500,000,000	2.0%	2022/23
British Columbia	\$1,454,727,000	\$80,832,000,000	1.8%	2022/23
Ontario	\$3,197,296,156	\$198,750,000,000	1.6%	2022/23

"There is no more fat to trim in administration or management. We will have to eliminate 15% of our support hours in the next year to balance the budget if there are no increases from MCCSS."

"We have already cut budgets for training, repairs and maintenance, and transportation. This all has an impact - not a good one."

A cost-effective solution to health and social care

Increasing near-term investments in home- and community-based developmental services is a cost-saving measure over the long term. By boosting the ability of organizations and informal caregivers to support people who have a developmental disability, we increase people's health and well-being, and reduce the likelihood that they will end up in shelters, long-term care facilities, and hospitals.

The developmental service sector – encompassing family members, informal support networks, and front-line agencies including the members of Community Living Ontario – is essential to support the needs of people who have a developmental disability in Ontario. Our recommendations are a direct result of people, families and organizations facing tough decisions about how to meet support needs and make ends meet in a very uncertain climate.

We are calling on the provincial government to provide stabilization investments for developmental service organizations across Ontario, with an immediate base budget increase of five percent and a commitment to sustainable and ongoing annualized funding. Additionally, we are calling for a 5% increase to the Passport and Special Services at Home programs.

A five percent increase is equivalent to \$145 million for the entire developmental services sector. If implemented, our recommendation will help to offset historical underfunding, increase the sector's ability to manage the ongoing human resource crisis, and provide additional stability for people who have a developmental disability.



Notes

1. D. Lamanna et. al (2020). Supporting Efforts by Intellectually Disabled Adults to Exit Homelessness: Key Ingredients of a Cross-Sector Partnership. Psychiatric Services.
2. Q. Guan et. al (2022). New opioid use and risk of opioid-related adverse events among adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Ontario, Canada. BJPsych Open.
3. HCARRD health gaps report
4. HCARDD. Developmental Disabilities in Ontario's Provincial Correctional Facilities: Using Data to Tell the Story.
5. HCARDD. Developmental Disabilities in Ontario's Criminal Justice and Forensic System: Using Data to Tell the Story.
6. Ontario Select Committee on Developmental Services (2014). Inclusion and Opportunity: A New Path for Developmental Services in Ontario.
7. Office of the Auditor General of Ontario (2020). Value-for-money audit: Supportive services for adults with developmental disabilities.
8. 57,000 people also receive between \$5,500 and \$45,500 per year via the Passport program, with an average allocation of \$11,500 as of 2021. See People for Personalized Funding for more information.
9. See, for example: M. Stabile & S. Allin (2012). The economic costs of childhood disability. S. Mitra et. al (2017). Extra costs of living with a disability: A review and agenda for research. Government of Ontario (2023). Public accounts 2022-23: Consolidated financial statements.
10. Sources:

Developmental services spending data:

All U.S. states: <https://stateofthestates.ku.edu/state-profiles>

Alberta: <https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/3a6b50d8-c1f2-4e9a-94ec-62f1e0a34e59/resource/417f8027-7b9f-4fe3-a123-a4fe3473a030/download/scss-annual-report-2022-2023.pdf>

British Columbia: <https://www.communitylivingbc.ca/about-us/corporate-reports/financial-reports>

Ontario: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/public-accounts-ontario-2022-23>

Jurisdictional annual spending data:

Pennsylvania:
<https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/projects/state-fiscal-briefs/pennsylvania>

California: <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4083>

New York: <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/reports/finance/pdf/annual-comprehensive-financial-report-2022.pdf>

Vermont: <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/projects/state-fiscal-briefs/vermont>

New Jersey:
<https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/projects/state-fiscal-briefs/new-jersey>

Oregon: <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/projects/state-fiscal-briefs/oregon>

Arizona: <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/projects/state-fiscal-briefs/arizona>

Colorado: <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/projects/state-fiscal-briefs/colorado>

Alberta:
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/7714457c-7527-443a-a7db-dd8c1c8ead86/resource/e700b94a-bf65-49d1-bdac-af4915338c2c/download/tbf-go-2022-2023-final-results-year-end-report.pdf>

British Columbia:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/british-columbians-our-governments/government-finances/public-accounts/2022-23/pa-2022-23-summary-financial-statements.pdf>

Ontario: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/public-accounts-2022-23-consolidated-financial-statements>



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