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COMMUNITY LIVING
Ontario 

#WaitingtoBelong

**Election Engagement Toolkit
2025 Ontario General Election**

www.waiting2belong.ca

www.oasonline.ca

www.communitylivingontario.ca

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2025 Ontario General Election Advocacy Tool Kit

Introduction:

Since its launch last autumn, the **#WaitingToBelong** campaign has highlighted the unacceptable barriers faced by people with intellectual and developmental disabilities on the Developmental Services waitlists, a situation exacerbated by decades of government underfunding. These obstacles prevent access to essential supports such as housing, employment, and community connections.

A central focus of the campaign so far has been sharing personal and local stories from people, families, agencies, and staff, emphasizing the urgent need for immediate government action.

With Ontario currently in the middle of an early election, your voice is more crucial than ever.

This kit is designed to empower **OASIS** and **Community Living Ontario** member agencies and allies to effectively raise critical issues facing people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families during the **2025 Ontario Election**.

This guide offers clear, step-by-step instructions to help you engage with the election process, ensuring that the unique challenges of our community are prominently featured in discussions with candidates and parties.

In a typical election cycle, our sector faces difficulty in gaining the attention it deserves. Given the current global circumstances, this task is even more daunting. Which makes it even more critical that as many as possible participate, and as many as possible vote.

People, families, and local member agencies can provide a non-partisan perspective to representatives of all parties on the importance of our priorities, hopefully secure commitments of support, and help establish a network of new and revitalized relationships with candidates who may soon serve in the Ontario Legislature.

By participating in this process, you are not only amplifying the sector's priorities from a local perspective but also demanding that the next government commit to meaningful action, increased funding, and comprehensive support for those affected by long wait times. Together, let's ensure that the needs of people with developmental disabilities—and the families and agencies that support them—remain a central focus of Ontario's future.

Local Candidate & Campaign Engagement

We encourage you to reach out as soon as possible and arrange to meet virtually or in person with all your local candidates between now and **Election Day on Thursday, 27th February**.

CANDIDATE & CAMPAIGN ENGAGEMENT: Building Relationships and Telling Your Story

Your voice is vital. You provide a compelling, community-focused context that will resonate with candidates from across the province. We want people, families and agencies in every community to connect with their local candidates of all major parties (i.e., Conservative, Liberal, New Democratic Party and Green).

This will be part of an ongoing, local dialogue with your local candidates that will significantly contribute to our sector's efforts and build momentum on our priorities, as well as to lay a foundation or continue to build your relationship with those candidates elected as MPPs to engage on other important issues going forward.

Finding Your Riding, local Candidates, their Events and Contact information for Political Parties:

Your Riding:

If you don't know **your Riding/Electoral District**, please enter your **Postal Code** [HERE](#).

Your Local Candidates:

If you want to know **all the names of all candidates in your Riding / Electoral district**, and to find the most up-to-date information, **please choose your electoral district from the drop down menu** on the Elections Ontario website, found here: [Candidate search - Elections Ontario](#) and it will tell you the name of all currently registered candidates. It will usually, but not always, have a link to that candidate's website which will outline contact details and information on events in the riding. If there is no link to the website, you may need to search the name of a candidate to find their website, social media etc.

Registered Political Parties

To find information as well as contact details on **ALL** registered political parties in Ontario, please use this link: [Registered Parties](#) **PLEASE NOTE:** Just because the list includes a registered political party, it does not mean that party has any candidates in your riding or at all in this Election.

The General Contact Information for the **Four Main Political Parties** are as follows:

Green Party of Ontario

President: Ard Van Leeuwen

Leader: Mike Schreiner

Address: PO Box 1132 STN F TORONTO ON M4Y 2T8

Telephone: 416-977-7476

Web Site: <http://www.gpo.ca>

New Democratic Party of Ontario

President: Janelle Brady

Leader: Marit Stiles

Address: 201-2069 LAKE SHORE BLVD W Toronto ON M8V 3Z4

Telephone: 416-591-8637

Web Site: <http://www.ontariondp.ca>

Ontario Liberal Party

President: Kathryn McGarry

Leader: Bonnie Crombie

Address: 306-344 BLOOR ST W TORONTO ON M5S 3A7

Telephone: 416-961-3800

Web Site: <http://www.ontarioliberal.ca>

Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario

President: Michael Diamond

Leader: Doug Ford

Address: 400-56 ABERFOYLE CRES, ETOBICOKE ON M8X2W4

Telephone: 416-861-0020

Web Site: <http://www.ontariopc.ca>

Contacting Your Candidates:

Reaching out to a campaign or candidate via an email or letter can serve as an effective tool to communicate our sectors concerns and request a written commitment to support the DS sector. Having a written commitment to supporting our sector needs is vital if the political party who made it forms government.

Included below is a **template letter** that you can use for your own local outreach.

- *Please use the tools provided in the previous section to find the contact information you need for your local candidates.*

The letter below is only a template. Please feel free to use it as a guide while also expanding to include your own needs. Emphasize the critical role that developmental services play in supporting people with developmental disabilities and their families.

Present Current Challenges: Outline the existing issues within the sector, such as funding shortages, long wait times, and the need for enhanced service quality.

Request Specific Commitments: Seek a clear, written pledge from the candidate or campaign on how they plan to prioritize and support the DS sector if they form government. through increased funding, reduced wait times, and improved service quality.

TEMPLATE LETTER TO CAMPAIGNS/CANDIDATES

This is a sample email/letter that you can send to the candidate or the campaign – just remember to remove all italicized placeholders and replace them with the appropriate information.

Subject: How will the (Insert Political Party/Candidate Name) Support Those with Developmental Disabilities?

[MONTH] XX, 2025

*[Mr./Ms.] [FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]
[Candidate, Riding Name]
Via email: [EMAIL]*

Dear *[MR./MS.] [CANDIDATE LAST NAME]*, On behalf of *[Insert local agency]*, we are writing to you regarding the 52,000 adults with intellectual disabilities who are languishing on the Developmental Services (DS) waitlist in Ontario. Since 1993, successive Ontario Governments, regardless of political party, have increased core funding to support agencies by less than 7%, while the cost of living has soared by over 60% over that same time. Developmental services agencies across the province, including here in *[INSERT NAME OF YOUR RIDING]*, say the system is no longer sustainable.

Many people waiting for life-changing support and services have been on waitlists for years-some for decades. This ongoing crisis has left thousands of vulnerable people and their families without the resources and stability they desperately need to live full, meaningful lives in their communities.

Immediate action is required to ensure they are not forgotten. As a candidate for *[Insert Political Party]*, we are asking you to clarify your party's stance and provide a proposed solution to address these critical issues. If you form the next government, what will you do to ensure that people with intellectual and developmental disabilities receive the necessary support and care they need in *[Electoral district or community]* and across Ontario?

As part of the **#WaitingToBelong** campaign, launched in 2024, Community Living Ontario, OASIS, their member agencies and others in the DS Sector have been actively working to bring attention to this matter. However, without the government's cooperation and a commitment to fully fund the DS waitlist, this incredibly important issue cannot be resolved.

[Insert Here Additional Details on the DS Sector Challenges, Your Agency's Additional Concerns and unique challenges your agency is facing]



This is an opportunity to outline [Insert Political Party]'s plan and make a significant impact on the lives of the 100,000 Ontarians with intellectual disabilities, their families, and the Developmental Services agencies that support them.

We appreciate your consideration of this urgent matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Your Organisation]

[Your Contact Information]

Meeting Your Candidates

Given that this Election is only four weeks long, it may be difficult to arrange an in-person or virtual meetings with candidates. However, you should still try, especially if you have an existing relationship with or have met a particular candidate before. Meeting in person offers an opportunity to possibly get genuine, spontaneous answers rather than just relying on key messages from a central campaign team.

Step 1: Scheduling and Preparing for a meeting

- Below is a template meeting request that you can use for your own local candidates.
- **Be as accommodating as possible** in terms of making yourself available to meet with the candidate, for whatever length of time they have available.
- Candidates get a lot of meeting requests. You should expect to **follow-up on your invitation** after a few days if you haven't received any acknowledgement or a confirmed a date for the meeting.
- There is **strength in numbers** when arranging candidate meetings. We encourage you, where appropriate, to seek to **schedule meetings in partnership with other local agencies**. In addition to having the support of another agency, it may increase the chances of successfully securing the meeting and demonstrate to candidates in real-time that the sector is speaking with one voice.
- Once the meeting is scheduled, remember to **share the names/titles of those participating in the meeting with the candidate**. This will help them prepare in advance and contribute to a better dialogue.
- Review the resources provided in this toolkit in advance of your meeting.
- If more than one person is joining, determine speaking roles in advance.
- Again, It is important to prepare local examples from the Riding to strengthen your message.

Step 2: Conducting a meeting

- Focus on the main issues, the key messages and “ask” and highlight the local examples in combination with the key messages from the briefing note.
- Be passionate and respectful.
- Be concise as you may only have 10- or 15-minutes total, or less, and it is important to leave time for questions.
- Take notes and highlight any questions raised.

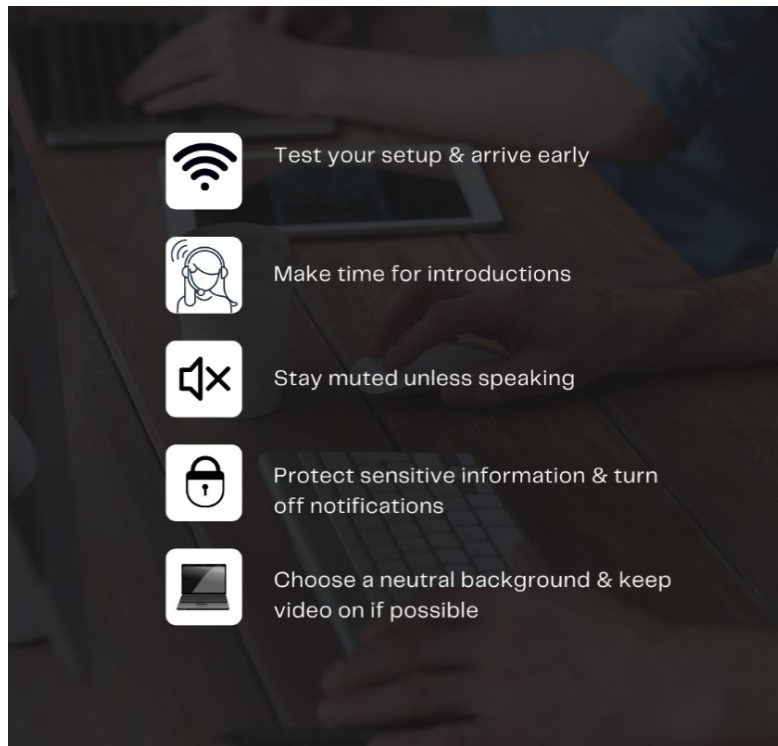
Step 3: Following up after the meeting

- Connect with the #WaitingtoBelong team via the emails provided at the end of this Kit. Let us know how the meeting(s) with your local candidates went. Also use this time to raise questions and information requests, particularly if the candidate is interested in learning more about the priorities of #WaitingtoBelong.
- Send a “thank you” email to the candidate

VIRTUAL MEETINGS

Many candidates may still opt to conduct some meetings virtually through either Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or another virtual meeting platform for time or distance reasons.

With a virtual meeting, generally follow the same format as requesting an In-Person Meeting. However, here are some additional important reminders to consider when conducting virtual meetings.



Template Meeting Request:

This is a sample email/letter that you can send to your local candidates to request a meeting. – please remember to remove all italicized placeholders and replace them with the appropriate information.

[MONTH] XX, 2025

*Mr./Ms.] [FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]
[Candidate, Riding Name]*

Via email: *[EMAIL]*

Dear *[Mr./Ms.]/ [CANDIDATE LAST NAME]*,

On behalf of *[Local Member Agency]*: I am reaching out to request a meeting either in person or virtually ahead of this year's General Election in Ontario to discuss the critical issues impacting the developmental services (DS) sector and the people living with developmental disabilities we serve in *[Electoral district or community]*.

[Insert local context about your agency]

We look forward to meeting with you at a time of your convenience to discuss important priorities for the developmental services sector that are vital to our continuing ability to ensure that people with developmental disabilities and their families in *[Electoral district or community]* have access to the supports and care that they need.

To confirm your availability, or if you have any questions, please contact me at *[contact details]*. We eagerly look forward to meeting with you and will follow up to confirm the details.

Sincerely,

*[Your Full
Name]*

[Your Title]

*[Your Contact Information including phone number and
email address] [Local Member Agency Name]*

TEMPLATE THANK YOU EMAIL

This is a sample thank you email that you can send to the candidate following your meeting – just remember to remove all italicized placeholders and replace them with the appropriate information.

[MONTH] XX, 2025

*[Mr./Ms.] [FIRST NAME] [LAST NAME]
[Candidate, Riding Name]*

Via email: *[EMAIL]*

Dear *[MR./MS.] [CANDIDATE LAST NAME]*,

On behalf of *[Insert local agency]* thank you for taking the time to meet with *[me or us]* on *[date]*. *[I or We]* appreciated the opportunity to discuss the critical role that we fulfil for people living with developmental disabilities and their families living in *[electoral district or community]* and across Ontario, and the importance of our priority issues to ensure the sustainability of the DS sector so we can continue to perform essential work in our community. We appreciated your support.

[Reiterate any relevant commitment to support the priorities of the #WaitingtoBelong campaign and speak to others in their respective party]

[Reiterate any relevant details from the discussion]

[Provide answers to any questions they raised that you committed to following up on]

We look forward to continuing this conversation going forward. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at *[your email address]*.

Sincerely,

*[Your Name]
[Your Title]
[Your Organisation]
[Your Contact Information]*

Utilizing Media and Social Media to Amplify Your Story:

While engaging directly with campaigns and candidates is extremely important, don't overlook the power of **media** and **social media** to help amplify your message. These platforms will further tell your story, raise awareness, and generate public support for the sector's asks.

Media Coverage: If you have the opportunity to share your story through local news, press releases, or interviews, take it. Journalists are often looking for compelling human-interest stories, especially during an election, and your story could be a great opportunity for media coverage. Please use the Press Release template below to assist with crafting a media release for your local media. We need to do everything we can to bring attention to our sector during this election.

Our **#WaitingtoBelong Media and Communications Specialist Teresa Kruze**, is a resource you can access. Contact her at tkruze@rogers.com if you need assistance, help or coaching with any television, radio or print opportunities.

Social Media: *Leverage platforms like X, Instagram and Facebook to share key points you want to make, personal stories, and calls to action. Use hashtags and tag relevant candidates or political parties to increase visibility. In most cases, you will be able to find candidates social media information via their websites. Remember to include the @ sign ahead of the username/handle and if the MPP doesn't have a social media username, use #MPP and their name. Please use the **#WaitingtoBelong** and **#Waiting2Belong** hashtags and add your own hashtags, or hashtags for specific events, as needed. You should also use the **#ONPOLI** hashtag. This hashtag covers all politics in Ontario. The below posts are just suggestions based on the **#WaitingtoBelong** campaign with suggested posting dates. Please feel free to adjust the text to better suit your agency or network's tone or create your own original post. You may also download the suggested graphics using the links provided.*

TEMPLATE NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release// [INSERT YOUR CITY/TOWN/REGION], Ontario [INSERT DATE], 2025

**An Urgent Plea for Help from People with Developmental Disabilities
Over 52,000 People are on Waiting Lists for Critical Supports and Services**

People living with Developmental Disabilities 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, including here in [INSERT NAME OF YOUR CITY/TOWN/REGION]. “Since 1993, the Ontario government has increased core funding to support agencies by less than 7%”. says Community Living Ontario CEO Chris Beesley. “Over that same time, the cost of living has soared by over 60% and **the system is no longer sustainable**”.

“[INSERT BEGINNING OF QUOTE ABOUT STRUGGLES FACED BY YOUR ORGANISATION],” says [INSERT NAME OF YOUR ORGANISATION] [INSERT TITLE AND NAME OF YOUR ORGANISATION’S LEADER]. “[INSERT END OF QUOTE].” Some people have been on waitlists for years and even decades for life-changing supports and services. They need help coping with basic life skills, medications and appointments, to assistance in finding a home, job and finding community activities to participate in, so they can truly belong.

“We’re not a statistic, we are people,” says Amber Taylor, President of The Council for Community Living Ontario. “Even though we have a disability we can still do normal things but sometimes we need a little help.”



People with Developmental Disabilities are asking that immediate action is 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.**



“It hasn’t been funded properly,” points out 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 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?”

[INSERT NAME OF YOUR ORGANISATION] and Developmental services agencies across the province also 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
For media inquiries, please contact:
Teresa Kruze. tkruze@rogers.com 416-727-8145
Community Living Ontario and OASIS**

SOCIAL MEDIA TEMPLATE POSTINGS:

Tile	Caption & Posting Date
 <p>The tile features a photograph of a man looking out a window. Below the photo is a blue banner with the text "#WaitingToBelong". Underneath the banner is a black box containing a quote in white and red text, and the name "James, Scarborough" in white.</p>	<p>Long Version: 52,000 adults with intellectual disabilities are currently languishing on a waiting list — waiting for necessary supports and services so that they can lead meaningful lives. Some of those waiting have shared their stories with us — stories of frustration, fear, and an unsettling question: “What’s next?” Their voices need answers, and their experiences demand action. Learn more: www.waiting2belong.ca In the upcoming Ontario election, please keep families in mind when casting your vote. Lead with your head + vote with your heart. #WaitingToBelong #Waiting2Belong #ONPOLI</p> <p>Short Version: Over 52,000 Ontario adults with intellectual disabilities are stuck on waiting lists for vital supports. Their stories of fear and uncertainty demand action. This Ontario election, vote with your heart—support families and meaningful change. Learn more: www.waiting2belong.ca #WaitingToBelong #Waiting2Belong #ONPOLI</p> <p>Post: Friday, 7 Feb 2025</p>
 <p>The tile features a photograph of a man covering his face with his hands. Below the photo is a blue banner with the text "#WaitingToBelong". Underneath the banner is a black box containing a quote in white and red text, and the name "Justin, Durham Region" in white.</p>	<p>Long Version: 52,000 adults with intellectual disabilities are currently languishing on a waiting list — waiting for necessary supports and services so that they can lead meaningful lives. Some of those waiting have shared their stories with us — stories of frustration, fear, and an unsettling question: “What’s next?” Their voices need answers, and their experiences demand action. Learn more: www.waiting2belong.ca In the upcoming Ontario election, please keep families in mind when casting your vote. Lead with your head + vote with your heart. #WaitingToBelong #Waiting2Belong #ONPOLI</p> <p>Short Version: Over 52,000 Ontario adults with intellectual disabilities are stuck on waiting lists for vital supports. Their stories of fear and uncertainty demand action. This Ontario election, vote with your heart—support families and meaningful change. Learn more: www.waiting2belong.ca #WaitingToBelong #Waiting2Belong #ONPOLI</p> <p>Post: Wednesday, 12 Feb 2025</p>

 <p>#WaitingToBelong</p> <p>"My son is nonverbal, and communication has been a big challenge for us. We've been waiting 4 years for services."</p> <p>Maria, Toronto</p>	<p>Long Version: 52,000 adults with intellectual disabilities are currently languishing on a waiting list — waiting for necessary supports and services so that they can lead meaningful lives. Some of those waiting have shared their stories with us — stories of frustration, fear, and an unsettling question: "What's next?" Their voices need answers, and their experiences demand action. Learn more: www.waiting2belong.ca In the upcoming Ontario election, please keep families in mind when casting your vote. Lead with your head + vote with your heart. #WaitingToBelong #Waiting2Belong #ONPOLI</p> <p>Short Version: Over 52,000 Ontario adults with intellectual disabilities are stuck on waiting lists for vital supports. Their stories of fear and uncertainty demand action. This Ontario election, vote with your heart—support families and meaningful change. Learn more: www.waiting2belong.ca #WaitingToBelong #Waiting2Belong #ONPOLI</p> <p>Post: Wednesday, 19 Feb 2025</p>
 <p>#WaitingToBelong</p> <p>"Being on a waitlist makes it much harder to participate in the community."</p> <p>James, Southwestern Ontario</p>	<p>Long Version: 52,000 adults with intellectual disabilities are currently languishing on a waiting list — waiting for necessary supports and services so that they can lead meaningful lives. Some of those waiting have shared their stories with us — stories of frustration, fear, and an unsettling question: "What's next?" Their voices need answers, and their experiences demand action. Learn more: www.waiting2belong.ca In the upcoming Ontario election, please keep families in mind when casting your vote. Lead with your head + vote with your heart. #WaitingToBelong #Waiting2Belong #ONPOLI</p> <p>Short Version: Over 52,000 Ontario adults with intellectual disabilities are stuck on waiting lists for vital supports. Their stories of fear and uncertainty demand action. This Ontario election, vote with your heart—support families and meaningful change. Learn more: www.waiting2belong.ca #WaitingToBelong #Waiting2Belong #ONPOLI</p> <p>Post: Wednesday, 26 Feb 2025</p>

Key Messages: *These are meant as a guide for your engagement with candidates. Do not feel the need to include everything. Be sure to summarise and add your own local experience and individual pressures and challenges.*

Challenges Faced by the Developmental Services (DS) Sector

- The DS sector is experiencing a significant labour shortage, with low wages and limited training incentives. Developmental Services Workers (DSWs) often leave for better-paying roles in hospitals, schools, and other public sectors, resulting in a shortage of qualified staff to support people with developmental disabilities.
- Increased numbers of people are entering the system with complex needs, including health and mental health challenges, putting immense strain on service providers with already limited resources.
- **More than 52,000 adults with developmental disabilities in Ontario are on waitlists** for critical services and supportive housing. For many, this means waiting indefinitely for the services they need to live healthy, supported, and safe lives. For families, the wait is not just a number. It represents lost opportunities for early intervention, essential supports, and community inclusion.
- The current funding model has left service agencies struggling to meet demand, leading to programme closures and staff shortages.
- The lack of necessary financial support places organisations 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.**
- In addition, the housing crisis has left tens of thousands without appropriate housing. People are often forced into inappropriate settings such as hospitals and long-term care facilities, which are both costly and unsuitable.

Funding History

- We appreciate that a portion of the **\$310 million outlined in the 2024 budget**, equalled an approximate **3%** increase for Developmental Services (DS) agency base budgets. This is a positive step toward supporting the sector.
- However, this investment means that over the past three decades, developmental service organisations have received **cumulative base funding increases of less than 7%**, though the cost of living, as marked by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), has **increased nearly 70%**.
- While any additional resources allocated to the DS Sector are always appreciated, the lack of necessary support places organisations 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.**

- **If the investments made so far were enough, why are there still 52,000 people waiting for service?**
- Even with the announced increase, 80% of agencies surveyed are still projecting a deficit in 2025/2026; this means:
 - *Reductions in staff*
 - *Reductions in service and programming*
 - *Reduction in building repairs*
 - *Reductions in housing and housing supports.*
 - *And by extension, all of this represents a reduction in the safety and security of people with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.*
- With increased demands, skyrocketing costs, and a profound human resource and labour shortage, the system of care that has existed to ensure the safety and well-being of Ontarians with developmental disabilities is **facing collapse**.

Urgent Need for Action

- Recent investments and efforts are appreciated but more support is needed to address the ongoing crisis in the DS sector. Cutbacks in response to underfunding are leading to increasing pressure on families, as well as on the health care, mental health, long-term care, and shelter systems. Adequate and appropriate funding is crucial to provide effective services and support that ensure safety, security, and quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities.
- We call for a **collaborative, comprehensive wait-list strategy to be developed to end waitlists for services**. This strategy should involve sustained funding and consultation with the developmental services sector, families, and people with developmental disabilities to reduce waitlists and ensure equitable access to services.
- Key Initiatives needed urgently include:
 1. ***A balanced funding model that provides both direct support to people and sustained funding to agencies.***
 2. ***Stabilisation of the DS workforce through educational and other incentives;***
 3. ***expanding community-based housing options and reducing wait times for supportive housing***
 4. ***Providing full Passport allocations to all people eligible for the programme;***
 5. ***Tying all ODSP benefits, including the Personal Needs Allowance and Special Diet Allowance, not just basic needs, to inflation; and***
 6. ***Committing to zero claw backs of the Canada Disability Benefit from people receiving ODSP.***
- These measures will help stabilise the DS sector, prevent the collapse of essential services, support people in need and ensure that no one is left waiting for a safe, inclusive, and supported future.

Q&A

This Q&A is intended to provide possible answers to questions that may come up when engaging with candidates and campaigns. Again, as with Key Messages, These are not meant to be broad or complete and are instead intended as a guide for you to keep in mind and use throughout your engagement with candidates. There may be questions that come up that you can't answer. Simply say you will get back to them and reach out to representatives from the #WaitingtoBelong Campaign for assistance in answering them.

Q: The Progressive Conservative Party insists that it has provided \$3.5B in investment to the Developmental Services Sector, why do you need more investment?

A: The dollar figure is only a part of the story. It's important to understand the context. For example, the province spends **\$80 billion on health care** every year, yet **2.5 million people don't have access to a family doctor**. The province spends **\$9 billion on long-term care facilities**, yet **50,000 people are waiting for a long-term care placement**. Meanwhile, thousands of people with developmental disabilities are languishing inappropriately in hospitals and long-term care facilities because our sector is under-resourced. A focus on dollar figures takes attention away from these real issues and their effects on real people.

Q: Why is it essential to support the developmental services sector?

A: Developmental services are not luxuries—they are lifelines. These services empower people with developmental and intellectual disabilities to live, work, and fully participate in their communities. With over **52,000 Ontarians currently on wait lists** for these critical supports, further investment and support is essential to ensure everyone has the opportunity to belong, contribute, and live with dignity. Investing in these services has a profound ripple effect:

- It **reduces long-term costs by preventing crises and reducing reliance on emergency services**.
- It fosters a **more inclusive and diverse workforce** as individuals gain independence and new skills.
- It **alleviates the undue burden on families**, allowing them to thrive and contribute more fully to society.
- Ultimately, a well-supported developmental services sector **builds resilient communities where everyone has the opportunity to flourish**.

Q: What is the current state of developmental services in Ontario?

A: The data is alarming:

- **52,000+ people** on waitlists for various developmental supports.

- Over **28,000 people** are on wait lists for housing-related support. The Financial Accountability Office (FAO)'s June 2024 Report showed that while access to supportive housing has dropped over recent years, the wait list has surged by **60%**.
- More than **42,000 people** are waiting for community support services such as respite care, social work, mental health support and employment assistance. Without these supports, many are isolated from the very communities they wish to contribute to.
- In the Passport program, which provides financial support ranging from \$5,500 to \$45,000 per year, over **30,000 people** are waiting to receive their full assessed allocation.

These figures highlight a system that is not meeting the needs of a majority of its population.

Q: How has underfunding impacted the quality and accessibility of services?

A: Chronic underfunding forces agencies providing supports to operate with severely limited resources, which in turn:

- Creates longer wait lists for critical services.
- Reduces the availability of staff and specialised supports.
- Increases the pressure on families, who are often left to bridge the gap by providing additional care at home or forced to place them in often inappropriate settings such as hospital or long-term care.

The gap in funding forces families to shoulder more financial, emotional, and physical burdens just to meet basic needs, further underlining the systemic crisis.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

It isn't enough just to participate in the Ontario Election through advocacy, meeting with candidates etc. You must also ensure that you vote and that you do everything in your power to assist the people and families you support to vote. There is a myth amongst some politicians that this sector and its people don't vote. We need to prove them wrong. This section of the kit is designed to make sure that service providers and the people they support, have all the information needed to participate in the election confidently, independently and as stress-free as possible for all.

Key Voter Information

- **Voter Eligibility:**
 - To be eligible to vote, you must be:
 - *18 years of age or older.*
 - *a Canadian citizen; and*
 - *a resident of Ontario.*

- **Where to Vote:**
 - There are a number of ways you can vote. Including by Mail, your local Election Office, advanced voting locations and on Election Day.
 - [VOTING BY MAIL INFORMATION](#)
 - [FIND YOUR LOCAL ELECTION OFFICE & ADVANCED VOTING LOCATIONS](#)

- **ID Needed**
 - ID is required to vote. However, it doesn't need to be Photo ID, there are a large number of alternative options available, including any document showing your name issued by:
 - *the Government of Canada*
 - *the Government of Ontario*
 - *a municipality*
 - *a government agency*
 - A full list of acceptable ID can be found [HERE.](#)

Accessible Voting:

Elections Ontario ensures that everyone can vote. They offer:

- **Home Visits:** For those who can't travel or need assistance.
- **Mail-In Voting:** Request a kit by the deadline.
- **In-Person Voting:** With assistive technology available at multiple locations and times.

These options are designed to support all voters and ensure that every eligible person has the help they need to participate in the election. For More Information, visit the [Accessible Voting](#) page on the Elections Ontario website.

Finding Candidate Events, Debates and Meet-Ups

There is no one centralised way to find **all** local events, debates and other programmes taking place in Ridings across the province during the election. Below are suggestions for the best way to find them. Be sure to set aside time to **regularly check local listings**, review local event calendars and news outlets for updates on upcoming debates and forums. Also be sure to **reach out to local community leaders or organisations**

Event Listings:

- **Local Media Outlets:**
Local newspapers and radio stations often publish schedules for upcoming debates and candidate forums. Be sure to constantly check local media and social media.
- **Community Centres and Libraries:**
These venues frequently host or advertise political events. Check bulletin boards, websites or enquire with staff about upcoming debates or events.
- **Websites and Social Media Platforms:**
As mentioned in the Media and Social Media section, follow local candidates' social media as well as political parties and community groups on platforms such as Instagram or X for real-time updates on events. Also be sure to check local candidates' and political party websites, Candidates often announce their participation in debates through their official websites or social media channels.
- **Municipal Websites:**
Local governments may host events such as debates and other community events.

Community Engagement:

- **Community Organisations and Associations:**
Community Groups and Associations often host or promote candidate events. For example, FONOM (The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities) is hosting the 14th of February Leaders Debate in North Bay. Be sure to check the websites and social media or community organisations for potential events,
- **Local Chambers of Commerce:**
These organisations may organise or publicize candidate forums to inform the business community.
- **Cultural and Religious Institutions:**
Churches, mosques, synagogues, and cultural centres sometimes host political events to engage their communities.
- **Educational Institutions:**
Schools and universities may organise debates or forums, especially those with political science departments.

Planning Your Own Event:

It may be difficult, given how short the election is, but you may wish to consider hosting your own nonpartisan debate or forum ahead of the election. It doesn't have to be large or complicated, maybe just a small gathering, coffee meet-up, or discussion with candidates on developmental services in the community. Additionally, partnering with other local agencies can be a good way to share resources, help pool expertise and funding and expand your audience.

Latest Polling

If you are interested in tracking the latest polling during the Election, [338 Canada](#) provides the most recent polling projections, including on a Riding-by-Riding Basis. [Mainstreet Research](#) also provides recent polling as well as polling over time.



KEY CONTACT:

If you have any issues or questions, please contact:

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Teresa Kruz (tkruze@rogers.com)

We would be happy to assist with whatever issues or questions you may have.