



Alberta Association for
**Community
Living**

serving children and adults with developmental disabilities *for over 45 years*

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****URGENT****

CALL TO ACTION

**Adults with developmental
disabilities and their families face
FUNDING CRISIS!!!**

***MASSIVE CUTS TO SERVICES
& SUPPORTS IMMINENT***

**Contact your MLA and the Premier
immediately –
let them know adults with developmental
disabilities deserve adequate funding**

***In a few weeks the new government budget will
be announced – NOW is the time
to make a difference!!!***

Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) Provincial and Community Boards, are responsible for funding supports and services for adults with developmental disabilities. The Alberta government has recently advised these Boards that they will not receive sufficient funds to maintain existing services and supports.

As all PDD Boards are required by the government to balance their budgets, they must now begin to plan for large-scale reductions in services and supports. Based on current government projections these cuts to individuals with developmental disabilities and their families will get worse year after year.

This government action holds the following implications for families:

- Long waiting lists for services and supports
- More families and individuals in crises
- Reductions in supports and services placing individuals and families at risk
- Increased congregation and segregation further placing individuals at greater risk of abuse

There is only one way to reverse this action – EVERY family of EVERY child and adult with developmental disabilities and their friends, relatives, allies must immediately contact their MLA and the Office of the Premier to voice their outrage at this government betrayal of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

Background

Adults with developmental disabilities receive their disability-related supports through PDD, which is part of the Ministry of Seniors, and Community Supports. The Honourable Yvonne Fritz is the Minister. Ms. Fritz is aware of the issue and has made every effort, along with some of her colleagues, to secure adequate funding for adults with developmental disabilities and their families. The action to severely limit funding and compromise the lives of individuals with developmental disabilities and their families has been taken by the Treasury Board of Alberta. This is the government body that primarily determines the government's budget. However, the decisions of government are ultimately the responsibility of its Members and the Premier. It is to the Members and the Premier that our attention must turn.

The Treasury Board is projecting an increase of up to 2% for PDD this coming fiscal year, beginning April 1, 2006. This small increase is simply insufficient to keep up with the current funding needed by adults with developmental disabilities. PDD's costs for this coming year will be higher than the 2% increase and so the PDD boards must reduce funding to adults with developmental disabilities in order to balance their budgets.

A 2% increase will result in at least a 2 – 3% reduction in funding for supports and services (about \$10 – 15 million). This reduction is necessary, as PDD requires about 4% to simply continue to provide in 2006 the same level of supports and services as in 2005 and still accommodate new individuals turning age 18.

The government may provide separate funding to increase staff wages. It is important not to confuse this possible change with the need to increase funding for supports and services. Funding to increase the wages of existing staff and funding to provide sufficient supports and services are two entirely different matters. Funding for staff wages may increase but with the reduction in funding for services there will be less staff, although better paid, to provide support to individuals with developmental disabilities.

A minimum increase of 4% (about \$20 million) and ideally 6% (about \$30 million) is required to ensure adults with developmental disabilities and their families have access to the supports they require. In the context of Alberta's economy this is a small amount of funding.

In November 2005, The Hon. Shirley McLellan, Minister of Finance, reported that the Alberta surplus for 2005-06 is estimated to be \$8.7 billion. Many financial analysts believe it may be higher than this. To ensure

adults with developmental disabilities have the supports and services they need would require only 0.2 % of the projected surplus.

Issues

While Alberta just celebrated its Centennial, families who have sons and daughters with developmental disabilities enter this coming year under an atmosphere of fear and apprehension. Given Alberta's economic status, it is unconscionable that individuals with developmental disabilities and their families may be denied access to needed supports or threatened with reductions in required services.

While the Government publicly and commendably increased AISH for those who need income support, it appears to have failed to advise families or the Alberta public that the supports and services individuals with developmental disabilities need to live in the community would be denied or reduced subsequently. It is as if the government is saying because we helped you in one area of your life we can create hardship in another part of your life. Or because we helped with money for food or rent we can make it harder for people to live by reducing their supports.

It is critical to remind your MLA and the Premier that no individual or family benefits monetarily from the funding for supports and services – this funding goes to pay for support staff and services; it does not go into the pockets of individuals and families. Many families and individuals with developmental disabilities already contribute whatever they can to help with the costs of services and supports. This can be a hardship for many adults with developmental disabilities given their limited incomes.

It is patently unfair to require families and individuals with developmental disabilities to go without supports or have services reduced when Alberta government decisions play a central role in PDD's current fiscal dilemma. For example, PDD is restricted from fully reallocating funds from government operated services, while families and individuals with developmental disabilities who rely on community services, which typically cost less, are asked to cooperate in the denial or reduction of supports to their adult children with developmental disabilities. The government rightly increased the minimum wage but this has now added to an increase in costs for supports and services. No one advised individuals and families they would have to pay for this increase, from which they do not directly benefit, by reducing supports and increasing their vulnerability. Somehow the Government can find the funds for wage increases for government employees yet it cannot find the funds to support people with developmental disabilities.

No one doubts there may be ways to improve the efficiency and/or effectiveness of the services PDD funds. However, simply reducing funding only punishes individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Families are committed to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the supports and services they receive but this requires a partnership families can rely upon and trust.

As with many Albertans, the families of individuals with developmental disabilities are aging. One of the most recurrent and persistent worries of every parent of a child with developmental disabilities is – What will happen to my child when I am no longer here? The Alberta government is now contributing to every parent's worst nightmare. The government must lift this threat immediately.

The additional funds required to ensure every Albertan with developmental disabilities and their families have access to the supports needed to live a good life in community constitute a miniscule portion of the province's financial assets. Families do everything in their power, to support their children with developmental disabilities to live in the community; to be valued and contributing members of society. At the very least the Alberta government should stand by families and share in this commitment.

WHAT YOU CAN DO!

The time to act is NOW – the budget will be announced shortly.

The funding cuts will affect all individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. Families with young children must join families with older sons and daughters to ensure their voices are heard. The immediate and future well being of individuals with developmental disabilities is being threatened by this government decision.

Immediately contact your MLA – in person, by phone, letter (fax) or email.

Contact information for all Alberta MLA's is attached. This information can also be found at <http://www.assembly.ab.ca/> Click on 'Members of the Legislative Assembly'. You can also find out who your MLA is from this website or contact AACL.

- ❖ Arrange a meeting with your MLA at your home or his/her office.
- ❖ Arrange to have other families or friends join you or phone/write their MLA.
- ❖ Explain how the supports or services you now receive are essential to your son or daughter's well being.
- ❖ If you have experienced any reduction in services or supports or not been provided with needed supports explain the impact of these unwarranted actions on your family.
- ❖ Ask your government MLA to explain how she or he can justify reducing supports and services to adults with developmental disabilities and their families, particularly given Alberta's economy.
- ❖ A personally written letter has far more impact than a form letter.
- ❖ Consider organizing a community meeting of families in your area to share information with one another and possible actions.
- ❖ Write a letter to the Premier and copy your MLA, telling him how a reduction in supports or services will affect your family member. You can also call the Premier's office.
- ❖ Write to your local newspaper to let your community know how the government is planning to place adults with developmental disabilities in harm's way. Explain how community support and services make the difference between a life with promise and a life without.

You may contact AACL for any needed information or to address any questions you may have. We would be more than pleased to assist with arranging a meeting with your MLA or in other ways assisting you in communicating with your MLA.

Please let us know if you have contacted your MLA and what the response was to your concerns. You can contact AACL via our toll free telephone number, fax or email.

AACL contact information:

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