



‘CALL TO ACTION’ UPDATE

PLANS FOR FUNDING CUTS TO INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR FAMILIES ACTIVELY CONTINUES

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Thanks to your quick and responsive efforts, AAAL’s *Call to Action* is having a significant impact but we have not yet turned the corner. Many MLA’s have commented on the number of calls and inquiries they have received from families and concerned Albertans. And some media attention has been generated. These efforts need to continue and expand. We would like to thank you as well for keeping us informed of your efforts and sharing with us the responses of some of the MLA’s. Our campaign to lift the government’s threat to the lives of people with developmental disabilities and their families will enter a new phase over the next few weeks.

Given no new decision from government, PDD is actively continuing to develop plans, which it will implement shortly, to reduce funding to individuals, families and services. Nevertheless, there is still an opportunity to reverse this direction. Government has not made a final decision and will not do so until the budget is approved during the Spring Legislative Session, which begins February 22, 2006.

In some PDD regions (e.g., Northwest and South) they have already begun to implement reductions in funding and supports to address their projected deficits for this fiscal year. Most regions have begun to hold or will shortly be holding, meetings with families, individuals and service providers to discuss how to manage the required reduction in funding, if additional government funding is not forthcoming.

Some of you have had responses from government MLA's and Ministers, which state that no cuts are planned for PDD, others have suggested AACL's information is not accurate and yet others have wondered where the information comes from. If you received any such feedback from your government MLA, we strongly urge you to re-contact them and advise them of the following:

- 1) AACL's information comes from Alberta government sources
- 2) Our information has been confirmed as accurate by government sources and not a single point has been challenged or contested
- 3) Government MLA's have not been given accurate information, given that some regions have already implemented reductions in funding and supports and all regions are actively engaged in planning cuts in funding and supports. The proposed strategies for reducing funding are many, including large across-the-board cuts
- 4) PDD is a part of the Alberta government and it is PDD that is communicating to families and services providers that cuts are required given the budget information they have been provided
- 5) The Honourable Yvonne Fritz, Minister, Seniors and Community Supports has asked for adequate funding but as her request has not yet been accepted by the Alberta Treasury Board or the Alberta government, PDD continues to actively plan for large scale reductions in funding and has every intention of implementing those plans
- 6) As some MLA's believe no cuts are intended why do they not take the necessary action and have the Minister call a public halt to PDD's planned cuts

If you believe your government MLA is not aware of the above you may want to contact them as well.

Please note that the expression "no planned cuts" can be easily misinterpreted. The government can claim it is not cutting funding to individuals and families as it is actually increasing PDD funding. This is not a lie but it is also not the truth. The fact is the current estimated increase in PDD funding of up to 2% will directly result in PDD having to substantially reduce funding and services. In effect, if the government provides this insufficient increase in funding, PDD is required to reduce its expenditures in order to balance its budget. As PDD is part of the Alberta government and as PDD employees are government staff, it is the Alberta government that is responsible for placing individuals and families in harm's way. No government MLA should be allowed to claim that they are not responsible for the reduction in funding to individuals and families or unaware of the effects of the current direction of their government. And certainly they are responsible for whether or not the government makes the right decision – it is fair to ask if you can count on them in caucus and in the Legislature to support adequate funding for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

If the government is not satisfied with PDD's operations and expenditures, then it should hold itself and those it appoints to govern and manage PDD accountable rather than blaming and threatening individuals and families. For example, the Alberta government through PDD, continues to operate institutional and facility based services, which consume approximately two to four times the amount of money with far less benefit than what is spent on average per person living in the community.

In the interim, until the government's budget is finally determined, PDD will seek the cooperation of individuals, families and service providers in determining how funding and services should be reduced and limited. AACL remains committed to working in partnership with PDD,

service providers and community partners to enable individuals with developmental disabilities to be fully included in community life. To the end we can improve opportunities for an inclusive life, we will cooperate with PDD in making changes that further this outcome while reducing any unnecessary costs. In turn we expect PDD to make substantial adjustments to its direct services and costs. However, we will not participate in any actions or decisions that place people with developmental disabilities or their families in jeopardy.

We will shortly be entering the next phase of our advocacy campaign, which will target the government, public and media when the Legislature begins its fall sitting in a few weeks. During this time we would encourage you to continue to have as many people contact their MLA's as possible and ideally, arrange a time for them to meet with you, your family, relatives, friends and other families.

If you have any questions or need any additional effort, please do not hesitate to contact us.