

Bill 77 Written Submission
To the Standing Committee on Social Policy
From The Retired Teachers of Ontario, District 39, Peel

We are an organization of 2,673 retired teachers (District 39) in Peel Region.

Our organization is advocating on behalf of seniors – aging parents who find themselves in great stress without sufficient support for residential and respite services for their adult children with developmental disabilities. As our members age, they are becoming physically and mentally drained as they try to cope, without adequate support, with the daily physical demands and responsibilities of care giving for their adult children with developmental disabilities. Some have given up submitting requests for a community residential home, as it appears that waiting lists have almost become meaningless as all the spaces go directly to those in crisis situations – that is, to those whose parents have recently died.

We are also advocating on behalf of our former students who are now post 21 years-of-age, and in desperate need of quality day programs for continued learning and development.

We, as former educators, have been designing curricula and working for years to assist and prepare these students for supported or independent community living. We are dismayed that these young adults who have been part of an inclusive school system, partaking in meaningful educational programs, challenging activities and supported work experience, are now for the most part sitting at home. Our members tell us that they have a very difficult time explaining to their young adult children with developmental disabilities why the school bus no longer picks them up. Their adult children are anxious to continue their involvement and inclusion in daily community and lifelong learning programs. We acknowledge the positive intent of the Passport Funding initiative, but we understand that "90% of the applications that were submitted were refused or turned down." (Debates, Hansard 2008-05-26)

With Respect to Bill 77

1. We strongly believe that a milestone piece of legislation like this should include a preamble that clearly identifies the rights of Ontario citizens with developmental disabilities. Through the *Education Act* these young people were **entitled** to programs and services without prioritization and waiting lists. We wonder why this entitlement no longer exists after age 21 when the individual's disability continues.
2. We are concerned that enshrining the terms "prioritization" and "waiting lists" within the legislation will only perpetuate more of the same lack of service and always be available as an excuse for no provision of supports due to lack of funding. These terms should not be part of any legislation that has at its base a primary goal of "the full inclusion of Ontarians with a development disability in

all aspects of society." (*Consultations Regarding the Transformation of Developmental Services of 2006*)

3. We would like to see functional literacy and continuing education courses be added to the list of services in Bill 77 so that those young adults who have the potential may continue their lifelong learning.
4. A person-directed plan developed with the support of a facilitator should be the main focal point for any service profile, and should be a part of this Bill. We are fearful that the Application Centers may become over-focused on the use of assessments for **exclusion** of service as opposed to being supportive to the development of person-directed planning.
5. We urge the Ministry of Community and Social Services to co-operate with the Ministry of Education. The schools have a wealth of assessment information regarding those students who are leaving at age 21. Transition plans are already required by the Education Act. Sharing these assessments and plans will avoid further duplication of paper and time, and, thus, unnecessary use of tax-payers' dollars.

We applaud the Liberal government for the directions and recommendations set forth in the *Consultations Regarding the Transformation of Developmental Services of 2006* and for the promise that direct funding holds for families of adult children with developmental disabilities. On the other hand, we wonder how long it will take before these recommendations become a reality. As a province we must act **now**. According to *the Provincial Network on Developmental Services* there are 13,400 Ontarians waiting for residential services, day supports and services, including respite services. This is inexcusable. How did the province ever let this get out of control? Institutions have been closing over the past 30 years. Schools have been including students with developmental disabilities since 1982. Was there no one in the planning department to project and budget for future community services? Did no government care enough to commit the funds to continue the required services that a community-based inclusion philosophy requires? Where, in the Ontario government, are the advocates for this vulnerable population? This gap in service must be closed. We can all do better than this. When we are truly committed to ensuring the rights of those with disabilities, we will always find creative ways to make it happen.

As a province we must move forward to **guarantee the rights** of all citizens especially those who are most vulnerable. When we make the community a better place for those with special needs, we enrich all our lives. No family is ever exempt from disability.

Submitted by:

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