

## **OPS Submission re: Opportunities and Action**

**August 2006**  
**Ontario Public Service Employees Union**



Please accept this paper as the response for the Ontario Public Service employees who currently provide service to 1,000 developmentally disabled citizens in Ontario.

We are not in a position to debate the philosophy of the closure of the three remaining facilities but we are very concerned for the citizens of this province who are of this demographic group.

The current information available indicates that the current community based services are already in a crisis situation and that the existing facilities could help alleviate some of the burden and fill some voids. When you factor in the dramatic increase in the aging population of people with developmental disabilities, resulting in a more intensive need for specialized services, we believe that a more chronic situation is looming.

The document resembles the Centres of Excellence, a proposal drawn up by the leadership and front-line workers in the facilities and presented to the minister in March 2005. We have yet to get a response from the ministry.

These Centres of Excellence would be able to provide services to a wider client base if the transformation into Centres of Excellence was completed. Its first role would be to act as a single point of access to the developmental service sector services within their geographic regions.

These Centres already provide the same services that the community has identified as lacking for this demographic group. The services should be opened to all service providers within their geographic regions. Not only is there room for expansion, if necessary, but the existing space is also designed for assessing and providing the services the community is currently lacking. This would enable people to access services specialized to their needs in their own backyard, not have to search for them. Many service

providers are transfer-payment agencies and, as such, the ministry is ultimately responsible for the services offered to these citizens.

The needs assessments can be done at the existing centres by trained professionals already well versed in the special needs population and using standardized assessment tools, something that many general practitioners lack, enabling these people to have more timely access to services. The idea of having a central assessment and planning centre would provide families the confidence to participate without feeling the levels of anxiety that normally accompany the unknown. This ensures families are more involved with the planning for, and providing of, support and care that individuals with developmental disabilities require.

These Centres can also continue to act as training facilities for Community College and University programs in a variety of specialized fields and could be expanded to include community based agencies and families, thus producing a larger pool of qualified trained professionals.

The services that many of these individuals need are of a specialized nature and are not currently available in many communities. One such service that is not meeting the current need is the availability of respite care. The families of these individuals need to be supported and provided with a much-needed rest, and knowing that their loved one is being cared for in a safe, secure environment with trained personnel, can only aid in their recharging. The individuals will also have the opportunity to meet new friends and experience some new activities.

This time could also be used to update any assessments and provide specialized medical care, such as dental work. Our centres have extensive specialized medical, dental and therapeutic services already in place. Other medical and therapeutic services offered include, but not limited to: physiotherapy, pharmacy, foot clinic,

music therapy, therapeutic wheelchair accessible pool, immunization program, psychology department and recreational programs like horse backing riding, camp and bowling.

A regional hub model, as laid out in the Centres of Excellence, would ensure a strong, accountable and regulated system that would facilitate the transformation of developmental services in Ontario.