

NDP WORRIED ABOUT REGIONAL CENTRE CLOSINGS

QUEEN'S PARK - NDP MPP Gilles Bisson says the McGuinty government's decision to close regional centres for Ontarians with developmental disabilities is all about cutting funding and could vulnerable people at risk.

"The community support these residents will need simply doesn't exist," Bisson said. "Group homes are closing not expanding."

Ontario is closing three institutions that house and care for developmentally disabled adults by 2009. This decision will see 1,000 residents moved out of the facilities and into the community and will mean the loss of 2,200 jobs in Chatham, Smiths Falls and Orillia.

The McGuinty government claims the 1,000 residents can be moved into communities. But Bisson said he's worried, noting Community Living has been suffering from cutbacks recently. For example, the Cochrane Temiskaming Resource Centre (CTRC) is planning to close two group homes for the developmentally disabled in the Timmins area while 19 people are on the waiting list.

"The McGuinty government is increasing the need for community resources while they cut them," Bisson said. "The Liberals are saying 'trust us' when no one trusts them anymore."

Bisson urged the McGuinty government to consider proposals advanced by workers at the Regional Centres concerning transforming the centres.

- 30 -

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