

Province needs to do more for developmentally-disabled

Regarding Sian Leyshon-Doughty's letter "Wanted: Inclusion of developmentally-disabled in Caledon" (Oct. 24):

As executive director of Brampton Caledon Community Living, as well as the father of a young adult with a disability, I too share many of the concerns raised by the letter writer.

Over the past year, a number of media outlets, including CTV, Toronto Star, Globe and Mail and CBC featured heart-wrenching stories of loving, caring families who could no longer care for their disabled family member and families languishing on ever-growing waiting lists for services that have been chronically underfunded for decades.

In November 2012, against the backdrop of these stories and in response to hundreds of complaints from families across the province about the lack of services, Provincial Ombudsman of Ontario Andre Morin launched an investigation into developmental services.

"We have heard heart-wrenching stories from aging or ill parents whose adult sons and daughters need constant care that can't be provided at home but they have nowhere to turn," Morin said. "Some of these caregivers are on the brink of emotional and physical breakdown . . . What is particularly troubling is that our complaints have only gone up, despite new legislation and changes made by the Ministry in recent years."

Yet, despite widespread media coverage, alarms being raised at the Ombudsman's Office and warnings about the toll years of chronic underfunding have taken on families and the sector, Ontarians with a developmental disability and their families are losing hope.

Those of us who are concerned with the plight of vulnerable Ontarians with a disability and their families must make our provincial representatives understand that their well-being is as much a priority with them as health and education sectors that resonate with the electorate and, not coincidentally, with elected representatives.

In September 2012, the provincial legislature adopted a resolution presented by Progressive Conservative MPP Christine Elliott to strike a select committee of the Legislature. The committee will be charged with developing a strategy for addressing the issues facing people who have an intellectual disability and their families. MPP Sylvia Jones, who has worked diligently to raise awareness about the challenges confronting community living associations and individuals with a disability and their families, is sitting on this committee.

We encourage families to make their concerns and struggles known to the Select Committee. In the meantime, we offer any assistance we can to the Caledon Area Families for Inclusion.

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Executive Director,

Brampton Caledon Community Living