

Sylvia Jones MPP ? Select Committee on Developmental Services on hold at Queen's Park

Many individuals with developmental delays will have to wait to find out when Premier Kathleen Wynne will decide to convene a select committee to study a comprehensive services strategy and to make recommendations for improvements.

Premier Wynne allowed the Ontario Legislative to recess for summer break without forming the committee.

When I sat on the Select Committee for Mental Health and Addictions, we used the Legislative recess as an opportunity to travel across Ontario to conduct hearings and meet with individuals in their community. The work that was completed by the all-party committee during the summer was extensive, very productive and extremely beneficial.

The Liberal government, after agreeing with the Progressive Conservative motion that called for a select committee, have dragged their feet on assembling it. This was the second time a committee to study a comprehensive developmental services strategy has fallen victim to Liberal inaction. The first time the committee was shelved was last fall, when the Liberal government prorogued the Legislature for four months. I am very disappointed to see Premier Wynne's continued inaction; she has the ability to put the committee to work during the summer, but has chosen not to. Individuals with developmental delays and families with children needing service improvements should not have to wait any longer to have their voices heard.

The call for a committee was re-introduced in April in a motion by my colleague Christine Elliott, MPP for Whitby-Oshawa. She identified the urgent need for a comprehensive developmental services strategy to address the needs of children, youth and adults in Ontario with an intellectual disability or who are dually diagnosed with an intellectual disability and a mental illness.

Two months have passed since the motion and the Liberals continue to ignore the urgency that has already been identified, and that the committee members could be trying to resolve. This means that individuals with developmental delays and their families are being forced to wait.

It is frustrating for me to have to tell a family, anxious to be heard by the committee, that they, once again, have been postponed. Individuals with disabilities and those who care for them have had their patience tested time and again by provincial services and programs that have waiting lists.

I had an opportunity to highlight the problems with wait-times for services in a statement I made in May in the Legislature regarding the transition between the Special Services and Home (SSAH) and the Passport program. Funding changes to the program, and moving from one program to the next upon an individual's 18th birthday result in children being cut off from funding or becoming ineligible for continued services because of wait-lists.

Instead of having a reason to celebrate, families who have children with developmental delays are now facing their child's 18th birthday with trepidation, because it means services they are receiving no longer exist and they are not told when they can expect services to resume.

There are many programs and services Ontarians have to wait for ? the start of a committee that can begin solving problems shouldn't be one of them

