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MEDIA RELEASE

MARCH 24, 2011

Over 400 adults in Windsor-Essex County on waitlist for supports and services Meet the needs of “our most vulnerable” in budget

WINDSOR, Ont. - An infusion of new funding for developmental services in next week’s Ontario budget is needed to ensure existing programs, services and supports are stabilized and the needs of families on waitlists are addressed, said Windsor-Essex County advocates – including families, agencies and direct support workers – for quality local supports for people with a developmental disability at a media conference today.

For several years now, the province has asked agencies that support individuals with a developmental disability and their families and caregivers to do more with little new funding investment in the sector. In 2008/09, the province required that supports and services delivered by the sector be increased without providing any new funding.

“This,” said, Lisa Raffoul, a local advocate for quality services, “can’t continue. The capacity of agencies to provide quality supports without any new investment is tapped out. Spreading already thin funding resources to address the unmet needs of those on waitlists will mean a significant reduction in the quality and supports provided, and program and job cuts. The government has taken advantage of the goodwill of families for far too long.”

Across the province, the waitlist for residential supports has risen to 12,000. Currently, 16,000 people with a developmental disability receive residential supports province-wide. In Windsor and Essex County, there are currently over 400 adults on a waitlist for supports. Of those, over 100 have no support at all. That’s a 41 per cent increase from 2005 when 284 adults were on a similar waitlist.

“What makes the need so urgent for new investment to stabilize existing services and programs, and to increase access to supports for those on waitlists, is that many of the primary caregivers for those needing supports are well over 65 years old. We have a crisis in care. Parents and family members are at the age when they can no longer care for their loved one at home,” said Bruce Awad, a parent of a 35 year old daughter receiving supports through Community Living Essex County.

Along with Community Living Windsor and Community Living Essex County executive directors, Xavier Noordermeer and Nancy Wallace-Gero, and direct support workers Charlotte O’Neil and Srila Perine, Awad and Raffoul urged Windsor MPP and Ontario finance minister Dwight Duncan to put the needs of the “most vulnerable” – those with a developmental disability first and include substantial new investment in next Tuesday’s provincial budget for the sector.

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