



Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
Believing, Achieving, Serving

January 14, 2013

Honourable John Milloy, Minister
Ministry of Community and Social Services,
6th Floor, Hepburn Block,
80 Grosvenor St,
Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1E9

Dear Minister Milloy:

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board Special Education Advisory Committee (S.E.A.C.) is deeply concerned about the impact of some decisions in the "Transformation" agenda which will negatively impact our school board, and more importantly, the many families with developmentally disabled children who already receive adult services, or who are close to transition age.

There are four significant areas where regressive new policies are causing hardship to families who are already struggling to cope with the care of a disabled adult child, with inadequate funding supports:

1 Termination of Special Services At Home (S.S.A.H.)

We would like to appeal to your Ministry to re-consider the decision to terminate S.S.A.H. for individuals who have an intellectual disability when they reach the age of eighteen. As of April 2013, students who turn 18 will lose their S.S.A.H. dollars. They will have no funding until they have:

- left school at 21,
- applied and been found eligible for the Developmental Services Ontario (D.S.O.)
- had the Adult Developmental Services and Support (A.D.S.S.)/Supports Intensity Scale (S.I.S.) scales administered and their names placed on the Passport waiting list and
- remained on that list for many years.

With the current numbers of individuals waiting for Passport being in excess of 4,000, it is quite conceivable that young people will go without funding for community participation, - and their families without respite, - until the individual is in their mid to late 20's. This is not acceptable.

2 Barriers in Applying to the Developmental Services Ontario (D.S.O.)

Although individuals may have: used Developmental Services through childhood; a medically documented developmental disability; been assessed in the school system and deemed intellectually challenged; been found eligible for "Contact"; met the medical criteria of developmental disability to receive S.S.A.H.; applied to and qualified for Ontario Disability Support Pension (O.D.S.P.); they are required to "prove eligibility" again for adult services through the D.S.O.

The only acceptable documentation for determining eligibility for the D.S.O. is a psychological assessment. It seems to be assumed that psychological assessments are readily available through the school system. This is not the case. School boards assess to determine educational needs not to meet the D.S.O. requirements. The cost of private psychological assessment is prohibitive for most families. **We ask your Ministry to review and consider repealing this specific requirement for those who already have extensive medical documentation of developmental disability, or alternately to make funding (of approximately \$2000) available, so that families can afford the costs of private assessments. It is also important to observe that the process of assessment for administrative purposes can be disrespectful to and a burden on the individual.**

3 Waiting Lists After School

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board offers “work experience”, volunteering, and community participation for transition age students, to build bridges to the community and to a meaningful adult life. Individuals are accompanied by an educational assistant to make this possible. The purpose is many-fold, including increasing independence and self-reliance, and developing relationships. The schools have the expectation of continuity after school years, with a support worker replacing school staff. Without Passport/S.S.A.H. funding, community participation abruptly ends, unless one parent leaves their job to become their child’s support worker.

The school boards are doing their part, giving students opportunities to leave school with a readiness to participate in community life. **The Ministry needs to find the funding necessary to provide S.S.A.H. from age 18 to school leaving and then Passport dollars, so that there is no break in the continuity.** The future of these young people is at stake. Expecting them to languish on waiting lists for years is unfair to them and their families; it devalues their lives, and deprives our communities of their contributions.

The suggestion by your ministry that individuals use their O.D.S.P. to pay for community participation supports is not reasonable. This income support is meant for housing, food, and basic personal expenses. The yearly amount (\$12,768) is well below the poverty level (\$18,582).

4 Inadequate Funding For Those With Severe Disabilities

Finally, we would like to know how your Ministry will support those families who have a son or daughter with needs that are greater than those who fit within the “funding bands” of the Passport programme. Before the “Transformation” changes, parents who chose to have their child with high needs live at home and in the community, could receive \$10,000 through S.S.A.H., and up to \$25,000 through Passport. This amount was not close to covering daytime support needs. There was still the expectation that aging parents give many hours per week of caregiving and supervision. Some families have been placed under intolerable physical, emotional, and financial stress, but In spite of that, are committed to their child having a life outside of institutions.

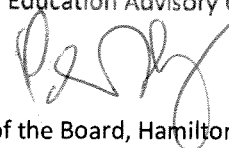
With merging of S.S.A.H. into Passport, the maximum funding has been reduced from \$35,000 to \$25,000 for day supports. This amounts to a little over \$2,000 per month. Individuals who are dependent for all care needs may require 16 hours of daily support. For many families the amount of funding required for them to have a “normal” life, and for the disabled member to have choices, opportunities, and quality of life, would be closer to \$50,000. **Parents who will not be able to provide for their child with high needs on \$25,000 per year, need to hear from your Ministry immediately about what provisions will be made for them. Will funding bands be broadened in all 4 categories to allow a maximum of \$50,000 for those with high needs?**

Family lives are further stressed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services offering no availability of accommodation support dollars when parents make a choice for their child to live at home and in the community. Housing/accommodation options are not available to families, but only to agencies. **Is this an issue the Ministry will address in the near future?**

We feel these issues are substantive and urgent and appreciate your response to our concerns.

Respectfully,


Dr. W. Mahoney,
Chair, Special Education Advisory Council (S.E.A.C.)


Mr. P. J. Daly,
Chairperson of the Board, Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
cc: Hon. Laurel Broten, Minister of Education
Andre Marin, Ontario Ombudsman,

90 Mulberry Street, P.O. Box 2012, Hamilton, Ontario L8N 3R9
Tel. 905 525-2930 Fax 905 525-1724 www.hwcdsb.ca