

Changing Times

Lo-Se-Ca Foundation Newsletter

Summer 2013

Three Rallies Later Cont.

The province has begun evaluations using the new assessment tool without consultation with service providers and families. The service providers have cited several concerns over the model, including clients being interviewed one-on-one without family members or support workers present, no information on reassessment when needs change as clients age and the discrepancy in how people were categorized before and how they are categorized now. The differences some describe as “night and day.”

“There seems to be something really wrong when (the new assessments) are coming back so far apart from that initial analysis. In some cases it’s a third of the funding (PDD) had approved earlier,” said Fujishige, adding he also sees a conflict with the province being both the assessor and the funder, instead of having a third party perform the evaluations.

Aside from the new assessment tool, service providers have also expressed their concerns for the safety and well-being of their clients if the funding cuts go through. They insist the money could be trimmed elsewhere. “How do you cut from something you’ve already stretched so thin?” asked Renaud.

In a 2010 report compiled by consultants KPMG, a look at the PDD program identified inefficiencies in the system including duplication of services and high administrative costs. For every \$100 spent on direct supports to individuals, PDD spent an additional \$31 on administration. This compares to developmental disability programs in British Columbia, Massachusetts and Western Australia where administration costs ranged from \$6 to \$20.

Off the top of the 2013-14 PDD budget for the Edmonton region, \$26 million is slated for agency administration, \$7.5 million for PDD administration and \$150,000 for PDD governance. \$13 million is allocated for agency employee wages. Going forward, Oberle insists that people who need services will get them and \$42 million is not a final figure.

“They just pushed it so far this time, there was just no choice, (they’ve put) people at risk for safety,” said Fujishige, referring to the public demonstrations that have erupted. “Initially we all thought that just pointing (the danger) out would be enough for them to back off.”

Renaud and Fujishige said they have no plans to cut more than \$60,000 each, or 20 full-time staff from their respective organizations, until they receive something in writing from the province. “Certainly we’re willing to look at change if it makes sense, but we won’t be forced to make a change that is to the detriment of our people,” commented Fujishige. “Well, not without a fight.”



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Three Rallies Later, the Efforts Continue.

Amy crofts - St. Albert Gazette

The directors of two St. Albert agencies that serve Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) say they are in limbo.

Marie Renaud of the Lo-Se-Ca Foundation and Paul Fujishige of Transitions attended a recent meeting between Edmonton service providers and the provincial government, regarding \$42 million in funding cuts from community access programs. The service providers walked out feeling even more uncertain than when they walked in. “The phrase that got me the most was ‘Listen, you need to trust us,’ ” said Renaud. “Well, you need to earn that trust.”

Announced in April, a “redistribution” of funds in the provincial PDD budget was originally slated for July 1. About \$42 million would be taken from community access, programs for employment and volunteer placements, life skills and leisure classes and transportation to and from medical appointments.

Fourty-five million dollars would be allocated towards agency staff to top up wages and benefits. The average wage for a support worker in the industry is \$15 per hour.

During the meeting, PDD officials stated they would “press pause” on the implementation deadline until September or October.

Associate Minister of Services for Persons with Disabilities Frank Oberle has pointed to the need for changes in order to fix a broken system. “We are providing an alarming range of services, from one individual that receives \$114 per year in supports to one who receives just under \$300,000 per year in supports,” he said. “People who need services have to get services, but we cannot provide services beyond need.”

Provincial PDD changes also include a new support need level delivery model called the supports intensity scale, whereby funding would be aligned with the individual’s assessed needs.

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Seniors Day Program Coordinator, Kristi Hall-Busque

Frank Oberle stated in Edson, June 19th, that cuts to PDD services will not happen right away; I am grateful for this comment. However, it does not address the questions that families and service providers have been asking – are we going to be a part of the decision and planning processes from this point on? I know personally, I would like to know that my opinion, my service and my right to make choices as a parent are respected by our government.

Not right away means to me: “still sometime soon”.

What the government does not see is how organizations and agencies are already accessing their community and providing appropriate services. Is there room for change? Absolutely. Always. But there needs to be a focus on including the people who know the individuals and clients best; a three hour assessment (I know, I know... it only counts for twenty percent) does not adequately address the support needs of individuals who would be categorized moderate or higher.

Four months ago, we (Lo-Se-Ca) opened a Seniors Day Program to address the increasing support that individuals who are aging require in terms of declining mental and physical health. It has been an eye-opening experience in a variety of ways. People who were not interested in participating or did not thrive in large group settings are now active, visibly more engaged with their peers, staff, and community; they appear more positive and happy overall. A smaller staffing ratio has enabled us to provide more adequate support; individuals with disabilities are living longer, healthier lives but there comes a point where the supports in place need to become more direct to ensure that we are able to address concerns effectively. Changing these staff ratios would be failing to provide service in their best interest. While I have watched the individuals in this program excel, I have also had the opportunity to pay closer attention to them and have noticed the miscues, forgetfulness, and aggressive behaviors increase (commonly associated with Dementia). I fear that without our program, they will return to a larger staffing ratio and unquestionably be lost in the crowd; not due to negligence but simply due to not having the time or chance to support them as closely as we do now.

My question is – how is the government going to ensure that this does not happen? With the current miscommunication and apparent dysfunction of PDD, I admit that I remain concerned and fearful.



Program Manager, Raymond Nkorerimana

Why do politicians say “your vote matters”? When it comes to budget cuts regarding the negative impacts to people with disabilities, their families, and staff who support these individuals, the politicians don’t ask the voters their opinions or their votes. What is this Government doing? Just breaking promises. People you need to get your voice out.



Acting Human Resources Manager, Jackie Pearson

I, along with many of my peers, am very concerned about the plans to make such drastic budget cuts to service providers and to Albertans with Disabilities receiving PDD funded supports. In short, I feel it is just not realistic and manageable for service providers to work within these parameters.

From my knowledge and understanding, I feel that these cuts would be detrimental to individuals receiving PDD funded supports. This will result in their well being and safety being compromised. Many of these individuals rely on their day supports for a reason and taking those away from them is just not an option. What is concerning to me is the fact that some of our people

have been rated through assessments as low on their “supports need level.” If you were to meet these individuals, you would realize that a large portion of them do have special needs and require staff support and assistance. Beyond that fact, there is a large percentage of individuals who have not yet been rated. Up to date and factual information should be taken into consideration when assessment tools are used.

I completely agree with the approach that employability can and should be a viable option for some individuals with disabilities. The agency that I work for does in fact have an employment option (either paid or volunteer) and from my personal experience I know that there have been some great matches between our individuals and employers. That said, it is a tough thing to actually find employers who are willing to hire on some of our people. Beyond that, they require extensive training and support in order to learn the job duties, and maintain that employment as independently as possible. Where is the budget for this proposed “solution?” From what I have heard in the news and read in the papers, there has only been a small percentage allocated towards employability whereas a dramatically larger portion has been removed from the Community Access funding.

I urgently call upon the Alberta Government to allocate sufficient funds for existing PDD supports. If the plan is to give Albertans with disabilities an increased option of employment, then these budget changes must be made comparatively between the Community Access funding and Employment Options.



Sister of Individual attending Discoveries Day Program,

I’m a 20-year-old St. Albert girl. I attend university and have a part-time job as well. Unfortunately, my 24-year-old sister does not have those privileges. She has Down syndrome and attends an amazing program in the St. Albert area for adults with disabilities called LoSeCa. The LoSeCa Foundation supports them with a fully stocked thrift store on top of local fundraising.

This is the largest cut to people with disabilities in the history of the Alberta government, more of a slash if you ask me. So you may think this cut seems huge but eventually evens itself out. LoSeCa, our local day program, which supports group homes from North Edmonton and St. Albert, is facing a cut of \$597,000 dollars to their program. For LoSeCa, this is a 12 per cent budget cut, which could lead to the closing up shop of my older sister’s program. Personally, I cannot understand why we are cutting funds to our most vulnerable population who need help the most.

Why the cuts you ask? The Redford government claims that the “low-risk” individuals do not even need these services and are capable of being employed full time, therefore, saving them buckets of money. My sister, although as amazing and unique as she is, is fairly low functioning. She can’t tie her shoes, she has no understanding of currency or time, she cannot write very clearly, and she is extremely hard to understand at the best of times. The assessment deemed my sister employable and very low risk! Keep in mind, the people that are “assessing” my sister have never bothered to meet her, she is simply a slip of paper.

So Alberta, I want you to know from a personal perspective how these cuts are affecting my sister, Alyssa, and my family. I live with my mom, who works full time while I go to school full time. With these cuts, Alyssa may be out of her program completely. If her program succeeds even with the budget cuts, her activities and stimulation will be non-existent.

They are real people, amazing people behind these cuts and they do not need to be pushed back anymore than they already are. They need a voice too and today I need to be my sister’s voice and say that these cuts are unacceptable and downright ridiculous. Please help us make their voice louder.

Thank you to everyone for their support



THE FIGHT IS NOT OVER!

How can you help?

- Write and book appointments with your local MLA
- Write to your local media (television, newspaper)

Let them know these cuts are unacceptable.

*Lo-Se-Ca's
Rafiki Project
wins PDD
Community
Disability
Service Sector
Leadership
Award*

"The awards are used to recognize the actions of individuals, organizations and businesses – that go that extra mile – to promote community inclusion"



STAFF APPRECIATION 2013

Thank you to all ye scurvy mates who attended Staff Appreciation.

Congratulations to Captain Mary Winklemann, CSW of the Year & Captain Sandy Kucher, Team Leader of the year.



Volunteer Appreciation 2013

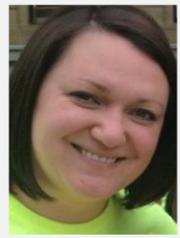
Thank you to all our wonderful volunteers.
You are all greatly appreciated!



*Save The
Date*

*Lo-Se-Ca
Annual
Silent &
Live
Auction*

*Friday,
Nov 1st
2013*



Discoveries Day Program Co-Manager, Stacey Anderson

I have been working at the LoSeCa Foundation since 2005. Since that time I have worked in the residences and I am currently working in the Discoveries Day Program. During that time I have seen the individuals at LoSeCa become more independent in so many ways, finding employment or volunteer positions and accomplish so many of their dreams. This is

possible with the help of the dedicated, selfless staff we have at LoSeCa. Our staff transports our individuals to and from work and teaches them life skills such as cooking and cleaning and helps them build self-esteem and improve communication.

The government has told our agency we need to cut 12 per cent from our budget which is nearly \$600,000.00. That will equal 600 staffing hours a week and 15 full time staff. Without this staff our individuals will not be able to be a valuable part of their community. It will put our individuals with choking concerns, diabetes and severe seizures at risk and not having proper staffing ratios or at times no staffing at all. Now more than ever our individuals need us to help them have a voice and stand up for their rights to have safety, dreams and a community inclusion.



Human Resources Assistant, Rebecca McLeod

I'm disgusted with the Redford's government cuts to disability services. Not only will they affect vulnerable Albertans, they will also threaten the livelihood of their support staff.

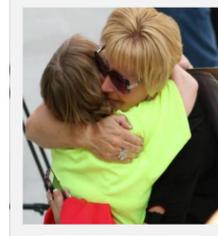
I work in human resources for an agency supporting adults with developmental disabilities and witness firsthand the unconditional dedication staff has for supporting those with special needs.

Disability service workers are grossly underpaid for what they do. They are caretaker, advocate, counselor, chauffeur, teacher and more. They deal with aggressive, complex behaviour, personal care and administration of medication. They work 24-hour, even 48-hour, shifts, and most hold multiple jobs.

It is disgraceful that the staff's hard work and commitment to this field is disregarded as Redford's government implements wholesale changes to a system that employs thousands. Many of our employees are from overseas; their stories of war, genocide and famine are too common. Their sincerity and passion for life after overcoming hardship is moving. The government should be grateful that these men and woman are willing to dedicate themselves to enhancing the lives of others instead of making blatant statements such as "this is not about saving jobs."

During our interview process we ask, "Why do you want to work in this field?" The most common answer: "I want to help those who may not be able to help themselves."

This is something the Redford government knows nothing about.



Guardian, Lori Paniccia

I am writing as I feel the public needs to be aware of what the government's proposed funding cuts will mean to the individuals who require assistance to live full, safe, productive lives. I have a sister who resides in her home in St. Albert. She lives a productive life, with support from the Lo Se Ca Foundation. The impending cuts will have a huge impact on my sister, the people who are employed to assist her, her family, and consequently, the community. These cuts were based on an assessment system. Although she has never been interviewed, my sister has been deemed low risk. She has a life-threatening swallowing condition. If she were left alone and started to choke, there could be catastrophic consequences. We are being told one of the services being cut will include her overnight staffing dollars. For the sake of 1% of the Alberta government's budget, they are willing to compromise the safety, well-being and security of the most vulnerable in society. The depth of the reduction in funding is not manageable and will result in tragic, possibly life-threatening situations.

(The government should rethink these cuts.)



Lo-Se-Ca Individual and Seniors Day Program Attendee, Karen Tansem

My name is Karen Tansem. I have been supported by the Lo-Se-Ca Foundation for over decade. It doesn't make me feel good when I hear about all the cutbacks. I feel that they are wrong.

The cut backs will really hurt my friends and myself in how we are supported in our everyday lives. The government has no idea.

Now we are able to go to concerts, hockey games, meet friends out for supper at restaurants, go grocery shopping, on outings to the park for walks and picnics.

We deserve to do these things. If our staffing is cut we will be limited to the community, and stuck majority of the time in our homes. We will be bored and have nothing to do.

The government isn't doing its job. They are hurting us by keeping us at home. The Government doesn't know what love is. Please stop the cutbacks.

