

Developmental Services in Durham Region: Urgent Need for Action

Durham Region is facing a developmental services (DS) crisis. Statistics show that, as of March 31, 2025, more than 55,000 Ontarians with developmental disabilities were waiting for essential supports, and over 10,000 (19%) of them live in Durham Region. Many families have been waiting 20+ years for assistance, and urgent cases are rising—52 people in Durham Region are currently in crisis, lacking housing, behavioral supports, and case management.

For over 30 years, agencies have been chronically underfunded, forcing them to stretch resources beyond breaking point. While the safety and welfare of people with developmental disabilities remains the top priority, without immediate government investment, agencies will be forced to cut staffing and services, leaving vulnerable people and their families without the care and support they need.

Durham is one of the fastest-growing regions in Ontario, yet funding has not kept pace. Agencies require at least a 3% annual increase just to maintain operations. Without this critical funding, agencies face higher workloads for staff, increased burnout, more turnover, and reduced hours of care—leading to wider social and economic impacts for families and caregivers who will continue to face impossible choices.

Labour Relations and Funding Pressures

The DS sector is also under intense strain due to collective bargaining challenges. Many agencies are operating with expired collective agreements or entering new bargaining cycles. Wage stagnation, inflation, and cost-of-living increases have intensified union demands for sustained wage increases, while agencies lack the financial capacity to absorb negotiated wage settlements because provincial base funding has not kept pace. When agreements are settled without matching funding from the government, agencies must cut programs, reduce staffing, or face financial instability.

Coordinated bargaining across the province raises the likelihood of simultaneous labour disruptions. Without proactive provincial funding, individuals with developmental disabilities will bear the consequences through cancelled or reduced supports, emergency relocations, or gaps in care.

Advocacy

Sector leaders and Durham Region Developmental Service agencies are looking to the government for:

Permanent, sustainable increases to base operating funding to meet wage expectations without reducing services.

A multi-year provincial funding plan that covers collective bargaining outcomes and stabilizes agency budgets.

Recognition that system sustainability, workforce retention, and long wait lists are inseparable from core funding levels.

The Durham Region and Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge Developmental Services Collaborative urge the Ontario government to:

- Increase base funding for developmental service agencies
- Expand housing and crisis supports
- Commit to long-term systemic reforms for equity and inclusion

Everyone deserves to belong. Immediate action is needed to ensure people with developmental disabilities in Durham Region—and across Ontario—have the supports they need to thrive.

The Data

- **Ontario:** 55,000 people wait for essential developmental services; only 35,000 receive support.
- **Durham Region:** Represents 19% of the provincial waitlist, with 10,248 people waiting and just 7,108 receiving supports.
- **Urgent Need:** 52 individuals in Durham are in crisis, requiring housing, behavioral supports, and case management.

Durham Region and Haliburton Kawartha Pine Ridge Developmental Services Collaborative

Community Living Ajax Pickering Whitby

<https://www.cl-apw.org/site/home>

Executive Director, Lisa McNee Baker

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Executive Director, Christine Robinson

Community Living Oshawa/Clarington

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Executive Director, Terri Gray

Community Living Trent Highlands

<https://www.clth.ca/>

Executive Director, Teresa Jordan

Participation House Durham

<https://www.phdurham.com/>

Executive Director, Michelle Brooks

Provincial Advocacy

Joint provincial advocacy campaign partnership between Community Living Ontario and OASIS,
#WaitingToBelong <https://communitylivingontario.ca/waiting-to-belong/>