

Community Living Essex County

Responses

1. Economic Recovery and Growth

Given the current climate of federal and global fiscal restraint, what specific federal measures do you feel are needed for a sustained economic recovery and enhanced economic growth in Canada?

Community Living Essex County, located in southern Ontario, supports people who have an intellectual disability and their families. Community Living exists to assist people who have an intellectual disability to both participate in and contribute to their communities. We support each person to achieve their goals and dreams and to realize their value as citizens in their community. The City of Windsor and Essex County is acknowledged to have been ground zero in the financial down turn – suffering the effect first and for a longer duration than most other regions in Canada. Further, as part of the Developmental Service Sector, fiscal restraint and ensuring value for money has been common place in our sector for decades. The rapidly growing need with even more constrained resources has resulted in many innovative solutions and partnerships. This submission draws on these experiences as the basis for our recommendations.

RDSP Program We applaud the creation of the RDSP program and appreciate the continuing improvements the Federal Government has made since its inception. This program provides a means to help the financial stability of many of our fellow citizens who are disabled. A continuing barrier for people who have an intellectual disability is the omission in recognizing supported decision making. This is a critical component that upon resolution will open the RDSP program for use by a larger segment of the disabled citizens of Canada.

Deinstitutionalization March 11, 2010, was an important day for all Canadians, especially those with disabilities because Canada ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This act demonstrated the values we hold dear and provided a critical step toward a completely inclusive society where the rights of all are respected. Towards this end the Federal Government is encouraged to promote the deinstitutionalization of people who have an intellectual disability throughout Canada. Ontario successfully completed this process with the remaining three institutions closed by the end of March, 2009. This process does not increase costs and is a critical component in honouring our commitment to the rights of persons with disabilities. A basic expectation for all Canadians is the right to live in and participate in your community.

Poverty The income source for the vast majority of people with disabilities in Ontario is the Ontario Disability Support Program, which does not meet their day-to-day needs, let alone the specialized services many require. Poverty is a significant problem in our country, not just in Ontario. Canada is held in high regard throughout the world, and should be a leader in the elimination of poverty. Federal leadership is needed. The rich/poor gap is increasing, yet in other developed countries this is not the case. People with disabilities are double marginalized and many do not have a voice to advocate for change. Considering our economic house is in order, Canada can and must do better to eradicate poverty. It will bring both economic and societal benefits and result to increased opportunities for people who have an intellectual disability.

2. Job Creation

As Canadian companies face pressures resulting from such factors as uncertainty about the U.S. economic recovery, a sovereign debt crisis in Europe, and competition from a number of developed and developing countries, what specific federal actions do you believe should be taken to promote job creation in Canada, including that which occurs as a result of enhanced internal and international trade?

Our agency specializes in supports and services for people who have an intellectual disability, therefore our recommendation is limited to requesting that any and all job creation programs include provisions to ensure the participation of people who have disabilities.

3. Demographic Change

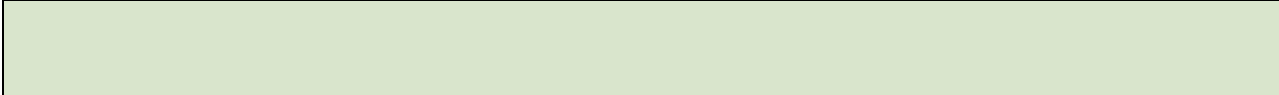
What specific federal measures do you think should be implemented to help the country address the consequences of, and challenges associated with, the aging of the Canadian population and of skills shortages?

Financial Impact of Dementia The comments submitted for your consideration are concerning the economic impact of caring for people who are aging and are not directly related to skills shortage but rather the alarming economic and social cost predicted due to the significant increases in cases of dementia in Canada. We support a significant number of people in Essex County who have early onset of dementia. Though health care is not delivered by the Federal Government, we believe the most senior level of government has the responsibility and ability to prepare and implement policies and practices to prepare for a positive and effective national response. Developing additional resources in community is one possible answer. In 2011 a partnership was formed to explore the benefits to both the person with dementia and their family of offering supported community residences as part of the continuum of services available both in urban and rural settings. The partnership included the following agencies: Alzheimer Society of Ontario, Community Living Ontario, Alzheimer Society of Windsor – Essex County, Community Living Windsor, Community Living Essex County and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The Alzheimer Society of Windsor-Essex County is now exploring the possibility of developing a pilot home in community for people living with Alzheimer’s disease as an alternative to long term care. If successful, the model and lessons learned could be shared throughout Ontario and nationally. Adoption of the following actions by the Government of Canada would raise the profile of this issue, and begin the process of preparing our country for the coming change in our demographics regarding our aging population:

- Through the income tax system provide relief and support to family members who are the primary care givers for their spouse or parent with dementia
- Begin a national dialogue to brainstorm for viable, cost effective solutions, based on the needs of the person and their family
- Solutions that require breaking down the silos that exist between sectors and levels of government are pursued.

4. Productivity

With labour market challenges arising in part as a result of the aging of Canada’s population and an ongoing focus on the actions needed for competitiveness, what specific federal initiatives are needed in order to increase productivity in Canada?



5. Other Challenges

With some Canadian individuals, businesses and communities facing particular challenges at this time, in your view, who is facing the most challenges, what are the challenges that are being faced and what specific federal actions are needed to address these challenges?

The impact of the Federal government's response to some situations may not always be appreciated and understood by the general population. The affordable housing program is a positive example. Our agency has enjoyed great success accessing Affordable Housing Program funding (Canada/Ontario government partnership) to create affordable and accessible housing for people who have an intellectual disability. They are typical homes built in neighbourhoods throughout Essex County. As necessary, specialized features are incorporated to meet the needs of people who may also experience medical or behaviour challenges. Over the last 5 years we have completed 16 independent projects creating 49 units through this funding program. The resulting increase in the supportive, accessible, affordable housing stock in Essex County is permanent and will be available for decades into the future. This program is no longer available even though there are long wait lists for affordable housing, longer delays if waiting for accessible housing. The Honourable Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, on March 9, 2012 at the 2012 Manning Networking Conference quoted Margaret Thatcher saying that a nation "grows and develops by means of countless decisions taken by ordinary people, in pursuit of their own hopes and dreams". Minister Finley went on to say the government "will continue to ensure that the vulnerable are protected and that Canadians get the services they need. We're not relinquishing any of our responsibilities". Our request is that the sentiments of these two statements result in action and change. Canada is a leader in inclusion, and there is very good work being done in our country by ordinary people. The federal government could support and encourage increased innovative solutions. Our agency recently hosted a delegation of government officials from Bangladesh who were seeking information about policies, procedures here in Canada, to improve the support of people with disabilities in their country. Canada is a leader in the international community with the resources and skills to find solutions, because the issues raised herein are not confined within our borders.