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HAS CLRCS RECEIVED ADDITIONAL FUNDING?

CLRCS/OPSEU 472

For the past many weeks I've been maintaining the idea that the provincial government of Doug Ford has been significantly underfunding the development services sector, an idea I continue to cling to. If I have erred in this opinion, I'm convinced I haven't erred completely, and if I've missed the point, I did so only by degree.

That said, some financial sleuthing from another source seems to be indicating that, notwithstanding my conspiratorial bent, *Community Living Renfrew County South* has actually had more money coming through the door than at any time previous in its existence. In fact, that seems to be the case for the last several years anyways, and the numbers appear to go up year over year.

Before leaning into this, I want to preface by saying that a cut or reduction in services doesn't necessarily mean a cut to funding of any sort. In that there doesn't have to be a direct linkage between the two. It's possible for funding to increase at the same time that a program is reduced or eliminated, it's just that such a situation is reflective of a choice of some sort made by the person holding the purse strings and calling the operational shots.

As well, an increase in funding from the *Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services* is not, in and of itself, proof that the sector is getting adequately funded. It just means agencies are getting more money than they're accustomed to. It doesn't mean it's enough, it just means it's more. So additional funding dollars may sound great, but if they're still not enough to meet mission and operational requirements, then in my mind its still a situation influenced by under-funding.

The following is a discussion piece with numbers derived from the research of another. Therefore I'm not going to tie myself to this data being solid gold. It was uncovered in the public domain from verifiable sources, but even with that, they're not my numbers. But since the Executive-Director has yet to invite me to take a peek at the books, you have to kind of start somewhere, so this table is my starting point. The numbers are apparently derived from the agency's CRA T3010 — Registered Charities Information Return — which sounds pretty impressive, but again, should not be merely accepted as solid gold unless backed up by further research and deeper digging. As I said, it's a place to start. But it does lead to one very simple question to the Executive-Director, the answer to which poses some additional serious discussion.

Did CLRCS receive additional or increased funding from the provincial government over the course of the past few years? If so, how much? And if so, where were these additional funds directed or absorbed? Other then, of course, her own personal 10% raise.

So, here's a table snap-shot:

FISCAL YEAR	PROVINCIAL TRANSFER	DIFFERENCE FROM 2019-20
2019-2020	$5,451,059	
2020-2021	$5,950,253	$499,194
2022-2023	$6,174,486	$723,427
2023-2024	$6,222,686	$771,627
2024-2025	$6,592,518	$1,141,459

*Apparently no numbers from Fiscal Year 2021-2022

Notwithstanding the absence of information involving one fiscal year, that of 2021 to 2022, the table above seems to show an increase in local funding of $1,141,459 over the course of the six years since the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

There's another wrinkle in all of this, and that's the government-sponsored changes to the way the funding system operates. We're now in an environment referred to as *"needs-based funding,"* where the dollars flow, or are supposed to flow in accordance with each individual client's ISP, or Individual Support Plan. This change reflects a spirit of individual choice and self-direction, which is supposed to allow for greater control over how supports are arranged, organized, and funded.

Trust the government to come up with an unwieldy plan to address some concern. Trust the government to make something as difficult as they possibly can.

As I've indicated previously, if these numbers are correct, or anywhere close to being correct, where did that money go? It's not an accusatorial question, or a gotcha question, it's simply a question. A request for more fulsome information so I, and others, can decide for ourselves how we feel about the possible answers.

There are people involved in this who would claim that this is none of my business, or none of our business, but I think every time a tax is paid by myself and others, it kinda makes us stakeholders to a degree as well. It is, after all, public money. And I am, after all, a paid-up member of that public. So I guess it is my business when it comes right down to it, since I'm the one paying for it.

Those potential questions, as posed by local business owner Laura Wheeler, mean I have to come up with another of those nifty tables.

QUESTIONS
If provincial funding has actually increased, what is the financial reason for any reduction in resident supports?
Have resident support hours been reduced because of the labour dispute, staffing availability, budget decisions, or some other reason?
How are client Individual Support Plans — ISP — being maintained during the strike action?
How are residents' planned social, recreational, community and daily-living supports being provided?
What arrangements are in place when housekeeping or other supports identified in a person's ISP are not delivered?
How are safety and supervision requirements being maintained?
If an individual's finances are managed by the agency, what safeguards and oversight remain in place during the labour dispute?
Has the agency received any additional provincial funding or emergency/temporary supports related to current operating pressures?
How much of the organization's funding flows to direct resident services as compared to administration and other costs?

There's no question an operation such as this has overhead costs, salary being primary among them. But the agency is also responsible for things like food and transportation, and in many cases housing and shelter. These can be expensive, especially with prices rising due to an American president busily ruining his country at every turn.

The properties themselves are expensive, and since CLRCS is an owner of real estate, those assets require upkeep, and as any homeowner will tell you, the expenses never stop coming. You get a new roof, then proceed to fix the plumbing, appliances, security features, safety features, etc. By the time you've paid out for all the maintenance and repairs, it's time to get the roof fixed again.

Is ownership of properties such as these an economic drag on the financial bottom line? Is renting instead of ownership a legitimate way to go? Admittedly, renting is expensive as well, but would it be less painful than owning? I mean, when you rent, you never have to pay for the roof to get fixed, right?

Also, the Executive-Director seems to claim that there's no money for raises, even though she ponied up for a 10% raise of her own. Now, from what I understand, the agency is offering the workers a 2% yearly wage hike. Admittedly, this doesn't take into account the whole Bill 124 remedy thing that both sides are currently arguing over. My opinion is that, regardless of whether or not those remedies were already paid — management's view — any such payments should not be incorporated into the hourly wage structure, but instead should be paid out via a lump sum through payroll. Nowhere have I seen such a remedy built into the hourly wage of an employee. And it should have absolutely no bearing on any discussions over wages.

A Bill 124 settlement and retroactive payment is not a wage issue. It's a payment that intends to make things right again, to redress a wrong. It's got nothing to do with how much I make an hour other than to calculate whatever 6% amounts to, wherever that 6% figure actually came from.

If I'm incorrect on this, it's really too bad, because again, if I'm wrong, I'm not shy about saying my way is better. But then again, I'm not trying to cheat anyone either. I have more talking to do on this specific subject, so therefore will leave it for another day.

Nevertheless, the table above seems to indicate funding increases year-over-year for Community Living Renfrew County South. Yet even with these apparent increases, if true, the agency still finds itself embroiled in a strike where wages are a primary issue.

So, again back to the salient question.

If funding has in fact increased the past several years, where did those dollars go?

Again, it’s just a question. Nobody needs to lose their hair over it.