



Honorable Jason Nixon, ECA
Seniors, Community and Social Services
227 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue NW
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

January 27, 2025

Dear Hon. Jason Nixon, ECA:

I am writing on behalf of AUPE members to express serious concerns about the state of the Family Support for Children with Disabilities (FSCD) and Persons with Developmental Disabilities (PDD) programs. These programs are critical to Alberta families and communities, yet recent decisions and operational challenges threaten their ability to meet growing needs.

As Albertans grow increasingly concerned about the neglect of families in need, it is essential for the Ministry to take decisive action to address these challenges and demonstrate a commitment to the values Albertans expect: Efficiency, transparency, and compassion.

FSCD: Artificial Bubble and Growing Backlog

In FSCD, workloads may appear manageable, but the truth has been hidden by the Ministry's decision to halt all intakes on new applications. There are now about 12,000 families waiting for applications to be processed. Some have been waiting for more than two years.

That means 12,000 families who are being denied the essential support they need for a loved one to live a safe and dignified life. The list grows by about 700 every month as new applications are made.

Even though there is so much work to do, temporary staff have been released, and full-time equivalent (FTE) positions remain unfilled. Without immediate action, workloads will quickly become even more unsustainable, leading to longer delays and increased public scrutiny.

PDD: Benchmarks Exceeded and Uneven Work Distribution

In PDD, caseloads have been artificially lowered by handing over thousands of files to non-delegated students.

The result is that caseworkers now carry significantly more complex and demanding caseloads because simpler maintenance files have been removed. These situations require significantly more expertise and time, but they are being assigned without additional resources.

This not only strains staff but also jeopardizes outcomes for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Missing workers

Between the ending of temporary contracts in late 2024, with more expected this year, and the failure of the Ministry to fill vacant FTE positions, dozens of caseworkers are missing. Fixing this would mean providing help to thousands of desperate families.

Public Optics and Growing Concern

The optics of the government allowing 12,000 families to wait months or years for services, particularly in programs designed to support vulnerable populations, undermines public trust. Albertans are asking why the government is cutting jobs at the same time as it cuts funding for disability advocacy groups.

This is an opportunity for the Ministry to lead with a proactive approach that not only addresses these issues but restores confidence in the government's ability to prioritize the needs of Albertans.

Our Requests for Immediate Action

We urge the Ministry to:

1. **Be Transparent:** Share regular, clear updates on staffing plans, workload management, and efforts to reduce the backlog in FSCD and PDD.
2. **Commit to Staffing Solutions:** Reverse the ending of temporary staff contracts, fill unfilled FTE positions, and ensure equitable workload distribution in PDD to stabilize the workforce.
3. **Be Accountable:** Develop a clear plan to address the 12,000 families waiting for FSCD services and ensure measurable progress is shared with the public.

As AUPE members and government workers, we care about the families we are supposed to help. We love our jobs because we get to make a real difference in the lives of our most vulnerable citizens.

Let's work together to fix this. Give us the resources so we can do the work.

I respectfully request a prompt response and a clear plan of action to address these urgent concerns.



Sincerely,
Sandra Azocar
Vice-President
Alberta Union of Provincial Employees (AUPE)