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Dec 17, 2021

Hon. Minister Dr. Merrilee Fullerton  
Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services  
438 University Ave. 7th Floor  
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Dear Minister Fullerton:

We appreciate your October 18, 2021 response to our Passport funding survey results, in which you said better lives for people with developmental disabilities depend on funding that is “fair, flexible and responsive to people’s needs” and that “people should be able to control more of their funding directly”.

We are writing to urgently request that the Ministry increase the amounts of direct funding immediately.

We ask your Ministry to consider and address reform of Developmental Services – as 2 processes:

1. Expanding Direct Funding: This change can be achieved right away. Journey to Belonging says DIRECT funding will promote innovation, higher quality services and speedier system reform.
2. Reforming the System of Agency Services: This is a more complex process but if there is the will, the way is there. The cost of providing such services is expensive, inequitable and unsustainable.

In your letter you told us: “I have heard... that funding changes are not happening soon enough.” We agree. Your Ministry has compromised the effectiveness of Special Services at Home and Passport through provincial underfunding and by limiting individual allocations. If Ontario continues to keep many thousands of eligible children, youth and adults on those direct funding waiting lists, they will never develop informal supports; more families will be in crisis and the segregated service system will be much harder to change.

You did not increase Passport funding despite this being the greatest immediate need and most likely to bring immediate help. In 2019-2020, 18,301 Passport recipients were on the service registry waiting for additional funding. Most are still waiting and more will have applied. Funding more DSO Housing

Navigators will not help when there is no money to support our family members to live in the homes they would choose.

During a November 18<sup>th</sup> webinar explaining the reform plan to families, Ministry staff questioned the quality of support purchased by families and whether families were making wise and safe choices. The current average annual Passport allotment of \$8,225.00 per person provides 11 hours of minimum wage support per week, a mere 1 ½ hours per day. With such meager Passport allocations, families struggle to hire and retain the workers who support our sons and daughters best, especially because agencies pay much more. In that webinar, MCCSS also said some families prefer agency services. We can certainly understand if families feel discouraged about direct funding, because Passport is now so grossly underfunded and hence underperforming.

There is no need for the “testing and prototyping of new approaches” you told us could take several years. As Journey to Belonging says, there are already “success stories” and “promising practices”. The Ministry is developing a platform to share the knowledge and experience gained by the dozens of pilot projects it funded over the years. Surely the insights and knowledge already gained will reduce the need for further study and delay.

Please do not waste years of people’s lives when the reform the government wants can start immediately. As more people achieve satisfying, safe lives in their communities with adequate direct funding, those who have only experienced segregated services will be inspired to benefit from it too.

Investing enough to make direct funding through SSAH and Passport effective is an essential first step in reforming Developmental Services.

Sincerely,

Alison Ouellette and Susann Palmiere, Co Chairs, People for Personalized Funding

Cc:

Chris Beesley, Community Living ON  
Carla O’Neil, Family Alliance ON  
Paula Boutis, Inclusion Action ON