

**Ministry of Children,
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November 4, 2022

Ms. Betty Daley
President
Family Alliance Ontario
alliance@family-alliance.com

Ms. Alison Ouellette
Ms. Susann Palmiere
Co-Chairs
People for Personalized Funding

Ms. Yona Frishman
Mr. Kory Earle
Co-Chairs
Individualized Funding Coalition for Ontario

The Ontario Independent Facilitation Network
Steward's Committee

Dear Ms. Daley, Ms. Ouellette, Ms. Palmiere, Ms. Frishman and Mr. Earle:

Thank you for your letters concerning the Permanent Wage Enhancement for Personal Support Workers and Direct Support Workers. I appreciate the time you have taken to share your concerns with me.

Personal support workers (PSWs) and direct support workers (DSWs) have been essential in our fight against COVID-19 and they continue to be essential by providing care for Ontarians.

Since October 1, 2020, Ontario has invested over \$1.3 billion to temporarily enhance compensations for 158,000 publicly funded PSWs and DSWs. This funding has helped stabilize, attract, and retain the workforce needed to provide high-quality care during the COVID-19 pandemic and to continue these important supports in the long-term recovery from the pandemic.

Until June 30, 2022, recipients of funding from the ministry's direct funding programs, including Passport, Special Services at Home (SSAH), Enhanced Respite for Medically Fragile and/or Technology Dependent Children (Enhanced Respite), and the Ontario Autism Program (OAP) Childhood Budgets and Interim One-time Funding, accessed funding through the same process as the temporary wage enhancement. Recipients would have received the \$3 per hour wage top up for any hours worked from October 1, 2020 to June 30, 2022.

An across-the-board funding increase was chosen to support permanent implementation of the wage enhancement for the ministry's direct funding programs, to provide more flexibility and simplicity for individuals and families. As of July 1, 2022, Passport, SSAH and OAP Childhood Budget and Interim One-time Funding recipients received a 10 per cent increase to their annual approval amounts. These increases are pro-rated for nine months for 2022–23 year, with twelve months of funding being applied in 2023–24. The funding increase was calculated based on the program recipient's annual approval amounts as of July 1, 2022.

Recipients of these direct funding programs have the choice and flexibility to utilize their funding in a way that they choose, which may include purchasing services from support workers. The ministry reviewed program data to inform the best estimate for support worker hours and to understand how individuals and families utilize their funding. This showed us that recipients and families spend their funding across both wages and other admissible program supports.

As such, the funding increase is not specific to direct support workers' wages. Recipients of Passport, SSAH and OAP Childhood Budgets and Interim One-Time Funding can use their funding on any admissible expenses, per the guidelines for each program that are available on the ministry's website. Recipients are responsible for negotiating the cost of the service/support they are purchasing, including support worker hours.

Recipients of Enhanced Respite received an 18 per cent increase to their annual approval amount to support permanent wage enhancement, as it is a program where the direct funding is only intended to support the purchase of respite services from support workers.

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Betty Daley
Family Alliance Ontario

I appreciate you sharing your concerns and for being a voice for families across the province. Since the release of the government's reform plan for developmental services, Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion in May 2021, the ministry has participated in several discussions with individuals and families to hear their perspectives and feedback. We are committed to continued engagement with individuals and families as we work to further improve services for people with developmental disabilities.

Sincerely,



Dr. Merrilee Fullerton
Minister