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October 3, 2023

Ms. Alison Ouellette
Ms. Susanne Palmier
Co-Chairs
People for Personalized Funding (PFPF)
pfpfontario@gmail.com

Dear Ms. Ouellette and Ms. Palmier:

Thank you for your letter concerning the Passport and Special Services at Home (SSAH) programs and adult developmental services reform.

Our government under the leadership of Premier Ford is working to improve services and supports for people with developmental disabilities and their families. [Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion](#), the long-term plan for adult developmental services reform, was informed by people with developmental disabilities, families, and service providers.

We share a common vision with our partners to empower people to make choices and help them live as independently as possible. Our commitment to a person-centred funding approach has not changed. We want to shift to a system where funding and supports for people with developmental disabilities are provided in a more equitable, fair, and transparent way.

We recognize that individuals want to see improvements now, while we work to continue to build better supports for the future. That's why the ministry is taking immediate actions to continue improving current services and supports and streamline processes for people with developmental disabilities, families, and service providers.

Recent amendments to the [Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008 \(SIPDDA\)](#) were made to better align the timing of the un-proclaimed provisions in SIPDDA and the regulations coming into force with a more gradual implementation. This supports the ministry to continue necessary research and engagements and to plan a phased implementation of the new developmental services funding approach.

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We continue to support people with developmental disabilities to participate fully in their communities by providing direct funding through the Passport program. During the 2022–23 fiscal year, Passport supported more than 60,000 people, an increase of about 15,000 people since March 2019. The total program budget for Passport in 2023–24 is projected to be about \$595 million; this is an increase from a budget of \$360 million in 2018–19.

The Passport program issued updated guidelines effective April 1, 2023, that made permanent some of the temporary expenses that were added during the COVID-19 pandemic, including technology-related goods and services, which is a Journey to Belonging commitment. This will allow people more flexibility in using their Passport funding to purchase the services and supports that meet their unique needs.

The Passport program will continue to prioritize individual choice and flexibility, so people can access the support they need to participate fully in their communities and live as independently as possible.

In the 2020 budget, our government also invested an additional \$132 million over five years in the SSAH program. The program currently serves nearly 34,150 children and youth. To continue to support children and families with special needs and minimize service disruptions, the temporary eligible expenditures that were introduced as a response to COVID-19 for Special Services at Home and Enhanced Respite for Medically Fragile and/or Technology-Dependent Children have been made permanent, with some changes to support additional clarity and consistency for families. These changes came into effect on April 1, 2023, and allow flexibility for families to make choices about the supports that meet the needs of their child.

We're also helping to support all eligible children with complex disabilities through the CARE tax credit, which parents can receive up to \$8,250 per child in tax relief for eligible childcare expenses.

One of the goals of developmental services reform is to reduce service barriers for people to access services in their community, including supporting individuals to access housing. This support is especially necessary for those who may be transitioning to the adult system, living with aging family members, or living in settings that are not responsive or appropriate to their needs. This includes recognition that supports need to reflect diversity within Ontario communities, including regional differences across the province.

We are developing the building blocks to create a system that puts people first, within a broader society that is more welcoming and responsive, including collaborating with the sector on a workforce strategy to support a skilled, diverse, and professional workforce that will help all people participate in their communities.

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Ms. Alison Ouellette
Ms. Susanne Palmier
People for Personalized Funding (PFPF)

We will also remain focused on ensuring the sustainable delivery of key programs and services to the province's most vulnerable people.

We know there is more work to be done and we will continue to work with individuals, families, sector partners and across government, to help people with developmental disabilities live meaningful and inclusive lives.

I appreciate your taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Parsa".

Michael Parsa
Minister