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September 11, 2021

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

Dear Minister Fullerton:

Thank you for your prompt reply to our letter regarding the Passport One Program.

As you know, we are a volunteer organization that assists families to use direct provincial funding to support their family members with disabilities to have everyday lives within their communities.

We are writing to share the findings of our recent survey of Ontario families who receive Passport funding. We are relating these findings to the Passport funding statistics we received from Jody Hendry, Director of Developmental and Supportive Services Branch of the Ministry, June 3, 2021. We are also discussing the data and analysis in "Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion", your Ministry's policy paper on the reform of Developmental Services in Ontario and in the excellent paper "Building a Full Life and Home of One's Own in the Community", Community Living Ontario's proposal for the expansion of direct funding in the province.

From our survey results of families' experience with Passport funding we identified 3 main issues:

1. Individual passport funding amounts are inadequate.

- 94% of our respondents received the initial allocation of \$5000.00.
- 58% reported that the amount they received was inadequate to meet their needs and that they ran out of funds many months before fiscal year end.

While the Ministry reported no denials of new eligible applicants for Passport, at the end of 2019-20, the Ministry reported that 18,301 Passport recipients were on the service registry waiting for additional funding. Many of these people's situations were quite desperate.

- 68% of our respondents said that they were receiving their maximum allowable Passport allocation.

- 59% reported having their existing Passport allocation for 5 years or more and required cost of living increases.

In 2016-17 the annual average allocation was \$7809.00 per person. At that time the minimum wage of \$11.40 per hour would have purchased 13 hours of support a week.

In 2019-20 the average allocation of Passport funding was \$8225.00 per person which, at the minimum wage of \$14.25 per hour, purchases 11 hours of support a week, or 1.5 hours per day, even less than 3 years later. So, the actual support that people derive from Passport funding is decreasing yearly.

According to the May 2021 MCCSS paper “Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion” the government spends \$2.7 billion to fund services for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Of this, more than \$1.8 billion serves 19,300 people in residential programs at an average annual cost of \$93,264 per person. (Since people in Supported Independent Living receive a much lower degree of support, the per person cost in Ontario’s group homes is much higher.)

On the other hand, 434 million serves 53,000 people at an average annual cost of \$8,225.00 per person in direct funding through the Passport Program. So, 85% of the Developmental Services budget goes to fund residential and agency support services to serve a minority of the population, while 15% of the budget serves the majority of the people inadequately. It should be noted that people receiving residential services also access Passport funding, while those receiving only Passport are otherwise completely dependent on their families.

Our survey revealed that Passport funding enabled people to meet many needs simultaneously: 73% of respondents used Passport funding to purchase support for community participation; 20% purchased employment support; 51% purchased personal care support and 59% benefited from respite, all demonstrating that Passport funding enhances both inclusion and the effective use of tax dollars.

2. Ontario’s Developmental Service System is Unsustainable.

- 78% of our survey respondents reported that their family members lived in the family home.
- 38% were aged 22 to 30 years with 40% over the age of 30 and 5% over the age of 50.
- An overwhelming number of the parents surveyed were in the late middle age to senior age category.
- These aging parents reported limited resources and increasing difficulty providing support to their family member due to their own health and mobility issues.
- However, with the small amount of Passport funding available their sons and daughters were reliant on them for support 22 ½ hours, per day.

According to the Community Living Ontario’s report, from 2009 to 2014 there was a 50% increase in the waitlist for residential services, with only 1% of people accessing such services.

As noted in both the 2014 report of the Auditor General, and the 2016 report of the provincial ombudsman, “only people in situations of severe crisis, where family members can no longer provide care and support, and household breakdown is imminent, tend to be offered funded spaces”. According to the 2020-21 “Year in Review” report of the Central East DSO Region, 556 people in their region requested immediate accommodation in a group home, and 554 in supported independent living. Of these, only 8 were accommodated in a group home and 6 in supported independent living.

There is already an unsustainable crisis of care among aging parents of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As parents in the Baby Boom generation age out of their ability to provide care, or pass away, the situation will worsen. The limits the government now sets in amounts and uses of personalized funding means that many families will be forced to deplete their own personal and financial resources, be unable to implement person-directed plans, and will ultimately break down.

3. The Plan for Reform: “Journey to Belonging: Choice and Inclusion” fails to address systemic flaws and deficiencies.

The Ministry’s recently released report laid out its long term vision for developmental services in Ontario, in which it promises to improve “services” for people with developmental disabilities over the next 8 to 10 years. Unfortunately, it neither addresses the current systemic flaws and funding deficiencies nor prevents the impending crisis. As we can see from the report of the Central East DSO Region, in 8 to 10 years the sector will be facing an unmanageable crisis. The province needs a system now, not 10 years from now, that allows families to support adult sons/daughters to move out of the family home into housing arrangements of their own choosing, while accessing needed supports for a good life.

The “Journey to Belonging” plan for reform focuses on improving the traditional service model through ensuring fairness and equity of services.

- In our survey 80% of respondents managed their own Passport funding. This tells us that people want to control their own funding rather than being matched with a limited number of service agencies. They want choice and control of their funding, not fairness and equity of service.

Moreover, research has shown us direct funding is more cost effective. The CLO report notes that in the United Kingdom, “support packages based on direct payments were, on average, 30-40% cheaper than equivalent directly provided services.”

A major focus of immediate reform must be individualized and direct funding. Direct funding has been shown to increase flexibility, control, and quality of life for people and families. It is more cost effective tending to decrease per person costs of government supports since people using it are more likely to build natural supports in the community and use less paid support.

People for Personalized Funding is sharing the results of this survey widely with the expectation that the Minister will recognize the desperate struggle that many families face today, and the deepening crisis for people across Ontario. People with developmental disabilities require immediate increases in personalized funding, and the ministry must implement expansion of the allocations and criteria for Passport individualized funding in order to avoid impending crises. We look forward to your response.

Sincerest regards,

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Cc:

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