



Formerly Special Services at Home Passport Provincial Coalition (SSAHPC)

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Sept 27, 2023

Hon. Michael Parsa
Minister of Children, Community, and Social Services (MCCSS)
7th Floor, 438 University Ave.
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8
MinisterMCCSS@ontario.ca

Dear Minister Parsa:

Again, we are writing to express our alarm about the inadequacy and mismanagement of Special Services at Home (SSAH) – Ontario's essential direct funding support for disabled children and youth. We have received no replies to our letters to Assistant Deputy Minister Karen Glass on Feb 18, 2023 and to you on May 16 and June 19, 2023.

Special Services at Home was introduced more than 40 years ago to help Ontario's disabled children grow up in their families, included in their communities, and so the government could avoid the high costs of providing segregated programs.

However, your Ministry's administration of SSAH compromises its proven benefits in the following ways:

- Families receive very little SSAH, with no adjustment for inflation. In fact, MCCSS data showed that the average annual allocation per child was \$5000 in 1995 but had plummeted to \$3150 in 2021.
- Wages have increased over that time and it is much harder to find support workers.
- Thousands of children are kept waiting for years, missing out on life-enhancing opportunities, getting no funding, despite having been found eligible for SSAH.
- Many children deemed eligible for increased SSAH amounts are also waiting for years, while facing growing challenges.
- Families show us letters from your Ministry denying SSAH but recommending "out of home respite" programs that cost more and separate children from their families (such as Safehaven, for which your Ministry increased funding greatly this year).

- Although families know SSAH improves their children's lives, provincial allocations have never respected this.
- Families must expend their own money and then wait for SSAH reimbursement – which can now take as long as 3-4 months.
 - This is a bigger obstacle for children with more challenges and higher SSAH allocations.
 - Some parents have to borrow this money and must pay the interest themselves.
 - Those who can't afford to wait for reimbursement, cannot utilize their SSAH allocations.
 - In some parts of Ontario, agencies help families pay upfront but that option is not available everywhere. However, some agencies charge a fee, taking money away from the children.
 - This means some of Ontario's most needy families will not even apply for SSAH and their children will be at even greater risk.

Your Ministry underestimates and ignores the importance of direct funding by allowing these disincentives to persist.

The goals of inclusion outlined by MCCSS in "Journey to Belonging" will never be achieved if families are driven to the breaking point by inefficient and ineffective bureaucracy and the segregation of children.

If SSAH was managed well, children would grow up in well-supported families participating in and contributing to their communities. As adults, they might continue to need Passport funding but could have natural support networks, use generic services and thus cost government less. Surely this is what everyone wants, and it's why Ministry must make direct funding a priority.

Please stop ignoring us; please let us know you will resolve these issues now.

Sincerely,

Alison Ouellette and Susann Palmiere,

Co-Chairs of People for Personalized Funding

Cc:

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