



Formerly Special Services at Home Passport Provincial Coalition (SSAHPC)

1270 Walker Rd, Unit 2
Windsor, ON
N8Y 4T4
pffontario@gmail.com

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The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy
Minister of Finance
c/o Budget Secretariat
Frost Building North, 3rd Floor
95 Grosvenor St.
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Z1

**2024 Pre-budget Submission
Re: Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services
Special Services at Home and Passport programs**

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy:

People for Personalized Funding is pleased to provide our pre-budget submission to Ontario's Ministry of Finance, concerning two Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services direct funding programs: Special Services at Home (SSAH) and Passport.

Our submission focuses on the needs of children with disabilities and their families, adults with developmental disabilities, and the historic underfunding of this sector.

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



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PEOPLE FOR PERSONALIZED FUNDING

2024 Pre-Budget Submission to the Ontario Minister of Finance

Thousands of Ontario disabled children, youth and adults have been deemed eligible, but are being denied Special Services at Home (SSAH) and Passport funding.

Ontario must:

- Increase Ontario's SSAH budget in order to fund all of the children and youth already approved for SSAH funding.
- Increase Ontario's Passport budget in order to fund all of the adults and youth over 18 deemed eligible for increased annual Passport allocations.



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Who We Are:

People for Personalized Funding, previously known as the Special Services at Home Provincial Coalition (SSAHPC), is a family-led, volunteer, non-profit, grassroots organization that has been advocating with and for people living with disabilities and their families in Ontario for over 40 years. Our vision is a society where all people can live ordinary lives in their own homes and contribute to the life of their neighbourhoods and communities. Guided by our beliefs about inclusion, self-determination, choice and control, and rights and freedoms for all citizens, we promote personalized funding models so that people who require supports to live and contribute in their natural neighbourhoods and communities are able to do so with tailored, flexible supports that are responsive to their unique, changing needs.

Addressing the Urgent Growing Needs of Ontario Families

Special Services at Home (SSAH) Funding

Special Services at Home reimburses families for certain costs related to their children's disabilities.

SSAH was introduced more than 40 years ago to help Ontario's children with disabilities to grow up supported by their families and communities, rather than sent away to costly provincial institutions and other segregated settings. Our 2021 survey showed that families use SSAH allocations to hire personal support workers to assist them to improve their sons' and daughters' lives.

Underfunding SSAH
increases the risk of family
breakdown, necessitating
costly out-of-home
placement.

Ontario has been going backwards, unable to respond to proven need.

- MCCSS data shows that while the average annual SSAH allocation in 1995 was \$5000, by 2021 the average allocation had dropped to \$3150, while costs had increased.
- SSAH allocations to families have remained static for years, despite the facts that the inflationary cost of wages has significantly increased, and recruitment of support workers has become more difficult.



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To save tax dollars and improve future life outcomes for disabled adults, Ontario must increase SSAH funding for children and youth immediately.

- Government data shows that thousands of eligible children and youth have been left on waitlists, denied SSAH funding entirely, unable to participate in their communities and losing opportunities for friendship, education, and informal support.¹
- In addition, hundreds of children and youth deemed eligible for increased SSAH have been waiting years for increased allocations in the face of growing challenges. In 2022, the government required families to make a \$3 per hour pandemic-era wage enhancement for front-line personal support workers and direct support workers. To cover this cost, the government announced an increase in SSAH allotments by 10%. While this benefitted a few families, those who used all or most of their SSAH funds to hire workers at that continuing rate of pay actually suffered a loss of support hours.

Passport Funding

Passport is a direct, personalized funding program for people over the age of 18 years with a developmental disability.

- It reimburses some of the costs of disability-related goods and services, but, like SSAH, is used most effectively to support community connections and participation.
- It helps address some of the economic and social barriers to living a good life in community with a disability.
- It is well known that people with developmental disabilities are a high risk of negative health and social outcomes, such as homelessness, incarceration, addiction, and frequent hospitalizations. Today, people with developmental disabilities remain our most marginalized and vulnerable citizens.

Provincial Passport funding is far too low to meet the documented need:

- Passport reimburses all eligible adults for approved Passport expenses up to \$5500 per year, while some few may be reimbursed for higher amounts, up to an annual cap of \$44,275.
- In 2020, the Ministry reported that 18,301 Passport recipients were on the service registry, having been approved for additional funding, but left on waitlists, many times for years, with many recipients in desperate situations.
- By now, the needs of thousands more will have been documented but left unmet.

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In our 2021 survey, 78% of our respondents reported that Passport recipients lived in their family home.

- 38% of the family members with a developmental disability were aged 22 to 30 years, 40% were 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.

PFPF's 2021 survey indicated that 58% of respondents found the amount of Passport funding they received inadequate to meet their needs, with funds running out many months before fiscal year end.

Thousands of people, initially assessed for developmental services in the 1990s and 2000s, have not seen an inflationary increase in their funding since their first assessment.

- In our 2021 survey, 59% reported having their existing Passport allocation for 5 years or more without cost of living increases.
- As with SSAH, there was a 10% increase in allocations in response to the effects of the pandemic on staff recruitment and retention, but that actually decreased the number of support hours for many people.

Passport funding levels:

- According to a June 2021 letter from MCCSS, \$434.1 million in Passport funding was provided to 52,588 people in 2019-2020, an average per person allocation of \$8255 a year.²
- The 10% COVID related increase for wage enhancement in 2022 would bring that up to an annual average of \$9080 per person.
- At the wage of a Direct Support Worker of \$33 per hour, as noted by the Community Living Ontario report, that would provide just 5.3 hours of support per week, less than 1 hour per day.³
- At the current minimum wage of \$16.55 per hour, that would provide 10.6 hours per week or 1.5 hours a day.

Thousands of Ontario adults with developmental disabilities who receive Passport live at home, relying on their families to provide all other support.

- With such small Passport funding allocations, men and women must still rely on their aging parents for support 22.5 to 23 hours a day.
- However, Passport funding is also provided to people living in residential programs such as group homes, where 24/7 care is fully government-funded.



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- Ontario initiated direct funding in 1982 to help disabled children thrive at home and in their communities, to save the high cost of institutionalization and to acknowledge all the support families were already providing.
- There are thousands of people on waiting lists for residential placement, who could be better supported – more economically – if Passport allocations were adequate and equitable.
- If Passport was more flexible and generous, families could support adult sons and daughters to move from the family home into housing arrangements of their own choosing.

The Bottom Line – Funding Fair, Adequate, and Equitable Supports

Ontario faces a crisis of care for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as their parents become too old or ill to provide care for them, or pass away.

Direct personalized funding enhances inclusion and makes effective use of tax dollars.

- A recent report by Community Living Ontario noted that in the United Kingdom, “support packages based on direct payments were, on average, 30-40% cheaper than equivalent directly provided services.”⁴
- Our 2021 survey of recipients demonstrated that people use their direct personalized funding for many purposes, some of which overlap.
 - 73% of respondents used Passport funding to purchase support for community participation;
 - 20% purchased employment support;
 - 51% purchased personal care support;
 - When their sons and daughters are supported in these ways, 59% of parents benefit as well and do not require additional respite services.
- Supported with adequate SSAH funding, disabled children could live more inclusive lives, participating in and contributing to their families and communities. That’s the only way Ontario’s adults of tomorrow will live respected and inclusive lives, reducing the overwhelming pressure government now faces, to keep buying and operating more group homes.



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Increased SSAH and Passport allocations would strengthen families, prevent crises, postpone or negate the need for more costly segregated services, and fulfill the government's goal of community inclusion as in envisioned in the MCCSS document Journey to Belonging.

Direct funding has been shown to increase quality of life for people with developmental and intellectual disabilities and their families, and is more cost effective, tending to decrease per person costs of government supports as people using it are more likely to build natural supports in the community and to use less paid support.

Ontario must listen to all the families who seek SSAH and Passport funding, understand all the ways direct and personalized funding benefits disabled people, and change direction now by ensuring that the 2024-2025 Budget includes:

- **Increases to the provincial SSAH allocation, in order to fund all of the children and youth already approved for SSAH funding.**
- **Increases to the provincial Passport allocation, in order to fund all of the adults and youth over 18 deemed eligible for increased annual Passport allocations.**

Notes

1. MCCSS Response Letter to PFPF re: SSAH Statistics, February 14, 2022.
2. MCCSS Response Letter to PFPF re: Passport Statistics, June 3, 2021.
3. 2024 Pre-Budget Submission. Community Living Ontario, December 2023, Pg. 5.
4. Building a Full Life and a Home of One's Own in the Community. Community Living Ontario, 2021, Pg. 21.