

Improving Funding for Ontario's Developmental Services: Increase Passport and Special Services at Home Funding Now

The Ontario government's Passport and Special Services at Home (SSAH) programs are vital supports for Ontarians with intellectual disabilities. However, thousands of families that qualify for funding are on waitlists, or their funding is inadequate. The need for Ontario families is urgent and action must be taken to secure adequate funding for these direct funding programs, and for Developmental Services in Ontario.

Please join us in urging the Ontario government to strengthen its commitment to Developmental Services by increasing funding for Passport and SSAH now, and ensuring that sufficient funding is in place for the future, to ensure that individuals and families have real choices.

This Lobbying kit aims to provide Ontarians who are eligible, and may or may not receive support from the SSAH or Passport programs, their families and their supporters with tools to raise this urgent issue with members of government.

This Lobbying kit was prepared by ARCH Disability Law Centre, a province-wide specialty legal aid clinic dedicated to defending and advancing the equality-rights of people with disabilities (<http://www.archdisabilitylaw.ca>). ARCH acknowledges the support of Family Alliance Ontario, concerned families and other supporting organizations.

Attached you will find:

1. Information on writing a letter to relevant government Ministers
2. Information on writing a letter to your local MPP
3. Information on meeting with your local MPP
4. A template that you can use for writing a letter

We ask that you please copy ARCH on all correspondence with MPPs and any meetings that take place with members of government, so that we can accurately track progress on this initiative. Please contact us at:

ARCH Disability Law Centre 425 Bloor St E, Ste 110 Toronto ON M4W 3R5
Tel.: 416-482-8255 or 1-866-482-2724 ext. 224
TTY: 416-482-1254 or 1-866-482-2728 Fax: 416-482-2981 or 1-866-881-2723.
E-mail: archst2@lao.on.ca

The need is urgent and the time is right. Together, we can make our voices heard so that the Passport and SSAH programs truly work for those who need them.

Writing to the Premier, Minister of Finance and Minister of Community and Social Services

The Premier, Minister of Finance and Minister of Community and Social Services are three members of government who can influence the level of funding and support that Ontarians with intellectual disabilities receive.

The Premier is the head of government. The Minister of Finance is responsible for allocating funding to various programs, services and Ministries. The Minister of Community and Social Services is responsible for allocating funding to Developmental Services once the Ministry receives money from the Ministry of Finance.

You can send one letter addressed to all three members of government, or separate letters to each of them.

1) Deciding what to write.

You can use our letter template (see letter template attachment) to give you some ideas.

Include your own experiences with Passport and/or SSAH funding because this can have a big impact on these members of government.

You can write about the ways the waitlists and lack of funding have:

- Failed to support you and your family;
- Denied opportunities to you and your family; and
- Stopped you from reaching your full potential.

You can write about how adequate funding for people with intellectual disabilities would enable them and their families to:

- Have more choice;
- Have independence and economic security;
- Gain skills and employment opportunities;
- Thrive and live the life they want to live; and
- Contribute even more to their communities.

Tell these three members of government that they should honour the “transformation” of Developmental Services in the province by:

- Making the application and funding allocation processes transparent;
- Ensuring that all qualified Passport and SSAH applicants receive adequate funding while the government completes its “transformation” of the Developmental Services sector; and
- Ensuring that sufficient long-term funding is in place so that Ontarians with intellectual disabilities can access the supports and services they need.

If you are an activist, an agency worker, a community member, or a friend or supporter of a person who would benefit from Passport and/or SSAH funding, write about the experience you have gained from seeing the struggles of the people you know.

2) Keep your letter relatively short.

Short letters are most likely to be read. So keep your letter to two pages at the most.

3) Send your letter to the following addresses:

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario

Room 281, Main Legislative Building, Queen’s Park
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1A1

Tel 416-325-1941

Fax 416-325-3745

e-mail: dmcquinty.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services

6th floor, Hepburn Block, 80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9

Tel 416-325-5225

Fax 416-325-5191

e-mail: mmeilleur.mpp@liberal.ola.org

The Honourable Dwight Duncan - Minister of Finance and Chair of Management Board of Cabinet

7 Queen's Park Crescent, 7th floor
Toronto, ON, M7A 1Y7

Tel 416-325-0400

Fax: (416) 325-0374

e-mail: financecommunications.fin@ontario.ca



If you live in the riding of Ottawa South send your letter to the Premier's constituency office at the following address:

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty, M.P.P. (Ottawa South)

Constituency Office
1795 Kilborn Avenue
Ottawa, ON K1H 6N1
Tel: (613) 736-9573
Fax: (613) 736-7374
Email: dmcguinty.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

If you live in the riding of Ottawa - Vanier send your letter to Minister Meilleur's constituency office at the following address:

Constituency Office
237 Montreal Road
Vanier, Ontario K1L 6C7
Tel: (613) 744-4484
Fax: (613) 744-0889
e-mail: mmeilleur.mpp@liberal.ola.org

If you live in the riding of Windsor-Tecumseh send your letter to Minister Duncan's constituency office at the following address:

The Honourable Dwight Duncan, M.P.P (Windsor-Tecumseh)

Constituency Office
2825 Lauzon Parkway, Suite #211
Windsor ON N8T 3H5
Tel: (519) 251-5199
Fax: (519) 251-5299
e-mail: dduncan.mpp.co@liberal.ola.org

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Writing to Your Local MPP

Writing a letter or an email to your local Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) can be a powerful tool for change. MPPs want to hear about what is happening in their communities. Writing to them can be an effective way to influence the provincial government and make your voice heard.

1) If you don't know who your local MPP is, here's how to find out:

Go to the [Elections Ontario lookup page](http://fyed.elections.on.ca/fyed/en/form_page_en.jsp) (http://fyed.elections.on.ca/fyed/en/form_page_en.jsp) and use your postal code or address to find out.

Then, go to the [Elections Ontario addresses list](http://www.elections.on.ca/en-CA/Tools/MPP.htm) (<http://www.elections.on.ca/en-CA/Tools/MPP.htm>) to get the name of your MPP.

The addresses list will also give you the contact information for your MPP's Constituency Office.

2) Deciding what to write.

You can use our letter template (see the letter template attachment) to give you some ideas.

Include your own experiences with Passport and/or SSAH funding because this can have a big impact on your MPP.

You can write about the ways the waitlists and lack of funding have:

- Failed to support you and your family;
- Denied opportunities to you and your family; and
- Stopped you from reaching your full potential.

You can write about how adequate funding would enable you and your family to:

- Have more choice;
- Have independence and economic security;
- Gain skills and employment opportunities;
- Thrive and live the life you want to live; and
- Contribute even more to your community.



Tell your MPP that s/he should ensure that the government honours its commitments to the “transformation” of Developmental Services by:

- Making the application and funding allocation processes transparent;
- Ensuring that all qualified Passport and SSAH applicants receive adequate funding while the government completes its “transformation” of the Developmental Services sector; and
- Ensuring that sufficient long-term funding is in place so that Ontarians with intellectual disabilities can access the supports and services they need.

If you are an activist, an agency worker, a community member, or a friend or supporter of a person who would benefit from Passport and/or SSAH funding, write about the experience you have gained from seeing the struggles of the people you know.

3) Keep your letter relatively short.

Short letters are most likely to be read. So keep your letter to two pages at the most.

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Meeting with Your Local MPP¹

Meeting with your local Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) is a powerful, personal way to get your point across.

1) If you don't know who your local MPP is, here's how to find out:

Go to the [Elections Ontario lookup page](http://fyed.elections.on.ca/fyed/en/form_page_en.jsp) (http://fyed.elections.on.ca/fyed/en/form_page_en.jsp) and use your postal code or address to find out.

Then, go to the [Elections Ontario addresses list](http://www.elections.on.ca/en-CA/Tools/MPP.htm) (<http://www.elections.on.ca/en-CA/Tools/MPP.htm>) to get the name of your MPP.

The addresses list will also give you the contact information for your MPP's Constituency Office.

2) Arrange for the meeting.

Call your MPP's Constituency Office to arrange an appointment to meet. MPPs are usually available on Fridays in their offices. If the Legislature isn't sitting, they are available most workdays.

Sometimes several phone calls are necessary to get a date. Don't be shy about being persistent!

Once the meeting is set, let the office know who will attend.

3) Decide who will attend the meeting.

It is a good idea to bring other people along – although it's best not to invite more than two or three people. It's also best for all the people who attend the meeting to live in the MPP's Electoral District.

If you qualify for or receive Passport or SSAH funding, you may wish to invite supportive people who work for a local agency, own a local business, or are local community, religious, or cultural leaders. Another family member or friend can also be a good choice.

¹ These tips for MPP meetings were adapted from a lobbying toolkit created by [the ODSP Action Coalition](http://www.odspaction.ca) (<http://www.odspaction.ca>).

If you are an activist, an agency worker, a community member, or a friend or supporter of a person who receives or qualifies for Passport or SSAH funding, invite at least one person who qualifies for funding to the meeting. Make sure that person has time to speak and share their experiences and thoughts on Passport or SSAH funding during the meeting.

4) Preparing for the meeting.

Find out how long you'll have to meet with the MPP. 15 to 30 minutes is standard.

Telling your MPP about your lived experience with Passport and/or SSAH funding can be hard. You may want to make a few notes beforehand so that you remember what to say. Encourage the other people who are attending the meeting with you to do the same.

Make sure to arrive a few minutes early to give yourself time to get settled.

5) During the meeting.

Be assertive rather than aggressive. Being assertive will win you more respect. Try not to get into arguments. Focus on solutions rather than complaints.

Tell your story of how the lack of Passport and/or SSAH funding has failed you or stopped you from reaching your full potential.

Explain what a meaningful transformation of Developmental Services with adequate funding would look like.

Tell your MPP that s/he should ensure that the government honours its commitments to the "transformation" of Developmental Services by:

- Making the application and funding allocation processes transparent;
- Ensuring that all qualified Passport and SSAH applicants receive adequate funding while the government completes its "transformation" of the Developmental Services sector; and
- Ensuring that sufficient long-term funding is in place so that Ontarians with intellectual disabilities can access the supports and services they need.

6) What to ask the MPP to do specifically.

If your MPP is a government Cabinet Minister, ask him/her to support increased funding for Passport and SSAH in Cabinet meetings.



If your MPP is a Liberal MPP, ask him/her to bring up the urgent need for adequate Passport and SSAH funding in one of their caucus meetings.

If your MPP is a member of an opposition party (the NDP or the Progressive Conservatives), ask him/her to demand **adequate** funding with a substantial increase for Passport and SSAH **in the next budget** during Question Period in the Legislature.

Ask your MPP to write a letter to the Minister of Finance supporting your call for increased funding, and asking him to respond. Ask your MPP to send a copy of the letter to the Premier and the Minister of Community and Social Services.

7) Follow-up.

Send your MPP a follow-up letter thanking him/her for meeting with you, summarizing the content of the meeting, and confirming what the MPP agreed to do, or what you asked the MPP to do.

At a later date, call your MPP's office to see if the MPP followed through on any promises s/he made.

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E-mail: archst2@lao.on.ca

Suggested Template for your Letter

[INSERT DATE]

[INSERT ADDRESS OF THE PREMIER, MINISTER OR MPP]

Dear [INSERT NAME OF THE PREMIER, MINISTER OR MPP],

My community in [INSERT THE NAME OF YOUR CITY/TOWN] is experiencing an alarming and growing trend of adults with intellectual disabilities being unable to afford important supports and services that would facilitate their development, independence and participation in the community. The Ontario government's Passport program and the Special Services at Home (SSAH) program are two vital sources of funding for such support. However, Passport and SSAH remain grossly under-funded, with unwieldy, expanding waiting lists, and no program transparency. As a result, Ontarians with intellectual disabilities and families like mine are suffering extreme hardship.

After many months, and years, my family and thousands of other families are *still* waiting for funding for which we qualify, while the development, and physical and emotional well-being of our family members with intellectual disabilities continues to deteriorate, and the ability of families to be economically independent is compromised.

[WRITE ABOUT YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES AND STRUGGLES WITH PASSPORT AND/OR SSAH FUNDING]

I am urging the Ontario government to take quick action to substantially improve Developmental Services by:

- Making the application and funding allocation processes transparent;
- Ensuring that all qualified Passport and SSAH applicants receive adequate funding while the government completes its "transformation" of the Developmental Services sector; and
- Ensuring that sufficient long-term funding is in place so that Ontarians with intellectual disabilities can access the supports and services they need.

I would appreciate hearing from you about how the urgent need of Ontarians with intellectual disabilities will be addressed now and in the upcoming budget.

Sincerely,

[INSERT YOUR NAME]