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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Program puts more people with disabilities in control**

**Funding boost allows more Ontarians to self-manage their services**

A government-funded program is being expanded to allow more Ontarians with disabilities to live independently in their homes.

For the second time in as many years, the province has increased its funding to the Direct Funding Program, which enables adults living with physical disabilities to manage their personal care based on their individual needs. Funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, the program also eases pressure on Community Care Access Centres and other community support providers, freeing them up for other individuals.

The expanded program will provide direct funding to approximately 1,000 Ontarians with disabilities by 2016 to help them self-manage their care. Last year’s funding expansion allowed about 60 new people to participate in the program and enhanced the funding to dozens more.

Administered by the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT) through the Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network (TCLHIN), the Direct Funding Program ([www.dfontario.ca](http://www.dfontario.ca)) provides monthly funding to about 750 people across the province to recruit, hire and manage their own attendants to assist with their activities of daily living; participants determine how and when their services are provided. Attendants assist clients with routine activities of living, including dressing, grooming, toileting and bathing. The program also allows family caregivers respite, reducing the personal and financial burden on relatives.

Derren Whiteman is a quadriplegic and has been a program participant since March 2014; he said his life has been transformed for the better due to the flexibility and control of Direct Funding.

“I have been nothing but thrilled by the way the Direct Funding Program works and how well it's organized not only to accommodate real life events but to make it feel like you actually have a ‘real life’” said Mr. Whiteman, who hires, schedules and manages his own staff with program funds. “I've not had this kind of freedom since before my accident and it's such a welcome experience.”

Leisa DeBono, manager of the Direct Funding Program, noted that in the 20 years since its inception the program has served more than 1,200 people. While the wait for an interview used to be off-putting to some potential applicants, it’s now been shortened to about two years, with the possibility of becoming even shorter with the funding increase.

“We’re thrilled the ministry has recognized the incredible value of Direct Funding,” said Ms. DeBono. “This means we’ve earned some recognition that we’re doing something right.”

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LEARN MORE:

* [Eligibility for the Direct Funding Program](http://www.dfontario.ca/info/general-information.html)
* [Frequently asked questions about the Direct Funding Program](http://www.dfontario.ca/info/general-faqs.html)
* [Testimonials about the Direct Funding Program](http://www.dfontario.ca/info/testimonials.html)

***NOTE TO MEDIA: The Direct Funding Program has 750 participants across the province; please ask about local participants in your area who would be willing to be interviewed about the program.***

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