

REFERRAL TO \_\_\_\_\_  
RECOMMENDED \_\_\_\_\_  
DIRECTION REQUIRED \_\_\_\_\_  
RECEIPT RECOMMENDED  \_\_\_\_\_

**From:** James Walton [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** November 15, 2021 4:43 AM  
**To:** Dos Santos, Charmaine <[Charmaine.DosSantos@peelregion.ca](mailto:Charmaine.DosSantos@peelregion.ca)>  
**Subject:** Re: FW: Requested Follow Up Letter To Chairman Innicca

**CAUTION: EXTERNAL MAIL. DO NOT CLICK ON LINKS OR OPEN ATTACHMENTS YOU DO NOT TRUST.**

Dear Mr. Innicca,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to meet with you last wednesday.  
It was an absolute pleasure to reconnect with you again after all these years and to see you thriving and in good health.

While our conversation was so robust and packed with lots of topics with the generous hour you granted me, it felt like such a short time. Although in all honesty, we could have had a three hour appointment and I'd feel the same way. (which is always a sign to me that I'm in good company).

At the end of our conversation you requested I write down in detail some of the thoughts I have about what it is to be disabled in Ontario; Where the system may not quite be hitting the notes desired to meet the needs of those living with disabilities and what (in a perfect world) we could do to start setting things on the right track. With that invitation in mind, I would like to offer the following:

Problem - Financial

(Honestly, I could write 20 pages on this topic and only skim the surface but I won't lol.

just know that this is not even close to a complete account of the ODSP situation)

This can not be stressed enough and although it could be watered down, any watering down of this wording simply would be an injustice to the situation.

People on ODSP are literally dying preventable deaths and will continue to die in greater numbers if they don't start to get real financial assistance.

I am lucky in that I am of the roughly 10% in Ontario who has a rent subsidy / RGI.

If it were not for that, my figures suggest that me, my wife and young daughter would be facing serious consequences

in less than 4 years as our income was \$1971 (double disabled rate + special diet allowance) - The month before that the RGI came in to effect when our rent raised to \$1460 I believe it was. For the two years prior to RGI we'd had AGI increases to our rent costs, the last one when combined with the standard rent increase raised the cost by nearly \$90 dollars per month.

The building where we live shows little sign of slowing down in this behavior.

Between this and the general cost of inflation, the rising costs in food across the board, the continuing cost of PPE for covid, clothes for the kid who is growing like a weed, I don't know how we would make ends meet. I don't know how we would have functioned..

Assuming between standard rent increases and AGI's a total rent increase of 6% each year,

in five years the cost of rent would be \$1953.

Even with a Ontario Liberal party victory and they carry forward with their last platform's promise of 3% yearly raises, at the end of the same 5 years my total odsp income would've only been \$2284.

\$330 dollars from ODSP and whatever CCB is, is not enough to sustain a family of 3 with the projected inflation rate in 2026. And that was the optimistic scenario.

This isn't the most likely and worst case scenario of a conservative second term (from the ODSP perspective) which follows the path of the first term where there was only a single 1.5% raise and a broken promise / misleading statement from 2020 when he said "we need to take care of those who can't take care of themselves and we will, i'll be having a talk with my minister about this shortly" then goes off about how we need to get a job.

I can't work.

I will never be able to work, no matter how much I want to.

No matter how smart I am, regardless of any retraining, I am unemployable.

I have a (specification redacted) genetic condition.

I am not suitable for work.

My wife was born with (redacted) Medical conditions,

she worked for a long time, for far longer than she should have.

She has worsening (redacted) mobility issues which makes simple tasks difficult and more time consuming and any "good" day, leads to several bad days.

She randomly falls down now.

The first time it happened, she was on her way to work.

She didn't even tell me (text call) as it was happening..

she was helped to the clinic by strangers, got stitches, took a cab home and knocked on our apartment door. The shock, of seeing my wife with blood on her swollen face just to try to work a job where because we are disabled she would have earned roughly \$5 an hour because of clawbacks is absolutely enraging.

On top of these (redacted) physical issues she has had life long (redacted) worsening since 2012. The desire is there.. the will is there.

but it's just not realistic.

I can't speak for everyone else on ODSP, but if their situation comes even close to ours which I honestly have little doubt it does (otherwise, how would they be on the program in the first place, right ?) but the financial income aspect must be considered the number one factor when looking to create a "good outcome".

Even with the subsidy which we are SO lucky to have, we still have to budget.

We still have to be considerate of everything and make hard and thoughtful choices.

We aren't out of the woods but at least WE have a fighting chance, thanks solely to that RGI.

So so many on ODSP, are not that lucky and I honestly don't know what they nor the cities of Ontario are going to do by the time 2025-2026 comes around and my projected numbers are realized.

The countdown clock to disaster, is getting rapidly close to completion.

There are 500,000 people depending on the income from ODSP who won't even be able to afford a basement apartment by then. (they barely can now, I'm quite certain).

After what happened in Trinity Bell woods, I shudder to think of similar scenes playing out at Chinguacousy or Gage Park's, hell even back where we both came from, Floradale Park. These situations will become so common and widespread, they won't even be covered on the news.

--Financial Solutions--

Obviously in a perfect world we would all rise up out of our chairs, shed our canes, cough up our cancers, "get our heads on right" then "just go back to work".

That isn't going to happen, so alternate solutions must be found to avoid a humanitarian crisis not just in our own backyard, but our front yards too.

Solution Suggestion 1.

Clearly the most obvious, raise ODSP to a realistic income level.

I don't have all the answers for how to make this happen.

Maybe it's public pleas to the federal government to allot the money conditionally upon its actually being used FOR that purpose.

(cough cough \$3billion in pandemic relief never used)

Maybe it's the provincial government diverting a small percentage of the police funding, or raising tax across the board by 1% and directing that income flow directly into social services -

I just don't know. but those are the most obvious answers to me.

In our society there is a promise to take care of each other but it honestly doesn't feel like it applies to those of us sitting in one of these chairs.

(These things I say, are not my opinion or reflective of you, Sir.

I know you to be an honorable and caring man and I hold you in the highest of esteem.)

Solution Suggestion 2.

If a direct cash to odsp client solution can not be hammered out, things get sticky. The next "most obvious" (to me) suggestion would be two fold.

A) The cost of actual rent & hydro provided to the landlord / hydro provider by ODSP. this way any concerns of excess spending or what have you are just not there. the person would be at least partially stabilized, however fail safes would need to be looked at to ensure that the landlord cant create a scenario which traps the disabled person.

B) A couple years ago, ODSP eliminated the paper drug card and somehow our health cards instantly took over the function without any direct action on my part. Somehow, my ohip card suddenly knew I was on ODSP so any medication which would have required the drug card prior, no longer does. I just have to provide my OHIP.

If the government is really so deeply concerned about the way I / other persons on disability spend the money we're given to the point that they provide so little it endangers our lives, let's just flip the page. If they don't trust us and won't give us the direct cash because they fear how we may spend it then program the OHIP card to function as a "Ration Card".

Keep the soul crushing, morally repugnant rates as they are, Implement "A" so they (odsp) can pay the rent directly, implement B and key it to also cover the cost of food and essential products from a pre-programmed list and anything that doesn't fall in those lines it's then up to the person to decide if they want to use some of their minimal cash provided to cover those items or not.

This would prevent or seriously reduce any chance of fraud, (even though the current Ontario government's own internal numbers show that criminal fraud against odsp is virtually non-existent) unless of course an underground black market for Maple Leaf Hotdogs opens up. lol though seriously, at \$7.00 a package (in Metro) that may not actually be much of a stretch.

All that would need to be done is what should be a simple reprogramming of the card readers by most major grocers. If

they can scan an AirMiles card, or loyalty rewards program card, they should be able to scan a health card with the proper reprogramming. Food, is an essential medical item.

Either of these solutions (1 or 2a+b) should help lower alternate secondary costs on the system by way of food banks, hospitals, law enforcement, the criminal justice system, emergency shelters while at the same time increasing the chances of some odsp members returning or attempting to return to work in some cases. ---

Problem : Virtually every sidewalk / the majority of sidewalks.

I see a lot of well intentioned changes and adjustments. I value the intent.

However, there are a lot of problems.

Although I can't personally recite from memory what the recommended guidelines are on angles of incline and the degrees and all the mathematics involved, it almost seems like whatever the maximum listing is, is being used as the base line number.

The Goal should always be to be as close to zero as possible.

Or at least feel like it to the average wheelchair user.

I am an unusual mix in my situation. I can say with confidence, objectively and without the intention of boasting that I am one of the best manual wheelchair "pilots" you'll ever find in your life time. when my health allows I use my chair like a pilot does a fighter jet.

That said, I also have more limits than other wheelchair users. I would imagine that a lot of the guidelines were set and influenced by paraplegic wheelchair users who can "take a hit" off of a bump from a more harsh downward incline from sidewalk to road when crossing and they have a higher muscle base (at less risk of tearing) for the incline. I have to be guarded with the amount of force exerted in upward incline and how hard a hit I take on decline.

I could put so much torque on my arms that could have redacted medical consequences trying to get up an unsuitable ramp / sidewalk, or sustain serious damage to my back going down one that is too steep leading to a bump at the end.

(there are also many cases where I risk catastrophic vertical head over posterior flippings unless I avoid certain sidewalks)

In addition to the direct relative incline / decline angles of the specific sites of all sidewalks, the surrounding environment does not appear to be taken into consideration.

So while many sidewalks at the point of road/sidewalk may meet whatever the requirements are, the space leading up to and just past those points can have a magnifying effect on the dangers and stresses which those locations entail.

I offer for example the road / sidewalk right outside your building at 10 Peel Centre Drive.

Following our meeting which I managed to reach on my own unassisted and without much risk, upon my departure from

out meeting to return home the path became a lot more dangerous.

Often I find myself encountering what must be considered "one way access" sidewalks.

Now I've done the trip from my home to your office building and back in the past without problem. This time however was the first time I had made the trip in roughly two years.

So on my way to you I was able to handle the downward angle of the strange double sidewalk decline at the corner where the bus depot is, even with the "Bump Plate" sidewalk. However on the way back, I could not. I got part of the way up, but between damage to the sidewalk which was kinda patched, plus the angle, plus the bump panel, I couldn't "Find my footing" to achieve a safe return to the sidewalk.

I attempted multiple times, rapidly in the time I had with the light but that time expired before I could find it and a City Zoom bus started to depart from the dedicated exit portal which intersects with the region of sidewalk. I had nowhere to go. I could not even in all honesty be 100% sure the bus would absolutely stop as there have been incidents in the last 5 to 7 years where I have had to jump out of the way of buses who did not see me near my own building when crossing the street with the rightaway.

So with no time to readjust and make another attempt up the sidewalk (in which success was not assumed) and with no assurance that I would be safe if the bus tried to "squeeze" past me, I took my chair into traffic and ran like hell from the bus depot to 1 knightsbridge which is the next safe point for me to return to the sidewalk.

Thank god, for the bike lane and bus lane which I maneuvered between to stay out of the way of the normal flow of traffic.

Solutions :

- Bump plates for the blind, while well intentioned, have no added benefit of being bumps instead of indents to my best knowledge. A panel with indents in the same pattern as the bumps would provide a similar tactile notification to the person that they have reached a crosswalk. However the bump panels create a far more hazardous experience for mobility device users.

If (when) we raise our front caster wheels to "power" up the sidewalk we have to be very careful how we land. it is possible that a bad landing for the casters at a bad speed could lead to an abrupt stoppage of forward motion . if the person has enough momentum leading up to that second, the results would be disastrous. Additionally, If my tires which are air inflatable have any sort of weakness or wear when hitting the bump panels they are FAR more likely to be torn apart causing a total pressure loss event.

(And honestly, I shudder to think how this may affect or be affecting our older population who are dependant on walkers and who's walking isn't exactly the most stable to begin with.. stepping on built in marbles with their osteoporosis and arthritis riddled ankles, screams problem to me. I'm honestly surprised these things made it off the drawing board)

-- Indent Panels, instead of Bump Panels.(I've heard rumors if you turn a bump panel upside down it already is indented but I have obviously not seen this personally.

- The angles of side walks are random and haphazard between their own direct design X the surrounding environment. Many sidewalks do not form a smooth transition to the road in any meaningful way and now often (potentially to

accommodate the bump panels ?) there is an inch OR more of near direct vertical climb AND THEN the incline. these inch or more platforms need to be removed and smoothed and a wider physical range needs to be taken into consideration and utilized in order to create the safest and smoothest path of "on foot" accessibility. (in the stead of blasting down sidewalks, building up the road surface leading up to the sidewalk could help mitigate a lot of these issues. - its almost as if the road isn't being laid down as "thick" as it used to be)

- Its very difficult to explain all the technical issues here in writing,

but there is also an issue with sidewalks being narrow (in general) and narrow at sidewalk to road transitions. The greater the rate of incline and locational, situational complexity and difficulty, the wider the sidewalk needs to be in order to accommodate the chair making it up.

frequently, I have to use high speed wheeling with precisely timed caster raising in order to make it up. My own required momentum to get up can create the problem of not enough sidewalk to stop properly before running into other locational issues. (i.e unbuilt surface, grass which is much lower than the sidewalk which would be a tipping hazard, a light pole, ect)

and finally (in relation to sidewalks) its also an issue where at a four way intersection where the slab will be tilted / angled and rounded at the same time. (a great example of this is at the corner of Kings Cross and Clark) depending on the severity of the angling, the entire region is simply untraversable. Any attempt for me to even wheel on the side walk in that area will result in serious, life altering or ending damage as I will fall on to the road.

(city works is already talking with me about it.. however the odds of this being resolved is unlikely because it would require what I believe to be a major renovation of the sidewalk and road in that area)

- I offer myself as an onsite advisor for any and all sidewalk repairs, reviews, constructions and retrofits. as I said above, I am a unique blend of ability / disability. I'm highly skilled and talented in my use of a wheelchair, but I also have to be very cautious of how I handle every path I take.

I am sure there are many persons with disabilities who uses chairs who can handle these sidewalks but I know from my lived experience that there are some or many who can't.

I am lucky in that I have physical strength but I must use caution when utilizing it.

If it takes me multiple tries, or running jumps to clear these sidewalks then I promise you there are many people who simply can not use them at all.

I ask for no money to do this, It would be my pleasure and honor to go to any and every sidewalk in the entire peel region to provide first hand technical guidance and insight to help create the safest and most accessible pathways in Ontario.

If used infrequently, I will pay my own way to get there. If used often, help me out with the cost of getting wherever you need me and my time is yours so long as I am not dealing with (Redacted medical issues) at that time.. The reward will be the result of our collaboration in these efforts.

Problems: TransHelp

A well intentioned program that undoubtedly helps a lot of people do a lot of things which they wouldn't be able to do otherwise.

Credit where it is due.

For myself I've had problems with it, maybe i'm "expecting too much" or have "unrealistic expectations" but these are just my feelings. I believe that there is a lot of room to improve.

First there are too many "Windows" in the system.

There is the pick up / drop off window. which I do get to a degree but how its handled leaves a lot to be desired.

Lets say I want to visit my mom who lives 10 minutes away by car / taxi / TransHelp.

I want to be at her place at 12pm.

I would have a pick up window roughly of 11:10 to 11:40 roughly.

now if it was just a matter of "be ready between" those times I would get that.

however with the system as it is you have to be downstairs, outside basically in plain view for that entire window. It doesn't matter if it's +33 Degrees outside, it doesn't matter if its snowing, hailing, -25, you have to be out there. (and the same going home)

Its reasonable to want disabled people to be ready.

its reasonable to want them to be on time.

its not reasonable to make them wait for upto a half hour outside in any random weather no matter how harsh it is.

Solution Suggestions: I don't know how many people are picked up each minute or each quarter hour so i don't know the practicality of the number of people which would need to be involved to do this but my first thought would be to have a "dispatch team" who's job is to monitor the location of vehicles using GPS and when each one is about 5 minutes away from the person they are supposed to pick up, Call the person waiting to be picked up and tell them "Hi this is Shirley from TransHelp; Your scheduled ride will be at your pick up point in 5 minutes, please head to your normal pick up location now, thank you"

A simultaneous Text & Email could be sent at the same time in case of bad reception or whatever. This would create new jobs and improve the quality of service and safety for the passengers. Perhaps the passengers themselves could choose between a 5 or 10 minute eta call, whatever best serves them.

If its not practical to hire as many people as required to manually make those calls, A tie in system could be programed where an automated system tracks the TransHelp and when it detects that the driver is within the 5 - 10 minute point, it would Robo-Call much like it already does 30 minutes before the pick up window reminding people they have a

scheduled ride that day.

Maybe even just an App system for people with cell phones,  
When you order Skip the Dishes or InstaCart, when they are on the way it sends you a notification and you can watch them head to you on a map.

Do that ! lol.

If for some reason a GPS system isn't employed,  
then the original human option could still work with the driver simply calling and giving updates

"Yeah, I've picked up passenger 1 from Newgreen, Heading to Newhaven for passenger 2 now, I'm 8 minutes out, please call customer"

This would be a HUGE quality of service improvement and far more humanizing then "wait outside till we get you, sometime in that half hour.. we hope" lol.

An Addition Issue with TransHelp is the "Other" window they have..

They have some sort of system defined blackout window of return which forces people to be out for much longer then they may want or need to be.

Continuing the same scenario as in above

I want to visit my mom who lives 10 minutes away by TransHelp.

I want to be at her place at 12pm.

I would have a pick up window of 11:10 to 11:40 roughly

If I want to then go home at 12:30, say I just went to do a few dishes for her or to have a quick cup of tea, I'm not allowed.

I can not book a visit shorter then 2 hours.

"so what's the big deal, visit your mom for two hours ?!"

ok.. so I book it for two hours.  
and I am out for 3 and a half.

because I have an 11:10 to 11:40am "Head To" pick up window to be there for 12, I can't book a return until 2, but there is the 30 minute window there as well so if the TransHelp comes at the early side of the "Head To" window and the late end of the "Come Back" window I could be out from 11:10am until 2:30 (plus the actual driving time if picked up at 2:30, so 2:40.)

I just want a cup of tea.  
I'm out nearly 4 hours.

And this applies to anything I want to do with TransHelp.

If I want to buy Milk and Bread and four boxes of Frosted Flakes  
From the FreshCo across the street from your building (not far away from me)  
because they have a sale on and its hard to carry all that stuff at once, I have to be out of my home for up to 3 and a half  
hours.. to buy milk, bread and frosted flakes.

Does that make any sense at all ?

TransHelp is a helpful service for a lot of people..  
but it is also very restrictive at the same time.

It grants -partial- independence to its passengers but its conditional upon  
their rules of when I can go and when I can come back.

Don't get me wrong, I understand businesses can set policy to a degree

(no shoes, no shirt, no vaccine passport, no service lol)

but a Taxi does not tell me "oh, we won't pick you up if you've only been wherever your going for 15 minutes. you have  
to be there 2 hours"

any abled person can call any cab company at a moment's notice and short of Christmas, new years and extraordinary  
circumstances, have a cab ready and waiting to take them virtually anywhere in minutes.

We can't.

There is TransHelp, and I have to be out for 4 hours to get a reasonable rate

or there is BramCity Taxi.. who charges a not totally horrible rate for people who aren't below the poverty line.. they  
don't have a return trip blackout period but you do have to call, typically 2 days in advance.. sometimes longer. (usually  
safe with a 3 day window)

A1 Taxi has cabs readily available, but they charge an arm and a leg.

Solution Options:

Option 1 : Kill the bubble. it is ridiculous

Option 2 : Shorten the blackout bubble to 30 minutes (reasonable)

Option 3: Create a new "Tier" or "Service Option" at a different price point.

"TransHelp Express" "TransHelp Premium" "TransHelp Quick Run"

(whatever, make something up)

Where the customer can call in and say "Hey I need a Quick Run to.."

and so long as its within a certain physical range (say.. 5 or 6 kilometers of the starting point) They book the trip and the driver will stay there for up to 30 minutes.

(At 20 minutes a call and text could be sent from dispatch letting the passenger know that they only have x minutes left, please be back at the pick up site on time)

You could do two different tiers of this..

a 15 minute window (so at 10 minutes the hurry up text / call)  
and this would cost \$10 (\$2.50 over the normal cost of to and from travel)  
and a 30 minute window which would cost the passenger \$12.50.

I would imagine this would also be a more "green" solution as well,  
instead of the driver going off and doing whatever for however long and coming back from wherever it is, just go.. wait,  
return, next.

--spit balling--

((its unfortunate we can't just create a push button barrier system  
in standard public buses. the major reason I can't use standard buses is the  
threat that someone might fall on me. they see me or other disabled people  
in the wheelchair space and people just stand over me, hover near by and just hold on to the overhead handle with one  
hand and my entire life depends on them keeping their balance. ((totally unsafe for them and me))

if there was a way for the driver to press a button and a reasonable physical barrier deploys, creating a safety shield for  
disabled people in the disabled space.. that would be totally awesome and I could use public transit in good weather.  
(bad weather would still need a wheelcab or transhelp.. but..at least 8 months of the year it would be an extra option

though I understand the technology to do this likely isn't feasible at this point.))

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- Problem: Points of No Sale / Shopping Inaccessibility.

This one is not a life saving thing,

it's just a pain in my posterior.

it's something that angers me greatly and would be a "Quality of life" improvement but it is at the bottom of the list for  
a reason.

The Inaccessibility of point of purchase locations in Ontario, or at least in "my hood".

No matter the type of retail location, be it clothing, food, ect

there are a lot of stores that have their Debt machines bolted down or bolted down on a machine that only swivels left  
and right but not up and down.

I am short.

I can not see the padd.

Thank goodness for "Tap" because 5 years ago this problem was worse, today I can often pay but I am still having to pay "Sight Unseen". If a "bad actor" teller decided to charge me \$50 for a box of twinkies at metro, I wouldn't know for days or weeks because I cannot see the debt machine. Also there are times that tap simply doesn't work or isn't offered at some locations forcing me to either Cancel the purchase or give the teller direct access to my card or try to do it blind. (for a long time I had to have the metro debt machine menu interface memorized and do it without looking)

Additionally, the non-human tellers / self checkouts are frequently constructed in a non-accessible way with the paypad at the far back right of the machine. I can't reach that and its completely unnecessary. if it was front left, front right on a vertical angle hinge I could use one of those machines like anyone else. instead i have to hand my card over and hope that tap works.

I know that there is the ACA and the AODA, but they really aren't enforced in any meaningful way in this regard. The fact that the automated machines have been deployed SINCE the AODA came in and they exist in this way suggests to me that it has no enforcement or teeth.

I propose a (series of) regional by-law(s), banning debt machines which either:

A) cannot be unlocked to be passed to the consumer by the teller. (OR)

B) are mounted on a stand which does not swivel left, right, up & down. (AND)

C) are mounted on an automated unit in a difficult place to reach which the average person sitting in an average chair would not be able to operate manually if the tap pay system is non-functional.

I shouldn't have to be dependent on the honesty of store workers to be able to make purchases.

I shouldn't be so encumbered by the methods of payment that I create a long line behind me, drawing more attention to myself because I don't have cash on me and the debt machine fails to tap properly.

A worker at the metro literally bought my groceries for me once because of this.

it was a very sweet and kind thing for her to do but it was utterly embarrassing because I had the money in my bank, my card in my hand and ready to pay but because their debt machine only turns left and right, not up and down.. it made me look like I was begging for handouts at a grocery store.

If it weren't for the fact that a bank machine was literally around the corner from the store and I was able to swoop off, get the money, swoop back and pay her back in 10 minutes I simply would not have gotten food that day.

-- Conclusion..

Well, at least it wasn't 30 pages

a bit longer then I think either of us were hoping for lol

but there are a lot of big and important topics covered here and for them to make sense, you need the back story. you

need it to understand not just what the black and white issues are but the reasons -why- these issues are issues. I hope this has helped shed some light on some things.

I understand you have your limits as to scope and role in what you can do..  
but for whatever you may do in these issues, whatever consideration you give  
to the problems and solutions I've offered, I appreciate it greatly.

Again, I thank you for your time with the meeting and the invitation to write this letter to you.

If I can ever be of any assistance with any of the issues presented within, or any other issue you think I may be able to  
provide perspective on..

I'm a phone call away. :)

JW.