

# HOME AND VEHICLE MODIFICATIONS PROGRAM PROGRAM GUIDELINES

## Preamble

The Home and Vehicle Modifications Program provides home or vehicle modifications to eligible individuals and families to enable children and adults with disabilities that restrict mobility to continue living safely in their homes, avoid job loss and participate in their communities. The program guidelines established by the Ministry of Community and Social Services set forth the policies governing the provision of services under the Home and Vehicle Modifications Program. The Service Coordinator is responsible for determining whether or not an applicant meets the eligibility criteria, approving expenditures that comply with program guidelines and ensuring that services are delivered according to the program policies.

The program is intended to serve those people most in need of assistance and to be a program of last resort. Applicants to the Home and Vehicle Modifications Program must first access any other sources of available public or private funding before being considered eligible. It is expected that people with disabilities applying for home modification will have made reasonable efforts to locate accessible accommodation before receiving assistance. Applicants with the financial means are required to make a client contribution towards the cost of modifications.

For the purposes of the program guidelines, the term "applicant" refers to:

- a person with a disability who is applying on their own behalf, OR,
- a family member (e.g. spouse, parent) or "host family" applying on behalf of a person with a disability living in the family home.

Note: A "host family" refers to an adult person and/or family who provides accommodation, care, support and supervision to a client (child or adult with a developmental disability), and has a relationship with an organization coordinating the placement (e.g. MCSS Familyhome Program).

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## Client Applications/ Program Eligibility

### 1.1 General Program Eligibility

➤ The Service Coordinator will require proof of Program Eligibility, as described below.

➤ To be eligible for funding of home or vehicle modifications under the Home and Vehicle Modification Program (HVMP), a person must be:

1. A permanent Ontario resident -- the person must make his/her permanent and principal home in Ontario. Temporary residents and visitors (e.g. tourists, students, foreign workers on a work permit, etc.) are not eligible.

AND

2. A person with a substantial impairment caused by bodily injury, birth defect or illness that is ongoing and/or recurring and is expected to last one year or more.

AND

3. The impairment impedes mobility and results in substantial restriction in activities of daily living e.g. personal care and functioning in the community.

➤ The applicant must be one of the following :

a) **a homeowner** who meets the program eligibility criteria who is applying for a modification to their home or a homeowner who is applying for a modification to their home on behalf of a family member who meets the program eligibility criteria. The homeowner must submit proof of home ownership<sup>1</sup> and proof of residency for the person who meets the eligibility criteria.

b) **a tenant** who meets the program eligibility criteria who is applying for funding of portable assistive devices/equipment (e.g. lifting devices, environmental control units, etc.) or a tenant applying on behalf of a family member who meets the program eligibility criteria. Note: funding for structural modifications and permanently installed equipment may be available through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH).

See reference below to Landlords. The tenant must submit proof of residency for the person who meets the eligibility criteria.

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<sup>1</sup> Proof of home ownership may not be available at time of application but must be submitted prior to issuing payment. During the interim, funding for the modifications may be approved in principle.

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- c) a **vehicle owner** who meets the program eligibility criteria who is applying for a modification to their vehicle or a vehicle owner applying for a modification to their vehicle on behalf of a family member who meets the program eligibility criteria. The vehicle owner must submit proof of vehicle ownership<sup>2</sup> and a valid driver's licence.
- d) a **"host family"** applying for a home or vehicle modification on behalf of a child or adult with a disability who is living with and being cared for by the applicant in a family setting that is anticipated to be long-term (e.g. MCSS Familyhome Provider). The applicant must submit a letter from an organization involved in the placement as proof they are the host family, proof of residency for the person who meets the eligibility criteria, proof of home/vehicle ownership and, if applicable, a valid driver's licence. People applying on behalf of a child in the care and custody of a children's aid society are not eligible.
- A person may access the Home and Vehicle Modifications Program one time only for funding of home modifications except in the following circumstances:
- there has been a substantial change in the person's disability/impairment e.g. person previously used a cane to assist ambulation and now has increased mobility restrictions/reduced strength and requires the use of a wheelchair;
  - the person must move because of an immediate safety risk e.g. family breakdown , unanticipated loss of caregiver arrangements, unsafe living situation;
  - the person/family must move in order to maintain employment e.g. employer relocates; and,
  - the current home modifications do not meet the changing physical/developmental needs of the child.
- Note:** Applicants who have received grants in the past which total less than the \$15,000 lifetime maximum, may reapply for further home modifications at a later date. At the time of reapplication, the applicant may receive additional funding up to the maximum \$15,000 grant. If the applicant's circumstances fit with one of the exceptions identified above, the applicant may receive an amount higher than the maximum \$15,000 grant.
- A person may only access the Home and Vehicle Modifications Program for vehicle modifications once in 10 years unless there is been a substantial change in the person's disability/impairment and the current vehicle modifications no longer meet the person's

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<sup>2</sup> Proof of vehicle ownership may not be available at time of application but must be submitted prior to issuing payment. In the interim, funding for the modifications may be approved in principle.

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disability-related needs **or** to adapt to the changing physical/developmental needs of the child.

- Landlords who are applying on behalf of a tenant with a disability in order to modify their units to make them accessible are not eligible for funding through the Home and Vehicle Modifications Program. They may be redirected to the MMAH Ontario Renovates program.
- All applicants to the program must first make reasonable efforts to access any other available sources of public or private funding before being considered for funding under the Home and Vehicle Modifications Program. This does not include charitable organizations. Other sources of available public or private funding include the following:
  - The Ontario Renovates program provides forgivable loans for the modification and adaptation of existing homeowner households to improve the accessibility of the home for disabled occupants. The loan does not have to be repaid provided the borrower meets all the terms of the loan - e.g. the homeowner(s) must agree to own and occupy their home for the entire loan forgiveness period (generally 10 years). Loans are forgiven at an equal rate per year over the loan forgiveness period. Up to \$3,500 in accessibility modifications is in the form of a grant and does not require repayment.
  - People who become disabled as a result of a work-related injury may be eligible for financial assistance towards the cost of home or vehicle modifications from the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).
  - People injured in an automobile accident may be eligible for financial assistance for home or vehicle modification costs through the driver's automobile insurance plan. Some private extended medical or disability insurance policies also cover partial costs.

### 1.2 Funding Priorities

- In the event that the program funding available will not allow all of the requests for modifications received from eligible applications to be funded, approvals for funding will be based on the priority criteria identified below.

The individual requires the home or vehicle modifications in order to:

- remove or minimize a life safety risk (Examples: provide an accessible means of egress in an emergency life-threatening situation or, provide transportation to receive necessary medical treatment);
- prevent hospitalization/institutionalization **or** enable discharge from hospital/institution by assisting the individual to continue living safely in their home (with or without assistance)

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and/or enabling parents to care for their children with disabilities in the family home (Examples: modifications to bathroom to enable the person to perform essential self-care/hygiene or provide a means of transportation to shopping, banking, etc. in order to take care for oneself);

- avoid loss of employment and income (Examples: the person's job is in jeopardy without access to a vehicle or having a modified vehicle would enable the parent to meet work responsibilities as well as take the child day care/therapy);
- to support both children and adults to participate in developmental/community activities (Examples: to attend school, church, volunteer work, community activities, etc.).

### **1.3 Eligibility Determination**

- Prior to determining general program eligibility, the Service Coordinator will speak with and/or meet with the applicant to discuss the application form, provide guidance in the application process, and to discuss other required documents.
- The Service Coordinator will apply general eligibility criteria and make eligibility decisions as per Section 1.1.
- No waiting list will be maintained. All applicants will be notified in writing of eligibility and funding decisions (including the specific modifications approved and the amount of funding to be provided).
- Applicants to the Home and Vehicle Modification Program will have the right to have decisions that pertain to general program eligibility reviewed through a dispute resolution process. An applicant who meets general program eligibility guidelines but does not receive assistance due to funding available (i.e. it is determined that the applicant is not at the top of the priority list of those most in need when decisions for funding are made) cannot appeal this decision through the dispute resolution process. Also, decisions related to whether or not specific items or suppliers have been approved for funding are not appealable.
- If it has been determined that the applicant is ineligible for funding, the letter must inform the applicant of the decision, the reasons for arriving at the decision, and any information regarding the dispute resolution process.
- Applicants who meet general program eligibility guidelines but do not receive assistance due to a funding shortfall may reapply during the next application period to request reconsideration.

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## 1.4 Verification of Disability

- The Service Coordinator will ensure that a verification process is in place to determine that the applicant meets general program eligibility.

## 2. Authorisations of Eligible Modifications

### 2.1 Ensuring that Modifications Relate to Program Objectives

*(For a list of eligible modification items and eligible modification costs, see Section 3):*

- The Service Coordinator will ensure that all eligible home and vehicle modifications are required due to the person's disability/impairment and ensure basic accessibility, facilitate independent living, and/or reduce risk of harm to the person with a disability.
- Only items listed in Section 3.3 (List of Eligible Items - Home Modifications) and 3.4 (List of Eligible Items - Vehicle/ Garage & Carport Modifications) are eligible.
- Repairs to electrical or battery-operated modifications that are listed in Sections 3.3 and 3.4 and that are not covered by warranty are eligible.
- The Service Coordinator will not approve modifications to newly constructed homes except where the onset of the person's disability/impairment occurred after the purchase of the home or where unexpected, substantial change in the person's condition has taken place since purchase of home. It is expected that people with disabilities purchasing newly constructed homes will negotiate with the builder to ensure that the home is accessible and will meet their disability-related needs.
- The Service Coordinator will review the applicant's efforts to locate suitable accommodation and find an accessible dwelling that meets the person's disability-related needs and/or the needs of their family members with disabilities. This information may be used to assist in determining funding priorities.
- The Service Coordinator will not approve funding to an applicant who chooses to move from accessible to inaccessible accommodations except under the following circumstances:
  - where there has been a substantial change in the person's disability/impairment e.g. person previously used a cane to assist ambulation and now has increased mobility restrictions/strength and requires the use of a wheelchair
  - the person must move because of an immediate safety risk e.g. family breakdown , unanticipated loss of caregiver arrangements, unsafe living situation.

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- the person/family must move in order to maintain current employment e.g. employer relocates.
- to enable families with children with disabilities to have access to developmental activities e.g. medical treatment, schools, community activities, etc.
- The Service Coordinator may purchase an occupational therapist's assessment to help determine the person's disability requirements and whether or not the person's original accommodation met their access needs. This information may be useful in making funding decisions.
- The Service Coordinator will consider the anticipated duration of the person's living arrangement in determining eligibility and funding decisions.
- Applications for funding of home modifications will be considered in situations where a parent with a disability/impairment moves into the home of their adult children in order to have a safer, more affordable living environment or to receive caregiving assistance. The applicant must still meet all general program eligibility guidelines as set out in Section 1.1.
- No home or vehicle may be purchased using the funding provided by the Home and Vehicle Modifications Program.
- Adult family members who meet general eligibility guidelines outlined in Section 1.1 must be a party to the modification agreement along with the person applying on their behalf, and the contractor/ vendor/ supplier.
- Modifications to condominiums and co-operatives must have the explicit written consent of the Board of Directors if the modifications will impact on common property or on that of another owner.
- The Service Coordinator will not approve the funding/ reimbursement of expenditures made prior to authorization of the modification. Exceptions **may be** permitted where a person was in critical need of the modification because of an imminent safety risk, the person's continued employment was at risk or the person was unable to access necessary medical treatment. The applicant must still meet all eligibility requirements, all items reimbursed must be eligible goods and services; and the Service Coordinator would otherwise have approved the request.
- The Service Coordinator will not approve the funding for the restoration of the modified home or a vehicle to its original condition if the client or home/vehicle owner later decides to sell the home or vehicle.
- Structural modifications to homes must be limited to those that permit safe access to the building, and provide safe access to and movement within those areas that are essential

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to the client for the purposes of daily living. The modification should provide the client with a safe, barrier-free environment.

- In order to be considered eligible for modification, a dwelling must meet a minimum standard of health and safety under the Ontario Fire Code, the Ontario Building Code, and standards set by the local Board of Health.
- Modifications in excess of \$15,000 may be funded, provided the Service Coordinator can provide a contribution for the remainder of the cost and/ or is reasonably assured that the applicant is able to contribute or secure the remainder of the cost.
- The Service Coordinator will ensure that modifications to a vehicle are provided only where there is no public transportation, or when the person with the disability cannot safely use or has ongoing difficulties accessing public transportation, including public transportation systems for people with disabilities, in order to attend medical appointments, school, work or community activities.
- In cases where an applicant purchases a new vehicle that has already been modified, funding may be provided for the modification costs only. A detailed invoice/receipt must be submitted that identifies the specific modifications completed and cost involved, separate from the cost of the vehicle itself. (Eligibility for funding does not apply to older already modified vehicles as it would be too difficult to verify the specs, costs or safety of the modifications.)
- In order to be considered eligible for modification, a vehicle must be in good condition and meet a minimum standard of safety. If there is any doubt about the state of repair of the vehicle, it must be inspected by a licensed mechanic.
- The Service Coordinator will take into consideration the ability of the applicant to maintain the vehicle, including the cost of insurance and general vehicle repairs since the program will not assume these expenses.
- The Service Coordinator will seek at least two estimates relating to the approved modification(s) from reputable vendors or suppliers/contractors. In remote areas, or in the case of emergency, one estimate may suffice.

### 2.2 Authorisation Process

- The Service Coordinator will have a system in place to ensure that authorisations for home and vehicle modifications meet modification eligibility guidelines and funding limits.



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## **2.3 Authority to Approve Expenditures**

- The Service Coordinator will have the authority to approve expenditures that comply with program guidelines.

## **3. Eligible Modifications**

### **3.1 Eligible Modification Costs**

- The maximum government contribution for home and vehicle modifications is \$15,000 per client for home modifications and/or \$15,000 per client for vehicle modifications. The applicant may be eligible for additional funding beyond these maximum amounts if their circumstances have changed as defined under Section 1.1 , (see Section 1.1 of the Program Guidelines for eligibility criteria ).
- In situations where two or more people with disabilities are residing in the home (e.g. 2 adults with disabilities or a parent with a disability and child with a disability) and both/all meet the general program eligibility guidelines outlined in Section 1.1, the maximum government contribution of \$15,000 for home modifications and/or \$15,000 for vehicle modifications per client may be combined only where the eligible applicants need different modifications in the home or vehicle.
- The government contribution may be spent on the following goods and/or services, including any taxes not recoverable by the Service Coordinator from the Government of Canada:
  1. assessment completed after application to the Home and Vehicle Modifications Program; AND/OR
  2. design schematics and professional fees of contractors, architects or other professionals needed to plan construction or installation of the approved modification(s); AND/OR
  3. the equipment (these must be eligible items) and supplies needed for the approved modification(s), and the cost of any warranties; AND/OR
  4. the installation of any equipment, or the approved structural alteration of the home and/or vehicle, including labour; AND/OR
  5. training on the use of equipment, provided by the contractor/ supplier/ vendor or the Service Coordinator.

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- To determine the dollar amount of funding from the government contribution, the Service Coordinator will complete the following calculation if either home modifications OR vehicle modifications have been approved:

1. The total cost of the approved items
2. Less: The client's contribution requirement, as calculated in Section 3.2

If this calculation results in an amount over \$15,000, the \$15,000 maximum government contribution nevertheless applies.

To determine the dollar amount of funding from the government contribution if the client has been approved on the basis of a single request for both a home AND a vehicle modification, separate calculations for the home modifications and the vehicle modifications will be completed. 50% of the client's contribution requirement will be applied to the total cost of the home modifications and 50% of the client's contribution to the total cost of the vehicle modifications.

If this calculation results in an amount over \$15,000 for either home or vehicle modifications, the \$15,000 maximum government contribution for each category of modifications (home or vehicle) nevertheless applies.

### **3.2 Client Contribution Requirement**

- The Service Coordinator will require applicants with a gross annual income over \$35,000 to complete a "client contribution" assessment according to the following formula:

- 1) Total Income: Line 150 on Form T1.
- 2) Less: (allowable deductions, if applicable) annual union, professional or like dues (Line 212); child care expenses (Line 214); attendant care expenses (Line 215); support payments (Line 220); amounts for infirm dependants 18 or older (Line 306); Canada Pension Plan contributions (Line 308 or 310); Employment Insurance Premiums (Line 312); disability amounts (Line 316 or 318); allowable actual medical expenses (Line 330); and dependent children deduction amount (See note below), to determine "Assessed Income"

Note: applicants may claim a deduction for dependent children (under 18 years of age and living at home) based on the Federal Child Support Guidelines for people earning \$40,000 gross annual income:

1 child -                      \$4,140

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2 children -	\$6, 840
3 children -	\$8, 976
4 or more children -	\$10,728

Applicants claiming this deduction cannot also claim support payments under Line 220 on the Form T 1.

- 3) Assessed Income - \$35,000 (contribution threshold) equals "Residual Income".
- 4) Residual Income X % "Contribution Level" equals the "Contribution Amount".
- 5) "Contribution Level" is on a sliding scale based on Residual Family Income categories outlined in the chart below.

### Calculation of Contribution Level

Residual Family Income (\$/year)	Contribution Level: percentage of Residual Family Income
<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>\$1 - \$5000</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>\$5,001 - \$10,000</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>\$10,001 - \$15,000</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>\$15,001 - \$20,000</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>\$20,001 - \$25,000</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>\$25,001 - 30,000</b>	<b>60%</b>
<b>over \$30,000</b>	<b>no eligibility</b>

- Applicants (a person with a disability or family member/host family applying on behalf of a person with a disability) who are in receipt of ODSP Income Support, Ontario Works, or Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement are not required to make a client contribution. A client contribution assessment is not required in these cases.
- In calculating the client contribution, the revenue of spouses are considered in the calculation if they are residing with the person with a disability who requires the modification. Spouses in receipt of ODSP Income Support, Ontario Works or Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement are not required to make a contribution. (Note: only income from the previous taxation year is relevant)
- In circumstances where a family member or host family is applying on behalf of an adult with a disability in their family/care, it is the income of the person with the disability (and

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his/her spouse, if applicable) that is considered for the purposes of determining the client contribution.

- In circumstances where the application is made on behalf of a child, the parent's/parents' (as applicable) combined income is considered when calculating client contribution.
- Where the Residual Income is zero or negative, no contribution is required.
- Where the contribution amount is \$100 or less, no contribution is required.
- In cases where no Form T1 was filed for the previous taxation year, the Service Coordinator will:
  - request the client to provide alternate documentation that verifies his or her income (i.e. pay stub identifying gross income), and the income of his or her spouse, where applicable. If the gross annual income from the client and spouse is less than \$35,000, no contribution will be required;
  - where the income exceeds \$35,000 annually, the client must file the Form(s) T1 and obtain the Notice(s) of Assessment from Revenue Canada on behalf of him or herself, as well as his or her spouse, where applicable. Meanwhile, an interim assessment of client contribution will be completed based on the reported gross income to determine the client contribution required, if any. Once the Notice(s) of Assessment is provided, a new client contribution assessment will be completed. The Service Coordinator will take appropriate action to reconcile any difference between amount calculated on the interim client contribution assessment and the actual amount of contribution calculated based on the Notice of Assessment information.
- When there is more than one source of income (i.e. the spouse of the client), the "Assessed Income" for each party is combined and the "Residual Income" is calculated based on the combined "Assessed Income". The contribution amount is then determined, as noted in the formula above.
- Under the following exceptional circumstances, the Service Coordinator may reduce or waive the client contribution. In making this decision, the Service Coordinator will consider the following circumstances when reviewing cases for special exceptions and document the decision in the client's file:
  1. The applicant's ability to comply with the contribution requirement due to an unusually large disability-related expenditure within the current tax year. The Service Coordinator may, with the appropriate documentation, reduce or waive the contribution amount, or;
  2. There is a substantial reduction in current income from previous year's income due to loss of employment or a reduction in the amount of time worked. The Service

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Coordinator may, with the appropriate documentation, reduce or waive the contribution amount.

- The Service Coordinator may delay the client contribution requirement where the client has to seek financing for their contribution to a large expenditure item and requires time to secure financing.

### **3.3 List of Eligible Items - Home Modifications**

- Before approving specific items, the Service Coordinator will apply general guidelines for home modifications eligibility contained in Section 2.1.
- Eligible modifications include:
  - ramps;
  - inside and outside platform lifts, stairway lifts and lifting/ transferring devices, including necessary structural changes;
  - the paving of an access path between the client's home and mode of transportation if needed to facilitate the movement of a wheelchair;
  - elevating devices;
  - widening of doors and/or replacement of conventional doors by sliding or folding doors;
  - rearrangement of bathrooms to permit safe use;
  - installation of wheel-in showers, wall grab bars, and bathtub safety rails;
  - rearrangement and lowering or raising of kitchen equipment and cupboards;
  - a deck if it is an integral part of an access ramp or lift;
  - disability features for major appliances where the modification allows a person to safely use the appliance (NB: If a specialized adapted appliance is only sold as a whole item, the Program will fund the difference between the cost of the appliance and the market value of a similar non-specialized appliance);
  - environmental controls may be provided as appropriate. These include remote control or mechanical devices to: operate appliances; switch lights and computers on or off; facilitate the use of a telephone; or to open, close and lock doors.

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- modifications to a child's play area
  - other items as approved from time to time by the Ministry, or as amended in the Service Contract.
- Ineligible Modifications include:
- the purchase of a home;
  - therapeutic or supportive care-related items such as whirlpool baths, swimming pools, exercise bikes, wheelchairs, walkers, respiratory equipment and dialysis equipment will not be provided by this program;
  - upgrades or repairs to the home;
  - the construction of additional rooms;
  - a deck that is not an integral part of an access ramp or lift;
  - household appliances (refrigerators, stoves, microwaves, etc.);
  - a second accessible exit (not required by the Ontario Building Code);
  - cosmetic improvements to modifications that are not in need of repairs.

### **3.4 List of Eligible Items - Vehicle/ Garage & Carport Modifications**

- Before approving specific items, the Service Coordinator will apply general guidelines for vehicle modifications eligibility contained in Section 2.1.
- The Service Coordinator will only fund vehicle modifications that are related to special features not ordinarily required by people without disabilities.
- Eligible vehicle modifications include:
- transferable equipment such as hand controls, foot controls, lifts, safety devices etc. These should be fully convertible, if possible, to any type of vehicle so that they can be transferred when the applicant changes vehicles;
  - communication devices such as car phones, when necessary to ensure the safety of the person with a disability. Considerations should include: the severity of the disability, whether the person drives alone, and the area in which the vehicle is usually driven;

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- specialized seating and related accessories required for transportation purposes;
  - remote control devices to open garage doors for persons who use wheelchairs, scooters, or who walk with difficulty;
  - raising the roof of a vehicle;
  - lowering of the floor of a vehicle;
  - barrier-free modifications to garages or carports;
  - further vehicle modifications required to meet the child's changing needs; and,
  - other items as approved from time to time by the Ministry, or as amended in the Service Contract.
- Ineligible Modifications include:
- the purchase of a vehicle;
  - vehicle upgrades;
  - vehicle repairs;
  - monthly cellular telephone service.

### **4 Assessment of Homes and Vehicles**

#### **4.1 Assessments Required**

- Assessments are appropriate where the Service Coordinator believes that further information is required to determine the relationship between the client's functional capacity and the modification(s) requested.
- In cases where the Service Coordinator makes a decision not to require an assessment, the decision must be documented in the client's file along with the rationale.

#### **4.2 Approved Assessment Costs**

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- The cost of all assessments will be deducted from the maximum government contribution (see Section 3.1 - Eligible Modification Costs).
- The Service Coordinator will fund assessments according to a fee schedule that it sets in accordance with market standards for the professionals listed in Section 5.3.

### **4.3 Approved Professional Assessors**

- Prior to approval of the modification, an applicant must submit to the Service Coordinator an assessment of the need for home or vehicle modification, except where not required as per Section 4.1. This assessment must be completed by an occupational therapist, a rehabilitation engineer, a rehabilitation engineering technician, or rehabilitation technologist of the applicant's choice.
- The Service Coordinator will verify the qualifications of approved professionals and ensure that they are providing quality assessments that meet the needs of the Program.

### **4.4 Assessment Timelines**

- The Service Coordinator will ensure, where applicants have provided an assessment that was previously done, that the assessment is still valid i.e. the report contains the information necessary to make informed eligibility and funding decisions and that there has not been any change in the applicant's disability/impairment or circumstances.