



Ontario needs to bring positive change to social assistance



Ontario has two social assistance programs: Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). The loss of good jobs and the failure of other programs to carry their weight, like Employment Insurance and WSIB, mean more Ontarians are forced to turn to these programs for support. But OW and ODSP do not provide enough income for recipients to meet their basic needs, let alone the rising cost of living, and fail to help them get out of poverty. Both programs are “last resort” programs that take a punitive approach to income supports and financial eligibility, which is counterproductive to reducing poverty. The Ontario government has made some improvements to OW and ODSP.

But we’ve still got a long way to go ... people on social assistance continue to live in deep poverty and struggle with inadequate income support.

Ontario needs to bring positive change to help OW and ODSP recipients move out of poverty by:

- Increasing the incomes of people receiving OW and ODSP to a level that allows them to pay for housing, food, clothing, a phone, transportation, and other regular necessities
- Making sure people with disabilities have enough income to pay for their longer-term and disability-related needs
- Ending dollar-for-dollar deductions of child support payments from the benefits of lone parents
- Ending the practice of reducing social assistance benefits as the Ontario Child Benefit increases
- Giving municipalities sufficient funds for housing supports and homeless prevention to make up for the Province’s elimination of the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit
- Providing drug and dental benefits to all low income Ontarians, both children and adults, whether they are working or not

Ask your candidates:

- What actions will your party take to bring positive change to OW and ODSP in Ontario and ensure quality, accessible programs that help people out of poverty?
- Will your party commit to making sure that people on OW and ODSP have incomes that are adequate to support the cost of living?

Resources:

Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC): www.incomesecurity.org

ODSP Action Coalition: www.odspaction.ca

Colour of Poverty Campaign: www.colourofpoverty.ca

ISAC’s Social Assistance Review website: www.sareview.ca