



DISABILITIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP

Pre-Budget Submission
January, 2019

“I entered politics to help the little guy. To make life easier for you and your family. Not only so you can make ends meet, but also so you can get ahead and prosper.....We will put more money in your pocket.” *Doug Ford-Plan for the People*

Recommendations

1. “We will put more money in your pocket” must apply to Ontarians living in poverty.
2. Do not change the definition of ‘disability’ used in ODSP applications.
3. Increase the shelter portion of OW and ODSP so that it reflects the actual cost of housing in Ontario.
4. Allowing persons on ODSP to earn \$6000 per year before claw-backs are applied is a positive. However, much more clarity is needed as to precisely how the claw-backs will be implemented.
5. In order to significantly reduce the deficit, the government must increase its revenues.
6. Immediately increase OW and ODSP payments by \$200 per month.

Introduction

The Disabilities and Human Rights Group is a forum for educating, raising awareness and discussing issues related to human rights and disabilities. The Disabilities and Human Rights group has received ongoing in-kind support from the Social Development Centre of Waterloo Region since 2008.

Rationale

1. The *Plan for the People* must apply equally to all Ontarians. We welcome and applaud a government that will truly empower the ‘little guy’ to prosper. However, there is no ‘littler’ guy than the person on social assistance. Paid employment may be the route out of poverty for some, but for many paid employment is not a viable

option. The government must be more flexible in designing programs to end poverty.

2. The government's proposed change to the definition of 'disability' to mirror that used by the federal government for CPP-D purposes should be cancelled. The differing definitions are due to the different purposes of the programs. If Ontario makes this change a great many individuals who would otherwise qualify for ODSP would be denied benefits forcing them even deeper into poverty than necessary.
3. The current shelter allowance for OW and ODSP is grossly inadequate. It is not unusual for ODSP recipients to incur housing costs which are double, or more, the shelter allowance portion of their benefits.
4. The lack of clear communication surrounding the proposed changes to how earnings are treated under ODSP is causing confusion and concern. Without a clear understanding of what will happen once an individual crosses the \$6000 threshold households will be unable to budget their funds and may be disinclined to earn 'too much.'
5. The announced cuts to program spending and government services will have only a marginal impact on the deficit, while adversely impacting the Ontarians who rely on these programs. The only way to significantly reduce a deficit is to maximize government revenues. Ontario should increase the taxes on corporations and wealthy persons. Furthermore, the government should diligently pursue tax cheats and close tax loopholes.
6. Approximately ten years ago the Social Assistance Reform Commission recommended that social assistance rates be immediately increased by \$100/month. That recommendation was never implemented. Given the passage of time, and accrued changes in the cost of living, we believe the amount should now be \$200/month.

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