

The Issue

People living in poverty

The Facts

Many people with disabilities in Ontario are living in an ever-increasing state of poverty as a result of the failure of the Ontario Disability Support Plan (ODSP) to provide adequate levels of income support. People with disabilities are entitled to a reasonable and safe standard of living that many can no longer afford

Did You Know?

- Prior to 2004, ODSP benefits had not increased for 11 years
- Under the current government, ODSP rates have increased each year by approximately the cost of living
- Despite the increases since 2004, ODSP benefits remain more than 18% below what they were in 1993 when compared to inflation
- Current ODSP benefit amounts provide for an income that is approximately 40% below the poverty line
- The Government of Ontario has established a Social Assistance Review Committee to undertake a comprehensive review of the current system.

The Solution

- ODSP benefits need to provide for the real costs of living and should not be less than the recognized poverty line. Rates should reflect average market rents (as determined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation); the average cost of a nutritious food basket (as determined by municipal boards of health); and include money for other basic needs such as transportation and utilities. The rates should also be adjusted annually for inflation.
- Improvements to ODSP benefits should be accompanied by a renewed focus on employment strategies for people with disabilities to allow people every opportunity to increase their self-reliance through earnings and reduce their reliance on ODSP income supports.
- The Social Assistance Review Committee should have the support of government to recommend comprehensive reform; and this reform should be acted on in a timely fashion.