
Statement by Minister Milloy on Social Assistance Review

October 24, 2012

Today, John Milloy, Minister of Community and Social Services, issued the following statement in response to the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario:

“I want to thank Commissioners the Hon. Frances Lankin and Dr. Munir Sheikh for their hard work and dedication. The Commission reached out to thousands of Ontarians, hearing from people who receive assistance as well as from those who work to deliver our programs. Their review is the first in-depth, critical look at both Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) in over two decades.

Since the 2008 recession, the number of people relying on social assistance has increased steadily — with growth averaging five per cent each year over the past five years.

At the same time, we know that Ontario Works and ODSP have become overly complicated for people to navigate, and are not as responsive as they should be for the people they serve.

That’s why our government asked the Commission to find ways to make the system fairer for all clients, easier for them to access and understand, and more effective at connecting people to jobs.

We also asked them to find ways to make social assistance programs more sustainable over time.

The McGuinty government supports the objectives described in its report, and we’re committed to the end goal of reducing poverty by increasing opportunities for Ontarians.

The report makes it clear there are no simple solutions to successfully transform Ontario’s social assistance programs.

Improving the system will not be easy.

To this end, we’re going to take the time, working with our partners — both inside and outside of government — to discuss the implications of system transformation, and begin creating a responsible roadmap for success.

As we move toward a transformed system we must take into consideration the current economic challenges facing Ontario.

In the coming months, as we work with partners, we’ll be taking early steps to make a positive difference in the lives of social assistance clients. This will include:

- Making improvements to social assistance employment services for those who are able to work. This includes trying new ways to help ODSP clients identify their employment goals, and working with them to access the services and supports they need for success.

- Working with employers to better connect clients and people with disabilities to the workforce. This means working with our business partners, and engaging employer champions — particularly those who are established leaders — in hiring and integrating employees with disabilities.
- Determining the best ways to simplify and streamline the system by modernizing the way services are delivered.
- Continuing to involve and inform municipalities and First Nations as we form the basis for a renewed Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- Looking for other short-term steps that we can take to address immediate barriers to opportunity.
- Taking measures to improve the system’s integrity and make it more accountable.

We’ll also form a working group of community and business leaders, and those who have been clients, to help inform our path forward.

The government’s Poverty Reduction – Roots of Youth Violence Results Table will guide our early actions as part of a renewed Poverty Reduction Strategy so we can have an implementation plan in place in 2013.

I look forward to beginning this work and making progress in the coming months toward achieving the objectives outlined in the Commission’s report as we work together to increase opportunities for all Ontarians.”

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