

November 22, 2018

## **Government Announces New Social Assistance Reform Plan**

Children, Community and Social Services Minister, Lisa MacLeod, has announced a new plan for Social Assistance Reform. In Ontario, 47 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs) are on the front lines of delivering the Ontario Works component of social assistance. Reforms also impact the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), which is administered by the Province. Given municipal governments' 'on the ground' knowledge, AMO provided input into the Ontario government's reform plan. AMO's recommendations for social assistance reform were informed by municipal perspectives across Ontario. They can be found on the AMO [website](#).

AMO is supportive of efforts to reduce poverty and achieve greater overall affordability for the people of Ontario. An essential building block to help achieve this is to create a modern, responsive, effective, and cost-efficient social assistance system. Social assistance reform creates an opportunity to invest in peoples' well-being by providing services that centre on Ontarians in need and reduce administrative red tape. The Ontario government will be taking a multi-ministerial approach to social assistance moving forward. Changes will be implemented over the next 18 months.

To reform Ontario Works the Ontario government will:

- focus on employment, streamlining, local service flexibility, and accountability
- partner with and support municipal governments by creating more flexibility in how services are delivered on the ground
- empower case workers by freeing up their time so that they can focus on clients instead of paperwork

- develop individual action plans for Ontario Works recipients to help vulnerable Ontarians secure a job
- facilitate connecting Ontario Works recipients with potential employers, including the creation of a new 'Open for Business' website
- launch pilot projects with select municipal governments to help Ontario Works recipients secure employment.

Proposed Reforms to the Ontario Disability Support Program include:

- aligning the definition of 'disability' with the one used by the Federal government for new ODSP applicants
- reviewing ODSP eligibility on an annual basis instead of on a monthly basis
- increasing the ODSP income allowance to \$6000 a year before deductions in support are triggered
- allowing recipients greater flexibility in choosing benefits most suitable to their situation.

Notably, all existing ODSP recipients will be grandfathered into the new program.

After seeking more detail from the government about the new plan, AMO will conduct further analysis about the municipal impacts and work with the Province towards implementation. For more information, see the Ontario Government's [news release](#).