

# 2009

## Social Assistance Review

As the year progresses without the promised review in sight, ISAC takes action to push the government to fulfill its commitment.

At ISAC's June forum on the urgency of the review, Crystal Chin steals the show with her account of the many ways ODSP rules get in the way of what she wants to do in her life.

ISAC launches a social assistance review website that lets people send emails urging government for a "Bold and Broad Review".

The Toronto Star covers the story and the political pressure continues to build.



**the star.com**  
February 25, 2009

### Anti-poverty group hails child poverty legislation

Ontario's strategy to combat poverty by eschewing hard targets and allowing future governments to set their own goals was blasted by opposition critics today but hailed by an anti-poverty group as groundbreaking.

The legislation won't enshrine into law Premier Dalton McGuinty's goal to reduce poverty by 25 per cent within five years or include penalties for missing the target.

"What we are doing, by way of legislation, is requiring that all governments have a target of their own, adopt a strategy of their own," McGuinty said.

"It hardens up our collective commitment to address poverty."

That was done to allow future governments to set the goals themselves depending on the needs at the time, said Minister of Children and Youth Services Deb Matthews. Priorities must also be reviewed every five years.

"There are many groups at high risk of poverty that we were not able to address as fully as I would have liked to have done," Matthews said.

"If a future government decided that they wanted to focus on poverty amongst those with disabilities, they would need to be able to set a target that measured that."

The legislation also acknowledges that reducing poverty requires a long-term commitment, Matthews said in introducing the bill today.

The act proposes reporting on key indicators such as income, school success, health and housing, and mandates the government to consult with people in the public and private sectors, non-profit groups and people living in poverty in order to set its targets.

Sarah Blackstock of the anti-poverty group 25 in 5 Network called the legislation "groundbreaking" because it acknowledges that poverty is not inevitable and can be altered by proper government policy.

## Poverty Reduction Legislation

Bill 152 is introduced in February. Throughout the legislative process, ISAC and partners in 25 in 5 work to improve the bill in discussions with Queens' Park.

On May 6, the *Poverty Reduction Act 2009* receives unanimous support from all parties in the Ontario legislature, making it the first legislation of its kind in the province.

Principles for the creation and implementation of future poverty reduction strategies are enshrined in law, as is mandatory consultation with communities - including people with lived experience. The legislation also recognizes that some groups have a heightened risk of poverty.

## First Step Towards the Social Assistance Review: SARAC

As the year ends and 25 in 5 is about to issue its first Progress Report on poverty reduction, government announces the formation of a council to provide advice on the scope and structure of a review of social assistance.

ISAC's Director of Advocacy & Legal Services is appointed to the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council, or SARAC.

In its May 2010 report, SARAC calls for a cross-ministerial, broad-based review of Ontario's income security system.

