



INCOME SECURITY ADVOCACY CENTRE
Centre d'action pour la sécurité du revenu

December 9, 2019

Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) cautions against relying on the Auditor General's fundamentally flawed report on ODSP

The report misunderstands the purpose of ODSP and relies on erroneous assumptions

The Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) provides monthly income supports and health benefits to low-income persons with disabilities who have no other means to pay for their basic necessities like food and shelter. A December 4, 2019 report by the Auditor General of Ontario criticized this program for the wrong reasons.

“A proper audit of ODSP would have asked if the program is meeting its purpose of supporting the most vulnerable members of our community,” said Karin Baqi, Staff Lawyer at ISAC. “Instead of focusing on the extreme inadequacy of ODSP payments, this report targets recipients with suspicion and perpetuates the stigma that they do not really deserve to receive public support to meet their basic needs.”

Above all, the report misinterprets an increase in the number of recipients as a sign of administrative error. This ignores factors such as an aging population, an increase in precarious work, stagnating wages and considerable cuts to other social programs that now force more Ontarians to rely on ODSP.

“We are concerned that the Auditor General’s report will embolden the provincial government to go ahead with a plan to make it harder to qualify for ODSP by introducing a more onerous definition for disability.” Baqi added. “The fact is that many more Ontarians need ODSP today than ten years ago, not fewer.”

Also concerning is the report’s apparent disregard for the independence and expertise of the Social Benefits Tribunal. “The tribunal’s role is not to rubberstamp government decisions to deny benefits,” Baqi said. “If the government’s decisions to deny benefits are overturned on closer review of the evidence, that shows that the government has made an error – not that the tribunal is undermining the government, as the Auditor’s report suggests.”

ISAC calls on the government of Ontario to consult with recipients, raise the social assistance rates, safeguard the independence of the Social Benefits Tribunal, and maintain the current definition of disability used to qualify for ODSP.

ISAC is a specialty legal clinic with a mandate to advance the systemic interests and rights of low-income Ontarians around income security programs and low-wage precarious employment. For more information see our backgrounder [here](#).

Media contact: Karin Baqi, Staff Lawyer at baqikr@lao.on.ca, (416) 597-5820 ext. 5157.

###