

PROVINCIAL ELECTION 2007

Social assistance in Ontario

Social assistance is delivered through the Ontario Works (OW) program and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) to low income people who are in financial need. Most people rely on OW or ODSP because of disability, loss of a job or loss of a spouse.

In Ontario, OW and ODSP monthly benefit amounts are dangerously low. In fact, the rates are so low that health practioners, housing experts and child development experts have publicly expressed great concern about the consequences of forcing people to live in such poverty.

Below are some examples of the current social assistance rates.

OW Case Type	Current Basic Needs	Current Maximum Shelter	Current Total
Single	\$206	\$342	\$548
Single Parent + 1 Child*	\$470	\$538	\$1008
ODSP Case Type			
Single Disabled	\$543	\$436	\$979
Single Disabled Parent + 1 Child*	\$812	\$686	\$1,498

*child 0-12 years

These rates are far too low to ensure people have adequate income for decent housing, nutritious food, transportation, clothing and other necessities. Consider, for example, that the Ontario average rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$787/month. For a two-bedroom apartment it is \$919/month.

Currently, there is no rationale for setting OW and ODSP rates.

Ask candidates:

- i) Will your party, within six months of taking office, establish an expert panel, including low-income people, policy experts and advocates, to determine just and rational criteria for setting OW and ODSP rates, with the goal of ensuring everyone has a decent standard of living?
- ii) How would you define a just and rational criteria is for establishing OW and ODSP rates?