June 4th, 2014

Income Security Advocacy Centre: ODSP – 2014 Election Questionnaire

NDP Responses

1. *Will your party commit to making sure that the incomes people get when they're on ODSP are enough to afford all the regular costs of living, in addition to long-term needs and the costs of having a disability? What specific steps will you take to make ODSP incomes adequate?*

   The Ontario NDP is committed to social assistance reforms that deliver for all Ontarians. For years, we have pushed the government to increase the Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program. In 2013, we were successful in our insistence that the government create earnings exemption that will allows recipients of OW and the ODSP to keep the first $200 in employment earnings before the government begins clawing back their benefits.

   We are committed to implementing the 1% increase in social assistance benefits in the province's existing fiscal framework, including the 1% increase to ODSP and OW.

   The Ontario NDP recognizes that OW and ODSP still do not reflect the actual cost of living, including the cost of shelter, energy, and nutritious food, which is rising ever faster. Our goal is to address this issue and to stand up for middle class families. We will also continue to implement recommendations from the Review of Social Assistance that Ontarians agree are the right way forward.

2. *Will your party end the freeze on rate increases for family members of people with disabilities on ODSP?*

   The Ontario NDP recognizes the importance of ODSP support for the family members of those with disabilities and a NDP government would review this decision. The Ontario NDP has also committed to the introduction of a Caregiver Tax Credit, which is a fully refundable tax credit that provides $1275 for each person care for. While not a substitute for adequate ODSP support, this tax credit should bring many families relief.

3. *Will your party commit to maintaining a separate income support program designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities?*

   The Ontario NDP recognizes the unique challenges faced by Ontarians with disabilities and will continue to maintain a separate income support program for Ontarians with disabilities.

4. *What will your party do to support the employment goals of people with disabilities?*

The Ontario NDP recognizes the importance of ensuring all Ontarians can access employment supports and training programs. We are doubling the province's investment in re-training programs for workers over the age of 55 to increase older workers' ability to find employment. We believe that this and all other employment benefits should be accessible to Ontarians with disabilities. In addition, The Ontario NDP fought to achieve a significant change that allows people to keep the first $200 they earn before triggering claw backs.

A NDP government will fight to ensure that Ontarians with disabilities can access meaningful educational and employment opportunities.

5. ***Will your party make eligibility for income supports conditional on whether or not a person works or takes training?***

The Ontario NDP believes that Ontarians with disabilities should be able to receive support from the provincial government regardless of their situation. We will, however, ensure that Ontarians with disabilities who want to work are fully supported by their government.

6. ***Will your party create a Social Inclusion Allowance within ODSP and make it available to every ODSP recipient in the province?***

The Ontario NDP recognizes that the important volunteer work done by many Ontarians with disabilities is not supported by the provincial government. The Ontario NDP will work with stakeholders to find the best solutions to support Ontarians with disabilities who wish to be more involved in their communities.

7. ***What will your party do to improve access to ODSP?***

The Ontario NDP believes that accessing ODSP should be a simple and transparent process. We will work with stakeholders and members of the community to make access to ODSP transparent and fast.