

**Income Security Advocacy Centre  
Ontario Election 2014  
Questions on Ontario Works**

**Where does your party stand on the following issues?**

**1. Social Assistance Reform**

**Q: Does your party have plans to reform Ontario's social assistance programs? If so, what reforms would you make?**

The Ontario NDP supports continued efforts to make social assistance programs work better for recipients. Our social assistance programs must provide proper supports without creating unnecessary barriers. A NDP government will begin by increasing social assistance rates by one percent. We will also continue to work with Ontarians to improve social assistance programs so that they are accessible when people need them.

**2. Income Adequacy**

**Q: Will your party commit to ensuring that the incomes people get when they're on OW are enough to afford housing, food, clothing, a phone, transportation, and other regular necessities? What specific investments will you make to ensure incomes are adequate?**

Yes. The Ontario NDP is committed to ensuring that incomes are sufficient to afford housing, food, and other necessities. There is broad agreement that inequality is growing; poverty contributes to poor health outcomes; and, all Ontarians collectively pay more to cope with the impacts of poverty than it would cost to eliminate poverty altogether. We fought to achieve a significant change that allows people to keep the first \$200 they earn before triggering clawbacks. We oppose the continuing clawback of the Ontario Child Benefit through the reduction of basic social assistance rates to parents. Going forward, a NDP government will begin by raising social assistance rates by one percent. After the Ontario Child Benefit increases to \$1,310 in July, we will link it to inflation. A NDP government will also increase the minimum wage to \$12 by 2016 and index it to inflation.

**3. Child Support**

**Q: Will your party commit to changing OW and ODSP rules to make pursuit of child support voluntary and to treat child support income the same as earned income?**

The Ontario NDP supports efforts to improve the fairness of OW and ODSP. A NDP government will work with parents, recipients, and advocates to determine the best way forward with respect to child support income. We recognize that this is a very significant issue to many

families of modest means. It is important for the next government to make improvements that will better serve children and their families.

#### **4. Housing and Homelessness Supports**

**Q: Will your party reinstate the CSUMB program within social assistance? If not, what will you do to ensure that there are sufficient funds in the CHPI program to meet the need in communities? And what will you do to ensure that all municipalities have a program that is comparable to CSUMB and make program information publicly available?**

The Ontario NDP opposed the Liberals' decision to cut the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit and the Special Diet Allowance. We will work very closely with municipalities, recipients, and advocates to end the chaos caused by these Liberal cuts. A NDP government will ensure that sufficient funds are available to meet the needs of the community and to ensure that all Ontarians who need critical start-up funds within social assistance will be able to access those supports regardless of where they reside. Proper supports must be available to ensure people can access or maintain housing and pay their bills so that they can get back on their feet. In addition the Ontario NDP will increase the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative by \$42 Million annually to \$294 Million.

#### **5. Employment Supports**

**Q: What will your party do to improve employment supports and training, including access to post-secondary education and OSAP funding, for people on OW?**

The Ontario NDP recognizes the importance of ensuring all Ontarians can access post-secondary education, employment supports, and training programs. We are the only party proposing to freeze tuition fees and make provincial student loans interest-free. In addition, we will invest in re-training programs for workers over the age of 55 to increase older workers' ability to find employment. We fought to achieve a significant change that allows people to keep the first \$200 they earn before triggering clawbacks. A NDP government will also continue to ensure that OW recipients can access meaningful educational and employment opportunities.