

# INCREASE DIGITAL ACCESS

## DIGITAL ACCESS FOR ALL

**What you can do:** Ask candidates to provide funding to clinics and clients in the form of a monthly digital access benefit to ensure everyone can access the services they need.

- Remote hearings are now the default option at social justice tribunals.
- In-person hearing requests are only granted for Ontario Human Rights Code accommodation or if people can prove that the default hearing format would be unfair to them. This places the burden on people to prove their needs.
- Accessing tribunals online can be difficult for many people. The online portals are not always created with users in mind. For example, there was little consultation before the online portals at the Landlord and Tenant Board (LTB) were put into place.
- Online tribunals are inaccessible to those without digital skills and/or without reliable Internet service.
- Public access terminals at the Social Benefits Tribunal (SBT) are only made available on request in four major centres that are too far away for many. Access to these terminals is decided by request and on a case-by-case basis.

## DIGITAL ACCESS IS NEEDED TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

**What you can do:** Ask candidates to include users when designing digital processes and tools, and to make sure there are hybrid models with both digital and in-person options for hearings and access to caseworkers.

- The new modernization plans for social assistance include increased use of tools that can only be accessed online.
- MyBenefits is an online platform for clients to communicate with caseworkers, upload and receive documents, and to review payments, overpayments and other decisions.
- Another online tool is the Social Assistance Digital Application (SADA). It is an online centralized application. It uses drop-down menus that may not provide all of the options for individual circumstances and accommodation.
- The use of this online tool could increase barriers with accessing social assistance.

## COSTS OF DIGITIZATION

**What you can do:** Let candidates know the challenges presented to you personally. Share your stories, your clients' stories, or help clients share their stories.

- 29% of people living with disabilities, who also use food banks, have 'no access' to regular or reliable high-speed Internet.
- Canadian cellphone data plan rates are the highest or among the highest in the world and are completely unaffordable for people living on social assistance.
- There is no increase in social assistance rates or implementation of a digital access benefit to help cover the costs of digital access or to provide digital literacy training.
- Digital and remote tribunal hearings add a barrier to communication in cases where translation and interpretation are required.
- Through the increased use of remote hearings and digital tools, clinics and clients are being impacted by the cost of digitization.

**Digitization can act as a barrier to accessing social assistance**

**Digital access is an access to justice issue**

**Online-only creates communication barriers and doesn't support language translation and interpretation needs!**

