

FIX MODERNIZATION OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE (1)

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RENEWAL

What you can do: Ask to raise social assistance rates significantly and immediately, and to end the punitive rules.

- The Province is undergoing a once-in-a-generation overhaul from 2020-2024 that changes social assistance delivery.
- Social assistance delivery remains with Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services.
- Decisions about eligibility and amount of benefits will mostly be removed from local offices and made centrally by the Province.
- Municipalities or Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs)/District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) will no longer administer financial assistance but will focus on “stability support” services.
- There is centralization of the phone system and of the application to the Social Assistance Digital Application (SADA).
- There is Automation with risk-based eligibility determinations via third-party credit reporting with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) and Equifax.
- There is an increased use of digital tools via the online communication portal, MyBenefits.
- Co-design is occurring between the province and municipalities/CMSMs/ DSSABs only, and not with clients.

MAJOR PROBLEMS WITH THE NEW PLAN

What you can do: Ask to halt the modernization process until the rollout thus far is studied, the findings are made public, and consultation with clients occurs. Ask for transparency of the funding models and for funding for new wraparound services.

Under the new plan:

- Social assistance rates (frozen since 2018 despite 11% inflation) are not going to go up.
- There are still 800+ punitive rules and clawbacks for social assistance clients.
- There will be less face-to-face interaction in the application process.
- People will lose direct access to caseworkers because of the centralized phone system.
- Funding for digital access for cellphones, computers, data and Internet plans, and digital literacy training is completely missing from the plan.
- There is no plan for additional funding for “stability supports” or wraparound services (supports for childcare, disability, food security, housing, literacy and language learning, mental health and addiction, settlement, training, etc.)
- There's no way for the public to know if or how this new plan will be helpful and successful because there are no clear metrics for success.
- There is no indication that access to social assistance will be broadened to include people with precarious immigration status.
- There was a major lack of broad consultation with social assistance clients before the changes were put into place.
- There is no transparent and supportive funding model between the province and municipalities/CMSMs/DSSABs.

Social assistance rates must be increased significantly and immediately!

Include meaningful consultation and co-design with clients!

Social assistance must be an accessible, integrated, responsive, comprehensive and uncomplicated service model to support Ontario's most vulnerable!



FIX MODERNIZATION OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE (2)

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TRANSFORMATION

What you can do: Ask to raise social assistance rates significantly and immediately, and to end the punitive rules.

- Employment services for Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) have been separated out from the rest of the social assistance system. Employment services for clients has become part of Employment Ontario.
- These supports are now overseen by the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development.
- New Service System Managers (SSMs) are chosen to oversee employment service providers.
- SSMs are selected through a bidding process and can be a private company, a non-profit, a public body (a municipality, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs)/District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) or a consortium (group of organizations).
- So far, WCG (a private Australia-based multinational corporation), FedCap (an American-based non-profit), a public college, and a consortium of CMSMs have won bids to do this work.
- The transformation uses a pay-per-performance model where SSMs are paid after a client is placed in a job.
- This model has been tried in Ontario, the UK and in Australia over the past 25 years. It often results in low long-term job placement rates into low-wage, precarious and contract jobs.
- A new digital questionnaire, the Common Assessment Tool (CAI) streams clients into three streams from least to most barriers to work.
- Phase 1 of the rollout has been prototyped, the SSMs for Phase 2.a have been announced, Phase 2.b and Phase 3 are forthcoming.

MAJOR PROBLEMS WITH THE NEW PLAN

What you can do: Ask to halt the modernization process until the rollout thus far is studied, the findings are made public, and consultation with clients occurs. Ask for more funding for pre-employment supports.

Under the new plan:

- There are no clear pathways for referral to the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).
- There has been no study and assessment and making outcomes of prototypes public before continuing the rollout of other phases.
- There is no new funding for pre-employment supports (childcare, housing, training, etc.)
- No safeguards to prevent clients from getting lost in the shuffle between their social assistance caseworker and their Employment Ontario caseworker.
- It may be harder to keep services public and local under this model.
- There has been little to no consideration for people with disabilities, including the extraordinary and unique costs of living with a disability and assurance of adequate workplace accommodation for people with disabilities who can work.
- There's no way for the public to know if or how this new plan will be helpful and successful because there are no clear metrics for success.

Stop the rollout until the plan can be studied properly!

Ensure people with disabilities are a core part of the plan!

Pay-per-performance is not the way to help support people into good jobs!

