



July 21, 2022

Hon. Doug Ford, premier
Premier's Office
Room 281, Legislative Building, Queen's Park
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Premier@ontario.ca

Re: Re-tabled budget must include significant increases to ODSP rates

Dear Premier Ford,

RNAO thanks you for recognizing during your re-election campaign that Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) rates are too low. This fact is now a matter of clear political consensus in our province. We look forward to your re-tabled budget accounting for a significant increase in ODSP rates.

Premier, we urge you in the strongest possible terms to move a step further by increasing ODSP rates well above the five per cent increase that you have pledged. No government benefit should allow recipients to live below the poverty line. And yet at present well over 400,000 ODSP benefit recipients live in utter poverty.

Today's ODSP rates, starting at \$1,169 per month for single recipients, leave people who must rely on these supports well below the poverty lines established by Statistics Canada:

- Single recipients are 47 per cent below the low-income measure of poverty
- Families of four living in rural Ontario are 39 per cent below the mixed basket measure of poverty
- The same families, if living in Toronto, are 49 per cent below the mixed basket measure

This means that ODSP recipients cannot secure adequate, healthy housing anywhere in our province. According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's latest data, the average rent for a bachelor apartment in Ontario is \$1,106 per month – leaving many single ODSP recipients in the province only \$63 per month for food and basic necessities. In Toronto, ODSP benefits actually fall short of the average rent for a bachelor apartment by almost \$50 per month.

The proposed five per cent increase to ODSP rates will not lift recipients out of poverty. Ontarians and their families will continue to live – unnecessarily – with precarious and inadequate housing and acute food insecurity. They will also face the profound and negative health impacts – including premature death – that flow from abject poverty. To remedy this human tragedy, ODSP rates must be doubled.

Premier, as nurses and witnesses to the devastating impact of poverty on people's lives in health terms, we plead to you to repair this longstanding injustice. ODSP reached its highest value in 1972. In the intervening 50 years, it has lost nearly one-third of its value. And, since your government last raised

ODSP rates by 1.5 percent in 2018, ODSP has lost over 10 per cent of its value as we contend with historically high inflation rates.

The evidence is conclusive: poverty makes people sick and leads to premature death. The World Health Organization states that "poverty is the single largest determinant of health, and ill health is an obstacle to social and economic development." According to Health Quality Ontario, "the poorer you are in Ontario, the more likely you are to have worse health outcomes." The inadequacies of our social assistance system are well-documented, as are the findings that increased provincial spending on social services has been shown to improve health.

Premier, please, we urge you to reflect the need to lift ODSP recipients out of poverty in your re-tabled budget. Please double the current ODSP rates. We know that you wish to build a healthier Ontario where all people can live in dignity and good health. RNAO stands ready to work with you to address the critical issue of poverty.

Yours warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doris Grinspun", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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