

MINIMAL ACTION 3 - October 30, 2018 — #NotMyPremier

LIM = Low Income Measure, internationally recognized concept for poverty line

- 2015: LIM-AT (after tax) = \$22'133 for single person, i.e. \$1844/month
- 2018: LIM-AT adjusted with Bank of Canada Inflation Calculator = \$23'350, i.e. \$1945/month

Basic Income Pilot Project in Ontario

- maximum allowance: \$16'989, i.e. \$1415/month
- maximum allowance for persons with disabilities: \$1415 + \$500 = \$1915

ODSP maximum allowance August 2018: \$1'151; Sept. 2018: \$1'169 (40% under LIM-AT)

Number of ODSP beneficiaries in June 2018: 507,320

- we are poorer than in 1998
- recommended by the Roadmap for Change (2017 review of social assistance): \$1209, \$1269, \$1332 for 2018-2020
15% over 3 years)
- *an ODSP adjudicator earns in a week what we get in one month*

OW maximum allowance August 2018: \$721; Sept. 2018: \$733 (62% under LIM-AT)

Number of OW beneficiaries in June 2018: 457,245

- recommended by the Roadmap for Change: \$793, \$848, \$890, for 2018-2020
(22% over 3 years = what the Harris government cut in 1995)

Family Benefits and General Assistance

- what existed before Mike Harris started his reform of social assistance
- were cut by 21.6% in 1995
- were replaced by OW and ODSP in 1997

"In 2013, the Canadian Medical Association published a report that showed that just 25% of a person's health status is attributable to access to health care. **50% is determined by social determinants such as income**, early childhood development, food security, employment, race, aboriginal status and community belonging." - Steve Lurie, executive director of Canadian Mental Health Association Toronto Branch letter to the editor in Globe and Mail, Monday August 6, 2018

Relationship between disability and work, in 2012: of the total population of individuals living with disabilities:

- 50% were in the workforce = 45% employed + 5.4% unemployed
- 50% were not in the workforce = 27% as completely retired (age)+ 8.75% with a condition that prevented them absolutely from working + 7.5% who said they would look for a job the next year + 6.1% who were either students or people who previously worked or had never worked but might

source: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-654-x/89-654-x2015005-eng.html>

current context

On July 31, 2018, Minister of Community and Social Services Lisa MacLeod (MPP for Nepean, in Ottawa region), announced that she was

- starting a 100 days review/redesign/i“patching of our broken social assistance system” (her words), following the Harris mantra that says: “the best social program is a job”.
- cancelling the Basic Income Pilot Project although it was supposed to run until 2020. 4000 people are affected. the program will be ended at the end of March 2019.
- dividing in two the increase of allowance rates that the previous Liberal government had passed for OW and ODSP before the election (instead of 3%, we get 1.5%). She did not mention anything for future years although the Liberals has promised 3x3% and the last review of social assistance published at the end of 2017 under the title “Roadmap for Change” had recommended a 15% increases over 3 years for ODSP and 22% increase for OW, i.e. a go back to the pre-Harris 22% cuts.
- “pausing” 19 other changes that had been passed by the previous Liberal government too, but not implemented and whose spirit was to make the system more supportive and less punitive.

“The 19 first steps would have started to address the issues that people on social assistance experience with the current system. They would have addressed the deep poverty that the system perpetuates, the daily worries about finding food and paying rent that prevent people from taking steps to make change in their lives, the intrusion and invasion of privacy, the punishment meted out for infractions large and small, and the vast amounts of paperwork required to meet the system’s 800 rules. The changes would have taken us toward a much better, more humane, more compassionate and supportive system.” - Jennefer Laidley, for the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario’ discussion on social assistance. August 16, 2018.

November 8, 2018 is the date that Minister MacLeod has chosen to announce her version of social assistance. It is exactly 100 days after her July 31st announcement.

some big questions behind our social assistance system:

- is “social assistance” a voluntary generous act (act of charity) or a societal obligation (recognition of poverty as a systemic problem)?
- “disability” only exists when it is defined as such. what if there was no such thing?
- what does it mean for people living with disabilities in Ontario to hear “the best social program is a job”?
- do you think that when (marginalized, vulnerable) human beings receive some money from the state, they need to be under a set of punitive rules/“strings attached”, as incentives to maintain/find a job and work (if they can)?

- why is this society not aligning social assistance/basic income rates with the poverty line?
- why is there a difference between “inclusion” and “decision-sharing”?
- who should participate in the design of a poverty reduction program?
- why aren't Indigenous Peoples given right now the self-governance they are asking for many things, including their poverty and disability management system?
- why do we continue to shame the recipients of social assistance and break their dignity?

some small questions: