



Honourable John Milloy
Minister of Community and Social Services
6th Fl, Hepburn Block, 80 Grosvenor St
Toronto ON M7A 1E9

December 1st, 2012

Dear Minister Milloy,

I am writing you today as I am very concerned about the recent report that was released by the Social Assistance Review Commission entitled Brighter Prospects – Transforming Social Assistance in Ontario.

First of all let me clarify that there are some recommendations I agree with in the proposed Social Assistance reform, for instance with Ontario Works an increase in rates, asset limits, and improved income exemptions are long overdue. It should be noted that many of the recommendations made by the Commission already exist within the ODSP Program.

Unfortunately the report also recommends merging the Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program into a new program that would be administered by the Municipalities. The report also operates from the premise that disabled ODSP recipients should be required to work as an eligibility requisite to receive Social Assistance under this new program.

I have concerns about the accountability of a downloaded program. In particular, having already laid off the Program Review Officers who monitored OW and First Nation delivery sites, there is concern that there will not be a consistent level of service from the municipalities. In addition there is a lack of transparency as to whom clients would address issues with. The limited accountability framework suggested by the Commission would only discover issues that are self reported in annual reports. This is not an acceptable way to treat the most vulnerable in Ontario.

I am aware the ODSP Program has recently undergone a major transformation known as “modernization”. Under this transformation ODSP staff received extensive training and were refocused on offering a customer centred service. These changes in service delivery were designed to improve the customer experience. In addition the ODSP Program integrated Income and Employment support services to deliver individualized case management that is more responsive to customer needs. Non-mandatory competitive employment opportunities for those ODSP recipients who are ready, able and willing to work has also been very successful. As well the new delivery structure in ODSP enhances program accountability requirements and improves how ODSP staff manage the program.

By not formally evaluating these changes in ODSP the Social Assistance Review Commission has failed to present a fair and factual report. Based on this I am urging you not to implement the recommendation to merge the two programs and allow ODSP to continue on its path of renewal. I look forward to your written response in this matter.

Sincerely,

Name & Address

Signature

