

Guelph & Wellington:

*A Local Response to Discussion Paper 2: Approaches
for Reform*

March 2012

Submitted to: The Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario

Prepared by: The Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination

Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination

The Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination is a community initiative composed of concerned and affected residents, organizations, all levels of government, the research community and others working together to move poverty reduction issues forward. The Poverty Task Force (PTF) works toward the elimination of poverty by supporting, coordinating and inspiring sustainable change and by supporting the growth of individual resilience through collective action.

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Introduction

Background: **Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario**

In the 2008 Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Ontario government committed to reviewing social assistance, with a focus on removing barriers and increasing opportunities for people to work.

In December 2010, the Minister of Community and Social Services announced the appointment of two Commissioners from outside the government to lead a review of Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

On June 9, 2011 the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario released its first report, *A Discussion Paper: Issues and Ideas*. Over the summer the Commission encouraged people across Ontario to come together in groups to engage in a discussion on the pressing issues facing social assistance. The Commission received more than 700 submissions in response.

The Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination, along with a number of community partners, gathered feedback from our community by hosting a community conversation and an online survey in August 2011. The information collected was submitted to the Commission on September 1, 2011. The submission is available on the Poverty Task Force website, www.gwpoverity.ca.

On February 2, 2012 the Commission released its second report, *Discussion Paper 2: Approaches for Reform*, which discusses different approaches to improving some of the key areas of the social assistance system.

The Commission requested further input and advice from stakeholders and communities by March 16, 2012 to help frame recommendations to the government.

Final recommendations are expected to be presented by the Commission in June 2012.

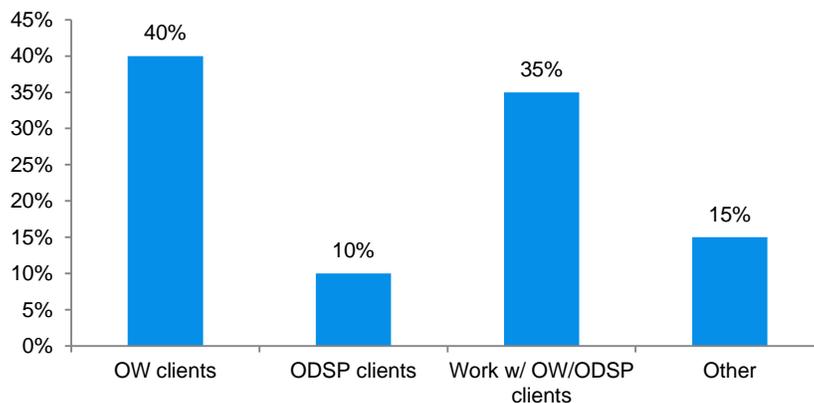
Background: **Local Response in Guelph & Wellington**

In an effort to engage with people and organizations with diverse perspectives on social assistance, the Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination, with the

support of an ad-hoc committee, invited groups and organizations, including staff, volunteers and clients, to provide feedback by taking advantage of one or more of the following opportunities:

- **Online survey.** An online survey, developed by the ad-hoc committee, provided an opportunity for input on the major themes identified in *Discussion Paper 2*. The survey was available for a three week period, from February 21st to March 9th, and could be completed online or over the phone.

A total of **78 individuals completed the survey**. The following graph shows a breakdown of who completed the survey¹:



- **Facilitate your own community conversation.** A facilitation guide was developed by the ad-hoc committee as a tool for those who wished to facilitate their own consultation session (Appendix 1).
- **Host a community conversation.** Members of the ad-hoc committee offered to facilitate community conversations for groups and organizations in the community from February 21st to March 9th. Discussions were based on the major themes and options identified in *Discussion Paper 2*.

A total of 10 community conversations were held throughout the community. Approximately **170 individuals participated in these sessions**. Groups ranged in size from 5 to 35 people. Participants were a mix of OW and ODSP clients, staff that work with OW and ODSP clients, volunteers, and general community members.

¹ "Other" refers to individuals who have received OW and/or ODSP in the past, have a family member that is an OW and/or ODSP client, and concerned citizens.

Purpose of the Report

The main purpose of this report is to send local feedback to the Commission to be considered in the development of recommendations to the government in June 2012.

In addition, this report will be used to inform local stakeholders and to develop local responses to address challenges and concerns expressed by community members based on their experiences with social assistance programs.

Scope

While this report provides a comprehensive analysis of the information collected in Guelph & Wellington through the online survey and community conversations, it does have significant limitations.

To begin, it was challenging to bring community members together in conversation and to distribute the online survey in the timeframe provided by the Commission. While over 75 surveys were completed online and nearly 200 people participated in community conversations, this remains a small sample of the overall community.

In addition, not all the issues described in *Discussion Paper 2* were covered equally during community conversations. The facilitators focused on issues that seemed to garner the most interest from participants. As a result, feedback on some issues (i.e. appropriate benefit structure) is more plentiful than it is on other issues (i.e. Viable over the Long Term). Furthermore, Chapter 6, *First Nations and Social Assistance*, was not covered. It was determined by members of the ad-hoc committee that issues discussed in this chapter were beyond their area of knowledge and feedback was best left to those individuals, organizations and communities with a direct interest in the issues.

Finally, the technical nature of *Discussion Paper 2* did not lend itself well to community conversations. In fact, the Commission quite unfairly gave communities the challenging task of translating the document into a language that was better understood by those from whom they were requesting feedback from. Despite our best efforts, many participants still grappled with the language and had a hard time providing feedback on issues they couldn't understand. Even those with a comprehensive understanding of the social assistance system struggled to provide informed feedback on some of the more technical issues.

Commonly Used Terms

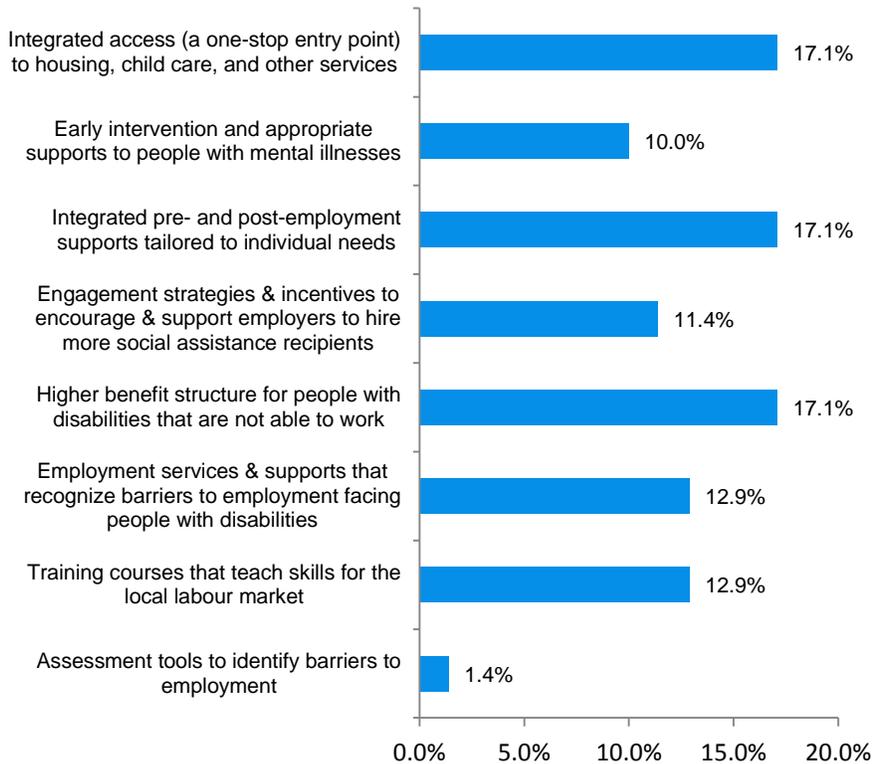
The following is a list of commonly used terms in this report:

- **Caseworker.** For the purpose of this report, a ‘caseworker’ refers to an employee that provides ongoing case management support for persons in receipt of social assistance.
- **Client.** For the purpose of this report, a ‘client’ refers to an individual in receipt of social assistance.
- **Participant.** A ‘participant’ refers to an individual that provided feedback for this report, whether it was offered online, over the telephone, or during an in-person community conversation.

Chapter #1: Reasonable Expectations and Necessary Supports to Employment

Features of Effective Services & Supports

A number of features of effective employment services and supports were identified by the Commission in *Discussion Paper 2*. Online survey participants were asked to indicate the most important feature to address. The following chart provides an overview of the responses collected:



Additional comments from the survey, as well as feedback from community conversations, focused on the following points:

- **Incentive programs for employers.** Many participants noted that the government should provide stronger financial incentives for employers to train and hire OW and ODSP clients. The County of Wellington Ontario Works programme does currently provides a Supportive Job Service that matches OW recipients with employment opportunities. This programme offers specific incentives for employers that qualify, including a training subsidy of up to \$1000 (Appendix 2). However, community feedback suggests that more programs like this are required to encourage employers to hire OW and ODSP recipients.
- **More holistic and client-centered approach.** Participants commented that current employment services and supports offer a one-size-fits-all approach, which ignores the unique circumstances of each individual. A new approach, one that addresses individual client needs, is required in order to provide adequate and appropriate services and supports.
- **More life-skills management support.** Participants noted that **life skill management issues are often a barrier to employment and current employment services and supports for social assistance recipients do not adequately address this.**

The County of Wellington does currently provide a Life Skills Intensive Case Management option for those who are experiencing a barrier to employment due to life skills management, addiction and/or mental health issues². However, based on the feedback collected for this report, clients would benefit from an expansion of the program.

- **Employer education.** Participants repeatedly stated that employers must be better educated about the needs and supports required by social assistance clients, particularly those on ODSP and/or those dealing with mental health issues, to help them successfully transition to the workforce. It was suggested by participants that current misunderstandings about the cost and uncertainty of hiring social assistance clients discourages employers from hiring those on OW and ODSP.
- **Local labour market.** The online survey results show that 12.9% of participants think that training courses that teach skills for the local labour market is the most important feature for the Commission to address in terms of ensuring effective employment services and supports. This issue came up repeatedly in community conversations. Many participants built on this fact by suggesting that **in addition to providing skills and training for the local labour market, employment services and supports should prepare social assistance clients for jobs that pay a livable income, opposed to minimum wage positions.**

Access to Employment Services and Supports

In *Discussion Paper 2*, the Commission provides three possible approaches aimed at improving the delivery of employment services and requested feedback on which would be most effective. Due to the technical nature of the question, providing input on this particular issue was a challenge for many participants. In fact, nearly 40% of the online survey participants skipped this question. During community conversations there was more of an opportunity to discuss each approach in-depth and consider the potential challenges and benefits that each offered, but consensus around a single approach was still not reached. The following chart summarizes some of the main feedback collected:

² County of Wellington (2012). "Life skills worker." Retrieved from: http://www.wellington.ca/social_subpage.aspx?id=25

	Potential Challenges	Potential Benefits
Improved Provincial-Municipal/First Nations collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current system is not client-friendly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major additional costs • Increased collaboration could result in less forms for clients to fill out • Allows for more flexibility to adapt services to the individual client • Enables local communities to direct employment services
Municipalities/First Nations deliver all employment services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not h currently have the knowledge to direct clients to the appropriate services. Would require (potentially costly) training for staff and increase workloads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows more flexibility for the municipality to respond to the local labour market needs
Employment Ontario delivers all employment services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May restrict local agencies that currently provide employment services outside of OW and ODSP programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many participants expressed positive experiences with Employment Ontario and they wish to see these continue

Table 1: Approaches to Improve Access to Employment Services and Supports

Chapter #2: Appropriate Benefit Structure

Balancing Adequacy, Fairness and Incentives to Work: **Interactions**

Many participants noted in community conversations that, in an attempt to address adequacy, fairness and incentives to work through an appropriate benefit structure, **the Commission perpetuates the stigma associated with the so-called “undeserving poor” (social assistance recipients), by contrasting them with the “deserving poor” (low-wage workers).** The feedback collected from participants is best summarized by the following statement from *Poverty Free Ontario*³:

“Focusing on the need to balance the “benefit structure” so that OW/ODSP recipients do not receive more in income and services than low wage earners consigns both groups to ongoing

³ Poverty Free Ontario (14 February 2012). “Call for cross-community action on Social Assistance Review Discussion Paper #2.” Retrieved from <http://www.povertyfreeontario.ca/category/social-assistance-review/>

poverty – the OW/ODSP recipients struggling to get out of deep poverty (below 80% of LIM) and the full-time, full-year minimum wage earner still falling below the poverty line. The Commissioners must be encouraged to recognize that, in terms of income adequacy, the interests of these two groups are joined. “

Balancing Adequacy, Fairness and Incentives to Work: **Establishing a Rate Methodology**

In *Discussion Paper 2*, the Commission grapples with how to establish a rate methodology that takes into account an ‘adequacy measure’ and a ‘reference wage.’

Many community conversation participants took note of the Commission’s statement that “there is no generally accepted definition of poverty to help determine adequacy of rates,”⁴ despite the fact that Ontario’s Poverty Reduction Strategy set targets based on Statistics Canada’s Low Income Measure⁵. In addition, the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy looks to the Ontario Deprivation Index as a poverty measure that distinguishes the poor from the non-poor⁶.

Participants strongly advocated that the Commission consider both the Low Income Measure and the Deprivation Index in determining a rate methodology. In addition, many participants called on the Commission to focus on a rate methodology that would result in a livable income, specific to the cost of living in the client’s community, opposed to any of the labour market income benchmarks suggested in *Discussion Paper 2*. The Commission should consider the indicators used to calculate living wages and Affordability Index measures, including (but not limited to):

- Nutritious Food Basket
- Average Cost of Child Care
- Average Monthly Rent
- Transportation
- Medical expenses
- Recreation

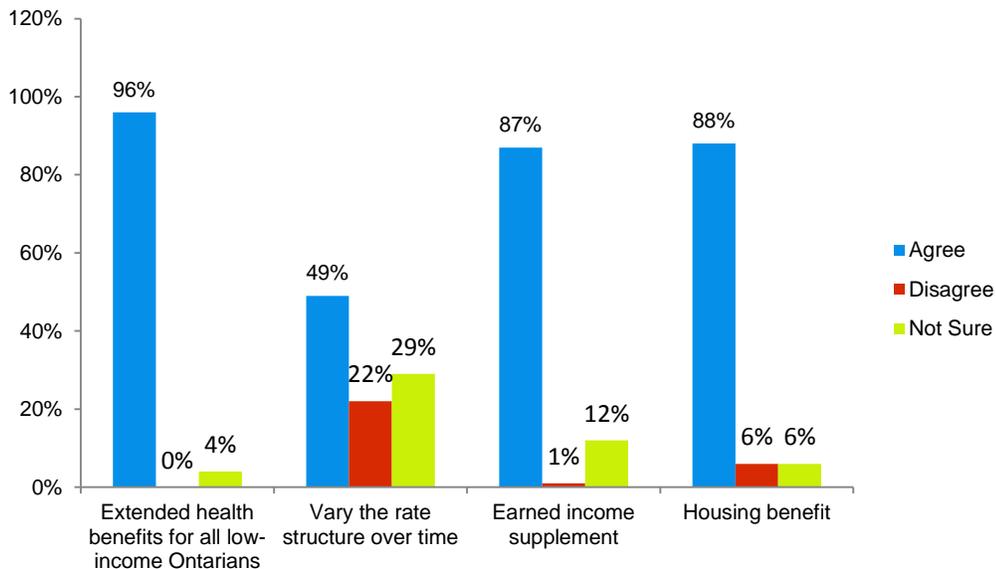
⁴ Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario (February 2012). “Discussion paper 2: Approaches for reform.” Retrieved from <http://www.povertyfreeontario.ca/category/social-assistance-review/>

⁵ Ontario. (22 November 2010). “Breaking the cycle: Ontario’s poverty reduction strategy.” Retrieved from <http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/breakingthecycle/report/index.aspx>

⁶ Matern, Richard, Mendelson, Michael, and Oliphant, Michael (2 December 2009). “Developing a deprivation index: The research process.” Retrieved from <http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/836ENG.pdf>

Balancing Adequacy, Fairness and Incentives to Work: **Addressing the Trade-Offs**

In *Discussion Paper 2*, the Commission provides several approaches to ease trade-offs between the objectives of adequacy, fairness and incentives to work. Online survey participants were asked to indicate which of the approaches they agreed with. The following chart provides an overview of the responses collected:



Community conversation participants strongly asserted that ALL of the approaches need to be implemented immediately. The following is a summary of the feedback collected on each approach:

i) **Extended health benefits for all low-income Ontarians**

The extension of health benefits for all low-income Ontarians was unanimously supported by community conversation participants. Many participants confirmed the Commission's finding that "losing health benefits upon moving into employment could be a powerful disincentive to exiting the [social assistance] program⁷." More importantly, others asserted, **not providing health benefits now will cost society more in the long-run in terms of health-care costs.**

⁷ Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario (February 2012). "Discussion paper 2: Approaches for reform." Retrieved from <http://www.povertyfreeontario.ca/category/social-assistance-review/>

ii) **Vary the rate structure over time**

While most community conversation participants understood the thinking behind this proposed approach, most argued that social assistance clients should get what they need from the start, rather than having to wait a period of time.

iii) **Earned income supplement**

There was overwhelming agreement among community conversation participants that an earned income supplement would be “a valuable mechanism to support low-income workers⁸.” It was also agreed that the current Working Income Tax Benefit is not meeting part of its mandate “to encourage other Canadians to enter the workforce⁹.” As mentioned in the Commission’s report, the value of the benefit is too low and it begins to phase out at an income level well below full-time minimum wage¹⁰.

iv) **Housing benefit**

Community conversation participants expressed overwhelming support for a housing benefit for all low-income Ontarians. Despite the Commission’s suggestion that “there has not yet been much public discussion about how to design it¹¹,” members of the Wellington-Guelph Housing Committee, as well as other participants, pointed to the report *A Housing Benefit for Ontario: One Housing Solution for a Poverty Reduction Strategy*¹², which thinks through the formula and offers a design.

⁸ Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario (February 2012). “Discussion paper 2: Approaches for reform.” Retrieved from <http://www.povertyfreeontario.ca/category/social-assistance-review/>

⁹ Canada Revenue Agency (2010). “Working Income Tax Benefit (WITB).” Retrieved from <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/wtb/menu-eng.html>

¹⁰ Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario (February 2012). “Discussion paper 2: Approaches for reform.” Retrieved from <http://www.povertyfreeontario.ca/category/social-assistance-review/>

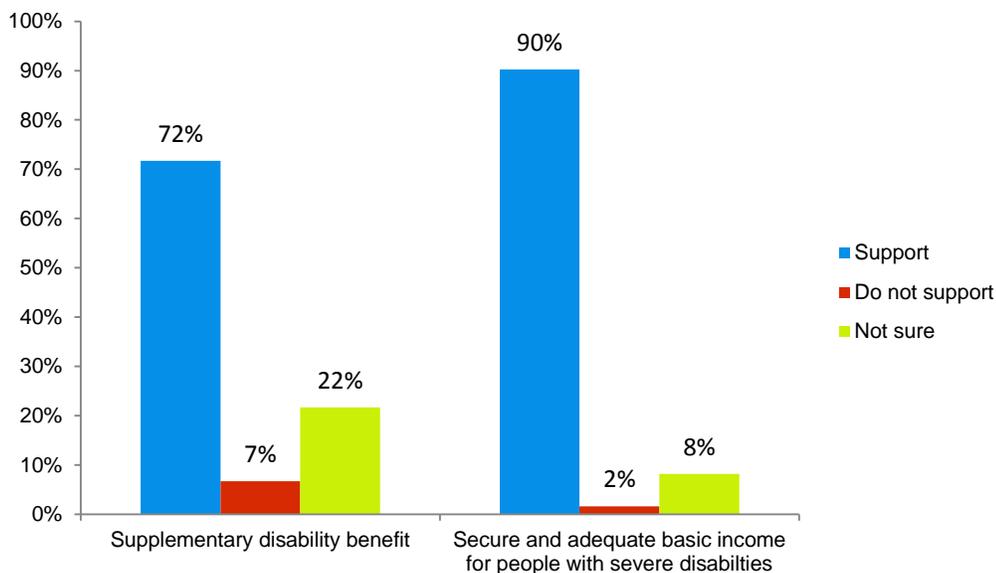
¹¹ Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario (February 2012). “Discussion paper 2: Approaches for reform.” Retrieved from <http://www.povertyfreeontario.ca/category/social-assistance-review/>

¹² Pomeroy, Steve, Steele, Marion, Hoy, Joshua, and Stapleton, John (November 2008). “A Housing Benefit for Ontario: One housing solution for a poverty reduction strategy.” Retrieved from http://www.dailybread.ca/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/Housing_Benefit_for_Ontario_Final.pdf

In general, participant feedback on the four approaches put forward by the Commission in *Discussion Paper 2* was positive. However, **many participants argued that the approaches failed to acknowledge the obvious: providing people with a livable income based on the cost of living will eliminate the need for piecemeal solutions. This involves increasing social assistance rates and minimum wage rates in Ontario.**

Balancing Adequacy, Fairness and Incentives to Work: **Designing Benefits for People with Disabilities**

In *Discussion Paper 2*, the Commission suggests two approaches for designing benefits for people with disabilities. The first involves removing the rate differential with Ontario Works from the current ODSP rate and introducing a new supplementary disability benefit, outside the social assistance system, to all low-income people with disabilities¹³. A second approach suggests providing a secure and adequate basic income for people with severe disabilities who are unlikely to work, similar to the Guaranteed Income Supplement for low-income seniors. Online survey participants were asked if they supported these approaches. The following graph shows their responses:



Community conversation participants indicated similar levels of support compared to the online survey participants for both approaches. However, **a major concern was**

¹³ Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario (February 2012). "Discussion paper 2: Approaches for reform." Retrieved from <http://www.povertyfreeontario.ca/category/social-assistance-review/>

repeatedly raised about how individuals with disabilities will be assessed, and who will conduct that assessment, to determine whether they are considered able to work or whether they would qualify for the basic income for people with severe disabilities. Concerns were raised particularly for those with episodic disabilities who may move along the ‘ability to work’ spectrum at different points in their lives (i.e. those struggling with mental illnesses).

Many participants commented that **removing the rate differential from the current ODSP rate should not be discussed until improvements are made to the OW program.** These comments reflect the sentiment expressed in the Income Security Advocacy Centre’s draft response to the Commission’s second discussion paper:

“Dismantling ODSP in the way that the Commission’s second discussion paper describes, before building responsive, accessible, and accommodating employment supports and training programs for everyone, is the wrong way to approach reforming social assistance. When the “basic” OW program is sufficiently responsive to the variety of needs of various groups and the services they require, discussion can be had about whether or not a separate ODSP program continues to be required¹⁴.”

Balancing Adequacy, Fairness and Incentives to Work: **Dealing with the Complexity of Benefits**

In an effort to simplify the currently very complex structure, the Commission suggests merging some elements. The following summarizes feedback from community conversation and online participants on the three approaches suggested in *Discussion Paper 2*:

- i) **Combine current basic needs component and shelter allowance into a standard rate for all adults.**

Online survey participants were split on whether they supported this approach, with 41% in support, 38% not in support, and 22% unsure. Community conversation participants thought that, in theory, the approach could make

¹⁴ Income Security Advocacy Centre (February 2012). “ISAC Responses to the Commission’s Second Discussion Paper.” Retrieved from <http://sareview.ca>

things easier for clients, but were hesitant to offer their full support without knowing the following:

- Would the standard rate take into account and respond to differences in market rents in different areas (i.e. rural vs. urban)?
- Would the standard rate make the application process simpler for clients?
- Would the standard rate take into account and respond to differences in the cost of living in different areas?
- Would the standard rate be higher than the current basic needs component plus the maximum shelter allowance?

Most participants noted that they would support a standard rate if it was an adequate amount that took into account the cost of living in specific geographical areas.

ii) **Eliminate the dependent adult category for adults not enrolled in post-secondary education.**

Many participants found it difficult to provide feedback on this approach without a deeper understanding of the current situation. In fact, nearly half of the online participants indicated that they were not sure if they supported this approach. During community conversations, the most feedback on this topic was collected from two groups: Family & Children's Services of Guelph & Wellington (staff) and Wyndham House Youth Resource Centre (clients).

Staff from Family & Children's Services commented that eliminating the dependent adult category could have advantages and disadvantages. Among the advantages, eliminating the category could result in extra income for the household and parent's assistance would not be impacted if their child went into non-compliance. Additionally, it could foster independence among these 'dependent adults'. However, it could lead to considerable household conflict if the child was not contributing to the household.

Youth clients from Wyndham House Youth Resource Centre felt more positive about eliminating the dependent adult category. Many of the youth commented that they left home because they either felt they were a financial burden to their parents or their parents kicked them out because they couldn't contribute financially. These youth commented that if they could be treated as separate applicants and receive individual payments if they qualify for social assistance, they would be able to continue living at home with safe housing and support.

iii) Merge some special benefits into the standard rate

The example provided by the Commission in *Discussion Paper 2*, was to potentially eliminate the Special Diet Allowance as a special benefit in social assistance and address the dietary needs of all low-income people. Nearly all participants were in favour of addressing the dietary needs of all low-income people, but raised concerns about whether the rate would be sufficient to meet the dietary needs related to certain medical conditions.

Many participants advocated that social assistance rates can address dietary needs by considering the Nutritious Food Basket, a tool that estimates the basic cost for an individual or household to eat healthy¹⁵.

A number of participants noted that **the issue is not only with how special benefits are delivered, but how they are communicated to clients**. Many participants stated that clients are often unaware of which special benefits they are eligible for and it is often up to the client, not the caseworker, to figure it out.

As stated several times in this report already, many participants argued that the approaches offered by the Commission in *Discussion Paper 2* fail to acknowledge the obvious: providing people with a livable income based on the cost of living will eliminate the need for piecemeal solutions. This involves increasing social assistance rates *and* minimum wage rates in Ontario.

Chapter #3: Easier to Understand

Complexity, Compliance and Risk Management

There was an overwhelming sense among participants that social assistance recipients are being held to unfair compliance measures that are intrusive and stressful for clients and an administrative burden for caseworkers. Much of the feedback came back to the same question – why does the government require social assistance recipients to meet more compliance measures than others that benefit from publicly funded programs (i.e. employment insurance, guaranteed income supplement, etc.)? Many participants

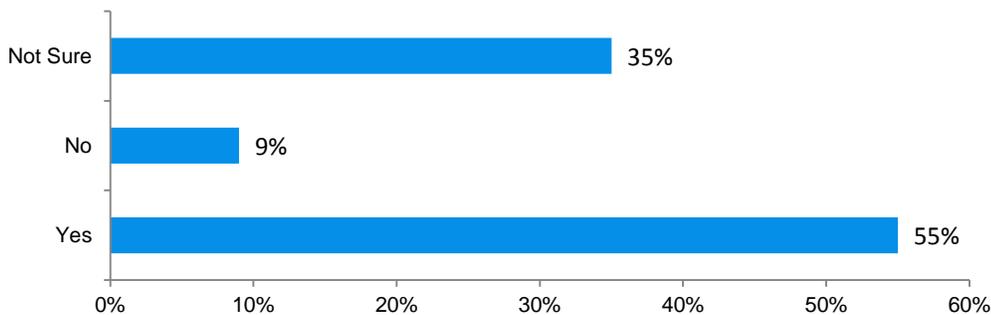
¹⁵ McCorriston, Jennifer (5 October 2011). "Ontario Nutritious Food Basket." Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health. Retrieved from http://www.wdgppublichealth.ca/sites/default/files/wdgpfiles/BOH%20Report%20BH_01_03_02_2311%20-%20Ontario%20Nutritious%20Food%20Basket.pdf

suggested that social assistance recipients should be held to the same compliance measures as taxpayers. **The current system, participants argued, stigmatizes social assistance recipients and discussing compliance measures only further perpetuates this.**

Similarly, participants had a difficult time discussing penalties for those that misuse the system without asking why the question was being asked by the Commission in the first place. Fraud rates among social assistance recipients, it was pointed out by participants, are very low and thus do not garner public discussion. Additionally, **participants pointed that there is a need to first identify and define the root causes of “fraud” and then do address non-compliance through a prevention lens.**

Complexity, Compliance and Risk Management: **Surveillance System vs. Audit System**

In the online survey, the audit-based system was explained using information from *Discussion Paper 2* and participants were asked if they thought the audit-based system was a good idea. The following graph shows their responses:



Community conversation participants provided plenty of feedback on this topic. Many participants noted **potential advantages to moving to an audit-based system**, including:

- An audit-based system could reduce stress for clients who currently have to find and submit receipts every month as part of the current compliance measures.
- An audit-based system could reduce the administrative burden of caseworkers, allowing them to develop relationships with their clients as individuals, opposed to clients as a case number.

- An audit-base system could be less intrusive and humiliating for clients, reducing the stigma that currently surrounds social assistance recipients.
- An audit-based system could save the system dollars, which could be reinvested in training and support programs and benefits.

However, many participants also pointed out **potential problems with an audit-based system**, including:

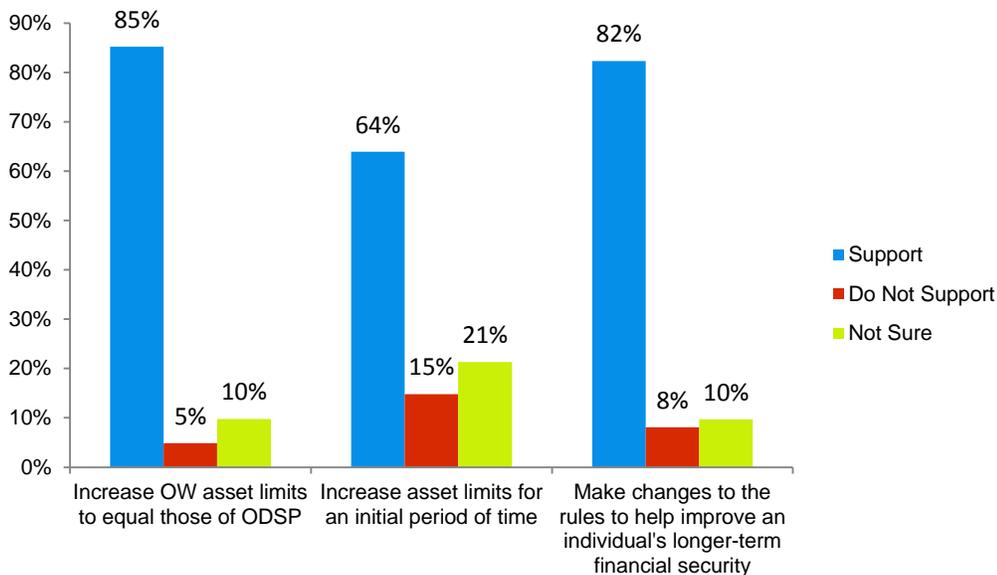
- An audit-based system could be more stressful for clients who forget to get receipts monthly and are then asked to show them during an audit.
- An audit-based system could result in clients owing money after an audit if they forget to report changes.
- An audit-based system fails to recognize that some clients require more support than others in tracking and reporting changes.

Some participants suggested that an audit-based approach may be appropriate for clients that have been under the surveillance approach for a certain period of time without any issues, while others commented that this approach would be unfair and judgemental.

Overall, there was general consensus among participants that the current surveillance measures need to be reduced; yet moving to an audit-based system does not appear to be the solution.

Complexity, Compliance and Risk Management: **Treatment of Assets**

In *Discussion Paper 2*, the Commission provides three approaches aimed at revising asset rules. The first approach looks at increasing Ontario Works asset limits to equal those of ODSP. The second approach considers increasing the asset limits for an initial period of time when an individual first enters the program. A third approach suggests changing current rules to help improve an individual's longer-term financial security (i.e. limits on specific assets such as RRSPs could be increased). Online survey participants were asked if they supported these approaches. The following graph shows their responses:



Feedback collected from community conversations suggest similar levels of support for the different approaches compared to the online survey results.

Chapter #4: Viable over the Long Term

In Chapter 4, the Commission discusses different approaches to improving integration and delivery to help achieve long-term viability. The approaches are as follows¹⁶:

Approach #1 – Continue with the current model of separate delivery of Ontario Works and ODSP income support, while integrating employment services and supports for everyone receiving social assistance.

Approach #2 – Provide employment services and income support through a one-stop delivery model that would integrate Ontario Works and ODSP at the local level.

Approach #3 – Municipalities to deliver human services components of social assistance, while the Province delivers administrative services.

¹⁶ Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario (February 2012). "Discussion paper 2: Approaches for reform." Retrieved from <http://www.povertyfreeontario.ca/category/social-assistance-review/>

Many participants found it challenging to provide feedback on these approaches without a concrete understanding of the possible outcomes of each approach. In fact, 20% of online survey participants skipped this question and 22% indicated that they were not sure which approach they supported.

During community conversations, a number of participants suggested they favoured the second approach because a “one-stop delivery model” led them to believe that it would be a simpler system for clients.

Others commented that the first approach conflicted with positions they supported earlier in the Commissions paper around providing a standard rate for both OW and ODSP clients, making separate delivery unnecessary.

It was often at this point in the community conversations that participants began expressing frustration with the Commission and *Discussion Paper 2*. Many participants were frustrated with the technical nature of the discussion and thought the Commission’s approach to reform was to treat issues in silos, rather than understand how integrated they are. With no disrespect to the challenge that lies before the Commission in terms of reforming a very complex system, **participants were discouraged by the lack of focus on the main issue – inadequate social assistance rates and minimum wage.**

Viable over the Long Term: **Other Programs**

The majority of participants were unable to provide feedback on the two other programs that are part of the social assistance program: Temporary Care Assistance (TCA) and Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities (ACSD). Some participants were familiar enough with the programs to provide the following feedback:

i) **Temporary Care Assistance**

There was general support for sharing the delivery of Temporary Care Assistance among the Ministry of Children and Youth and the social assistance system. For example, if child protection services have an open case then having them deliver TCA through the Ministry of Children and Youth would help streamline things. However, if there is no open case, it was felt that TCA should continue to be delivered through the social assistance system.

ii) Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities

General consensus among participants was that ACSD could move so it is delivered by the Ministry of Children & Youth Services or the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. However, if it does move to the MCYS, it should not be delivered by child protection services.

Chapter #5: An Integrated Ontario Position on Income Security

Online survey and community conversation participants applaud the Commissioner's for recognizing the policies and programs that impact the social assistance caseload, as well as the complex interactions between social assistance and other income support programs. These include:

- Lack of Canadian experience and credential recognition for many immigrants.
- Limited access to Employment Insurance, inadequate Employment Insurance rates, and limited period of time one can receive Employment Insurance.
- Limited availability of prescription drug, dental and vision care benefits.
- Inadequate minimum wage rates.
- Lack of affordable housing.
- Lack of coordination with other programs, such as EI and CPP-Disability.

In addition to the above, participants suggested the Commission also consider recommendations around additional assistance for low-income Ontarians to achieve post-secondary education.

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Discussion Paper 2: Approaches for Reform

Facilitation Guide

Produced by:
The Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination



Summary of Facilitator Tasks

01

Background:
Review of Social Assistance in Ontario

02

Preparing for a Community Conversation

03

Logistics

04

Proposed Agenda

05

Next Steps & Follow Up

06

Issues Background & Discussion Questions

07

The Role of the Facilitator

A good facilitator is vital to the success of a community conversation. It is not necessary to have training or experience in facilitating a group discussion as long as you are enthusiastic, friendly, a good listener and able to think on your feet. It is essential that you know your role and prepare carefully for the discussion. You do not need to be an expert in the topic being discussed but you should know enough about it to be able to ask sensible questions and raise points that have been missed by the group. You must be able to create a friendly atmosphere of cooperation and trust where participants are comfortable sharing their opinions and ideas. **You are not a teacher: you do not have to answer all the questions; your role is to help the group find their own answers.**

Summary of the Facilitator Tasks

The following tasks are described in further details in this guide:

- **Be prepared.** The information in this guide has been put together for facilitators to make sure they understand the goals of the discussion, are familiar with the subject, and have questions for the group in advance.
- **Assist the group process.** The facilitator's role is to guide the group and to keep them focused on the content of the discussion.
- **Ensure the information collected from the discussion is reported back.**

Information collected from the discussions will be used to prepare a submission to the Commission on the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario. Information should be returned to:

Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination

85 Westmount Road

Guelph ON N1H 5J2

gwpoverity@gmail.com

Background: Review of Social Assistance in Ontario

In the 2008 Poverty Reduction Strategy the Ontario government committed to reviewing social assistance, with a focus on removing barriers and increasing opportunities for people to work.

In December 2010, the Minister of Community and Social Services announced the appointment of two Commissioners from outside the government to lead a review of Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

On June 9, 2011 the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario released its first report, *A Discussion Paper: Issues and Ideas*. Over the summer the Commission encouraged people across Ontario to come together in groups to engage in a discussion on the pressing issues facing social assistance. The Commission received more than 700 submissions in response.

The Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination, along with a number of community partners, gathered feedback from our community by hosting a community conversation and an online survey in August 2011. The information collected was submitted to the Commission on September 1, 2011. The submission is available on the Poverty Task Force website, www.gwpoverty.ca.

On February 2, 2012 the Commission released its second report, *Discussion Paper 2: Approaches for Reform*, which discusses different approaches to improving some of the key areas of the social assistance system. Through this paper, the Commission is seeking further input and advice from stakeholders and communities by March 16, 2012 to help frame recommendations to the government.

Final recommendations to the government are expected to be presented by the Commission in June 2012.

Preparing for a Community Conversation

03

Facilitators should review the facilitation guide thoroughly and take some time to familiarize themselves with the subject. The information provided in this guide will provide facilitators with sufficient information to guide the discussion.

For those interested in learning more about social assistance, the review process, and options proposed by the Commission, the following documents are commended:

Resource Centre – Social Assistance Today

<http://socialassistancereview.ca/social-assistance-today>

What We Heard: A Summary of Discussion on Social Assistance

<http://socialassistancereview.ca/commission-publications>

Discussion Paper 2: Approaches to Reform

<http://socialassistancereview.ca/commission-publications>

Webinar Series – Preparing for the Options Paper

<http://sareview.ca/isac-resources/webinars-preparing-for-the-options-paper/>

Guelph & Wellington: Recommendations for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario

<http://socialassistancereview.ca/uploads/File/Guelph-Wellington-Task-Force-for-Poverty-Elimination.pdf>

Logistics

04

The following logistics have been outlined for those groups and organizations that have requested the support of a facilitator from the Poverty Task Force. However, groups and organizations facilitating their own sessions may also find this section useful to consider.

- The building must be accessible for all participants
- Chairs for participants should be set up in a circle. Several chairs with no arms should be provided.
- Blank nametags will be provided for participants.
- A flip chart and paper or whiteboard with markers should be provided.
- The agenda should be written where all participants can see it or copies should be distributed.
- The following handouts will be provided for participants:
 - Background & Summary based on *Discussion Paper 2*
 - Printed copies of the online survey being distributed in Guelph & Wellington
 - A list of ways people can provide input

Proposed Agenda

05

The following is a proposed agenda for facilitators to follow and adapt as necessary.

- | | | |
|------------|---|---|
| 10 minutes | Welcome & introductions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome participants, introduce the facilitator and note taker, and ask participants to introduce themselves• Review agenda |
| 10 minutes | Background & information about the review process | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review main areas identified by the Commission (employment supports, education & training, assets & benefits, rules, future of social assistance) <p>Identify the goals of the discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To obtain input on approaches to transforming social assistance and broader issues that affect the system |
| 10 minutes | Instructions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Guidelines for a respectful discussion• Goal is to identify common ground – don't force consensus |
| 60 minutes | Discussion | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• (This time can be broken up according to the number of questions you wish to discuss) |
| 30 minutes | Closing the discussion | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summarize feedback collected• Acknowledge participants contributions• Talk about next steps & follow up |

Next Steps & Follow Up

06

Information collected from community conversations and the online survey will be analyzed and written into a final report to submit to the Commission on September 1, 2012. The report will be posted on the Poverty Task Force website, www.gwpoverty.ca, and hard copies can be mailed upon request.

Community members, groups and organizations may also provide feedback directly to the Commission via email at socialassistancereview@ontario.ca or by mail or fax:

Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario
2 Bloor Street West
4th Floor, Suite 400
Toronto, ON
M4W 3E2

Fax: 416-212-0413

The Poverty Task Force can provide a follow-up information session for groups and organizations to review the final submission to the Commission if requested.

The Poverty Task Force will update any new information from Commission on their website as it is released. Information can also be found on the Commission's website, www.socialassistancereview.ca.

Issue Background & Discussion Questions

07

Discussion Paper 2: Approaches for Reform focuses on different approaches to improving some of the key areas of the social assistance system. The paper is organized by five outcomes for the review, plus a chapter on issues that are specific to First Nations.

The five areas are:

1. Reasonable Expectations and Necessary Supports to Employment
2. Appropriate Benefit Structure
3. Easier to Understand
4. Viable over the Long Term
5. An Integrated Ontario Position on Income Security

The following pages provide a summary of each area, along with the questions for discussion suggested by the Commission.

Since some of the information in the Commission's report deals with technical information and is quite detailed and lengthy, we have proposed questions in each area that we suggest using for discussions in our community.

Employment Supports, Education & Training

Summary

The Commission's report notes that employment is one of the best ways to help people move out of poverty and acknowledges that current employment services and supports are failing to meet the needs of those who are unable to easily enter the workforce.

This section of the report covers the main features of effective employment services and supports and provides options for improving access to employment services and supports.

Features of Effective Services & Supports

- Assessment tools to identify barriers to employment
- Training courses that teach skills for the local labour market
- Employment services and supports that recognize the barriers to employment facing people with disabilities
- Higher benefit structure for people with disabilities that are not able to work
- Engagement strategies and incentives to encourage and support employers to hire more social assistance recipients
- Integrated pre- and post-employment supports tailored to individual needs
- Early intervention and appropriate supports to people with mental illnesses
- Integrated access (a one-stop entry point) to housing, child care, and other services

Questions for Discussion

1. In your opinion, how can employment services be made more effective for social assistance recipients?

Options

The Commission's report presents the following approaches aimed at improving coordination and integration of employment services and related supports.

1. Strengthen collaboration among those currently responsible for delivering employment services with no changes to the roles and responsibilities of municipalities, First Nations, or the Province.
2. Allow municipalities and First Nations to deliver all employment services for people receiving social assistance, whether OW or ODSP.
3. Have all employment services delivered by Employment Ontario (EO). In this case, social assistance administrators could retain responsibility for overall case management, including referrals to EO.

Questions for Discussion

1. Of the options presented, which do you think the Commission should recommend? Why?

Appropriate Benefit Structure

Summary: Appropriate Benefit Structure

The Commission's report recognizes that the benefit structure needs to take into account the cost of living, fairness between low-income workers and people receiving social assistance, and incentives to take on employment.

Options

The Commission's report presents the following options for addressing the trade-offs between the objectives of adequacy, fairness, and incentives to work:

1. Provide extended health benefits to all low-income Ontarians, regardless of whether they are working or receiving social assistance.
2. Establish a rate structure that changes over the period in which an individual receives social assistance (i.e. a basic rate for the first 18-24 months and a higher rate for those in need of longer-term income support).
3. Provide an earned income supplement to enhance the incomes of low-income workers and provide an incentive for those not working to enter the workforce.
4. Provide a housing benefit for all low-income Ontarians, regardless of whether they are working or receiving social assistance.

Questions for Discussion

1. How can the benefit structure be made adequate and fair for low-income earners and social assistance recipients?

Summary: Designing Benefits for People with Disabilities

The Commissioner's report notes that they have not been able to find a stated reason for why ODSP benefits are more adequate than OW benefits. The assumption is that people with disabilities are unlikely to work and therefore require more adequate benefits. The Commission suggests that the desire of ODSP recipients to work is underestimated.

Options

The Commission's report presents the following options to improve the design of benefits for people with disabilities:

1. Provide a new supplementary disability benefit, outside the social assistance system, for all low-income people with disabilities. As a person's employment earnings increased, this benefit would be phased out.
2. Provide a basic income for people with severe disabilities who are unlikely to generate significant earnings over their lifetimes.

Questions for Discussion

1. In your opinion, how should income supplements for low-income people with disabilities be designed and delivered?

Summary: Dealing with the Complexity of Benefits

The Commissioner's report recognizes that the benefit structure has become very complicated, is difficult to administer, is inconsistently applied, and is not transparent to recipients.

Options

The Commission's report presents the following options to deal with the complexity of benefits:

1. Combine basic needs component and shelter allowance into a standard rate for all adults
2. Eliminate the "dependent adult" category for all adults not enrolled in post-secondary education
3. Merge some special benefits into the standard rate

Questions for Discussion

1. In your opinion, how can the current structure be changed to reduce complexity?

Easier to Understand

Summary: Complexity, Compliance and Risk Management

The Commission's report notes that both caseworkers and people receiving social assistance have difficulties navigating the maze of benefits, eligibility criteria, rules, and exceptions. This complexity is due in part to the program design. The current "surveillance approach" is meant to ensure that the program is accountable to taxpayers.

Options

The Commission's report suggests that an audit-based system may be a better way to approach risk-management. This system could include the following:

- Replacing the current comprehensive verification requirements, applied to all recipients, with a more targeted, audit-based process.
- Continue to require people receiving social assistance to report monthly on whether their income, childcare, or housing costs have changed, but only require documentation (i.e. pay stubs or receipts) if there is an audit.
- Develop a new risk identification tool to be used along with the audit-based system to better target people for eligibility reviews.

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you think an audit-based system is a good idea?
2. What level of reporting/monitoring is necessary to maintain a system that is accountable to Ontario taxpayers?
3. What penalties would discourage others from misusing the system?

Summary: Treatment of Assets

The Commission's report notes asset rules were consistently identified as a major obstacle for people trying to make the transition to work and become more financially resilient.

Current asset rules require individuals to use all financial resources available to them before turning to social assistance. The Commission recognizes that this reduces an individual's ability to leave the system permanently. In addition, the current treatment of assets limits people's ability to save for the future.

The report notes that there is no rationale to explain why asset limits should be higher for ODSP than OW.

Options

The Commission's report suggests the following options to revise asset rules:

1. Increase OW asset limits to equal those of ODSP
2. Increase asset limits for an initial period of time when an individual first enters the program
3. Make changes to the rules that will help improve an individual's longer-term financial security (i.e. increase limits on RRSPs)

Questions for Discussion

1. Should people be required to spend down their assets before receiving social assistance? Why or why not?

Viable Over the Long-Term

Options

The Commission's report presents the following approaches to improve integration and delivery and to make the system sustainable.

1. Continue with the current model of separate delivery of OW and ODSP income support, while integrating employment services and supports for everyone receiving social assistance.
2. Provide employment services and income support through a one-stop delivery model that would integrate OW and ODSP at the local level.
3. Have municipalities deliver human services components of social assistance, including case management and employment services, while the province delivers administrative services, such as issuing social assistance cheques.

Questions for Discussion

1. How should INCOME supports be delivered?
2. How should EMPLOYMENT supports be delivered?

An Integrated Ontario Position on Income Security

Summary

The Commission's report acknowledges that a number of policies and program designs beyond the social assistance program create challenges for income security in Ontario and Canada. The following are examples:

- Many immigrants are forced to turn to social assistance due to language barriers, lack of Canadian experience, and not having their credentials recognized
- Many Ontarians are forced to turn to social assistance because they have limited access to Employment Insurance
- The availability of prescription drugs, dental and vision benefits to low-income earners are limited
- The minimum wage is inadequate
- There is a lack of affordable housing to support people in need

Questions for Discussion

1. What programs in the federal/provincial social safety net need to be improved in order to decrease the reliance on social assistance?

COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

Supportive Job Service

If you are a private or public organization looking for qualified staff to fill paid positions, you may be interested in our Supportive Job Service (SJS). The County of Wellington Ontario Works programme welcomes the opportunity to assist you with your staffing needs. We will save your organization or business the time and expenses involved in hiring and training new employees. We provide fast, efficient, specialized human resources services and are committed to matching you with the right employee. Call us today as an alternative to filling your job.

Benefits of the Supportive Job Service

The SJS is intended to give Ontario works participants an opportunity for on-the-job training while receiving wages for employment. Our objective is to assist our participants in securing an employment opportunity that will provide not just skills and experience for our clients but quality employees for your business.

You will save money!

- Save on advertising and recruitment costs.
- You may qualify for a training subsidy, up to \$1000 for every individual hired through the program.
- Participating in this programme will not cause an increase to your Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) cost.

You will save time!

- Let our experienced employment staff prescreen applicants and refer only qualified candidates.
- We provide ongoing administrative support, allowing you to focus on other business needs.

We will provide employment maintenance follow up!

- Not just will we prescreen your potential employee, but we will continue to work with the employee even after you have hired them.
- Ongoing financial support for costs associated with employment placement and maintenance
- We can provide employee benefits for up to a one year period.



Contact: Mark Granger, Employment Specialist
138 Wyndham St. N
519-837-2670 ext. 3492

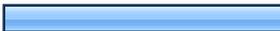
Social Assistance Review Survey - Approaches For Reform - Guelph/Wellington



1. 1.What is your experience with social assistance programs?

		Response Percent	Response Count
I am currently receiving Ontario Works (OW)		38.5%	30
I am currently receiving Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)		10.3%	8
I am applying for OW		0.0%	0
I am applying for ODSP		0.0%	0
I have received OW in the past		5.1%	4
I have received ODSP in the past		0.0%	0
My friend and/or family member is receiving OW/ODSP		2.6%	2
I work with individuals who receive OW/ODSP		35.9%	28
Other (please specify)		7.7%	6
		answered question	78
		skipped question	0

2. 2.What age category do you fall into?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Age 17 and Under		1.3%	1
Between the Ages of 18-40		42.1%	32
Age 41 and Above		59.2%	45
		answered question	76
		skipped question	2

3. 3.Sex

		Response Percent	Response Count
Male		22.4%	17
Female		77.6%	59
		answered question	76
		skipped question	2

4. 4.Please indicate if you identify with one or more of the following:

		Response Percent	Response Count
New Canadians		5.3%	4
First Nations		2.6%	2
People with Disabilities		23.7%	18
None of the Above		65.8%	50
Prefer not to Say		6.6%	5
		answered question	76
		skipped question	2

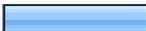
5. According to the Commission’s report, the following are features of effective employment, education and training services and supports. Please select the MOST important feature to address.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Assessment tools to identify barriers to employment		1.4%	1
Training courses that teach skills for the local labour market		12.9%	9
Employment services and supports that recognize barriers to employment facing people with disabilities		12.9%	9
Higher benefit structure for people with disabilities that are not able to work		17.1%	12
Engagement strategies and incentives to encourage and support employers to hire more social assistance recipients		11.4%	8
Integrated pre-and post-employment supports tailored to individual needs (i.e. child care, drug benefits, etc.)		17.1%	12
Early intervention and appropriate supports to people with mental illnesses		10.0%	7
Integrated access (a one-stop entry point) to housing, child care, and other services		17.1%	12
	Other (please specify)		9
answered question			70
skipped question			8

6. In your opinion, how can employment services be made more effective for social assistance recipients?

	Response Count
	50
answered question	50
skipped question	28

7. Please select the option that you think the Commission should recommend. *If you're not sure, you can leave this question blank.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Strengthen collaboration among those currently responsible for delivering employment services with no changes to the roles and responsibilities of municipalities, First Nations, or the Province.		29.4%	15
Allow municipalities and First Nations to deliver all employment services for people receiving social assistance, whether OW or ODSP.		21.6%	11
Have all employment services delivered by Employment Ontario (EO). In this case, social assistance administrators could retain responsibility for overall case management, including referrals to Employment Ontario.		49.0%	25
	Comments:		9
	answered question		51
	skipped question		27

8. Please indicate whether you AGREE with the following options:

	Yes	No	Not Sure	Rating Average	Response Count
Provide extended health benefits to ALL low-income Ontarian's	95.7% (66)	0.0% (0)	4.3% (3)	1.09	69
Establish a rate structure that changes over time (i.e. a basic rate for the first 18-24 months and a higher rate for those in need of longer-term income support after 24 months)	49.2% (32)	21.5% (14)	29.2% (19)	1.80	65
Provide an earned income supplement to enhance the incomes of low-income workers and provide an incentive for those not working to enter the workforce.	86.6% (58)	1.5% (1)	11.9% (8)	1.25	67
Provide a housing benefit for ALL low-income Ontarian's.	88.4% (61)	5.8% (4)	5.8% (4)	1.17	69
				Comments	16
				answered question	69
				skipped question	9

9. In your opinion, how can the benefit structure be made adequate and fair for low-income earners and social assistance recipients?

	Response Count
	32
	answered question
	32
	skipped question
	46

10. Please indicate whether you AGREE with the following options:

	Yes	No	Not Sure	Rating Average	Response Count
Provide a new supplementary disability benefit, outside the social assistance system, for all low-income people with disabilities. As employment earnings increase, this benefit could be phased out.	71.7% (43)	6.7% (4)	21.7% (13)	1.50	60
Provide a basic income for people with severe disabilities who are unlikely to generate significant earnings over their lifetimes.	90.2% (55)	1.6% (1)	8.2% (5)	1.18	61
				Comments	7
				answered question	61
				skipped question	17

11. How should income supplements for low-income people with disabilities be designed and delivered?

	Response Count
	19
answered question	19
skipped question	59

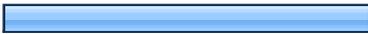
12. Please indicate whether you AGREE with the following options:

	Yes	No	Not Sure	Rating Average	Response Count
Combine basic needs benefits with shelter benefits into a standard rate for all adults.	40.6% (26)	37.5% (24)	21.9% (14)	1.81	64
Eliminate the “dependent adult” category for all adults not enrolled in post-secondary education.	34.9% (22)	19.0% (12)	46.0% (29)	2.11	63
Merge some special benefits into the standard rate (i.e. the Special Diet Allowance).	70.3% (45)	15.6% (10)	14.1% (9)	1.44	64
				Comments	12
				answered question	66
				skipped question	12

13. How can the current structure be changed to reduce complexity?

	Response Count
	15
	answered question
	15
	skipped question
	63

14. Do you think an audit-based system is a good idea?

		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes		55.4%	36
No		9.2%	6
Not Sure		35.4%	23

Comments: 14

answered question 65

skipped question 13

15. What level of reporting/monitoring is necessary to maintain a system that is accountable to Ontario taxpayers?

	Response Count
--	-------------------

35

answered question 35

skipped question 43

16. What penalties would discourage others from misusing the system?

	Response Count
--	-------------------

37

answered question 37

skipped question 41

17. The report suggests that following options to revise asset rules. Please indicate if you AGREE with the following options:

	Yes	No	Not Sure	Rating Average	Response Count
Increase OW asset limits to equal those of ODSP.	85.2% (52)	4.9% (3)	9.8% (6)	1.25	61
Increase asset limits for an initial period of time when an individual first enters the program.	63.9% (39)	14.8% (9)	21.3% (13)	1.57	61
Make changes to the rules that will help improve an individual's longer-term financial security (i.e. increase limits on RRSPs).	82.3% (51)	8.1% (5)	9.7% (6)	1.27	62
				Comments	6
				answered question	63
				skipped question	15

18. Should people be required to spend down their assets before receiving social assistance? Why or why not?

		Response Percent	Response Count
yes		19.7%	12
no		60.7%	37
not sure		19.7%	12
		Comments	45
		answered question	61
		skipped question	17

19. The Commission’s report outlines three approaches to improving integration and delivery to achieve long-term viability. Please select the option you think would improve delivery of OW and ODSP.

		Response Percent	Response Count
Continue with the current model of separate delivery of Ontario Works and ODSP income support, while integrating employment services and supports for everyone receiving social assistance.		21.0%	13
Provide employment services and income support through a one-stop delivery model that would integrate OW and ODSP at the local level.		35.5%	22
Have municipalities deliver human services components of social assistance, including case management and employment services, while the Province delivers administrative services related to social assistance, such as issuing social assistance cheques.		21.0%	13
Not sure		22.6%	14
		Comments	6
		answered question	62
		skipped question	16

20. In your opinion, how should INCOME supports be delivered?

	Response Count
	26
answered question	26
skipped question	52

21. In your opinion, how should EMPLOYMENT supports be delivered?

	Response Count
	23
answered question	23
skipped question	55

22. What programs in the federal/provincial social safety net need to be improved in order to decrease reliance on social assistance?

	Response Count
	43
answered question	43
skipped question	35

Page 2, Q1. 1.What is your experience with social assistance programs?

1	Agency serving OW/ODSP Clients	Mar 7, 2012 8:00 AM
2	concerned with research and policy development for OW/ODSP	Mar 2, 2012 11:58 AM
3	OW for Self - ODSP as caregiver for dependent son	Feb 28, 2012 11:45 AM
4	work in an organization that funds non profits	Feb 28, 2012 9:26 AM
5	friends have been apart of welfair	Feb 23, 2012 2:12 PM
6	ijklj	Feb 21, 2012 7:40 AM

Page 3, Q1. According to the Commission's report, the following are features of effective employment, education and training services and supports. Please select the MOST important feature to address.

1	(ow) not enough support to eat/most receiptes pay much more rent than is allocated and still live in poor conditions in terms of moving forward, worker attitudes and format of assistance oftan strictly oppose the term "to empower people" witch i beleive is the first three words of your mission statment. if the system isnt 'working for the people', they're more likely to work against it than with it	Mar 8, 2012 1:40 PM
2	Combination of 3,4,6,7 and 8	Mar 7, 2012 8:02 AM
3	easier access to university and college programs	Mar 7, 2012 4:21 AM
4	Teaching selfemployment as addition to the minimal income from OW	Mar 6, 2012 4:07 PM
5	basic dental assistance	Mar 6, 2012 9:00 AM
6	Being able to afford to work, OW takes half of our earnings making it difficult and sometimes impossible to work and make enough to support your family.	Mar 4, 2012 7:40 PM
7	all issues should be addressed all are important	Feb 29, 2012 5:13 PM
8	transportation-bus passes	Feb 29, 2012 6:48 AM
9	As the primary care giver to my autistic son, I am unable to work, but my OW benefits pay me substancially lower than minimum wage. To hire someone to do my work, the yearly cost would be upwards of \$40000/year	Feb 28, 2012 11:53 AM

Page 4, Q1. In your opinion, how can employment services be made more effective for social assistance recipients?

1	Set up incentive programs in order to motivate clients	Mar 12, 2012 11:07 AM
2	Allow municipalities and First Nations to deliver all employment services for people receiving social assistance, whether OW or ODSP. Why? Social assistance administrators' caseloads are too heavy to adequately manage their client's needs including referrals to E. O.(as per client complaints).	Mar 9, 2012 2:07 PM
3	Paying for transportation costs. People should be told what programs or services are available. More information.	Mar 9, 2012 12:16 PM
4	I have no comments to add at this time.	Mar 9, 2012 6:38 AM
5	there is a need to change attitudes in the community for both employers and co-workers. The services offered should bhe tailored to the individual rather than a one size fits all.	Mar 8, 2012 7:23 PM
6	green jobs(insentive to help community) co-operative employment(empowerment)	Mar 8, 2012 1:42 PM
7	increase payment amounts current amounts are innsufficient	Mar 8, 2012 12:07 PM
8	Assessment of barriers is critical and the supports to address barriers	Mar 8, 2012 7:09 AM
9	Try to find ways to more realistically assess the individual skills and prospects of participants in the program, including addressing roadblocks or barriers to employment. Likewise, focus on alternative forms of work, such as entrepreneurship, or training for self-employment. Most folks (myself included), really don't want to sit around on the dole, but at the same time, this is the most challenging job market since the Great Depression.	Mar 8, 2012 7:05 AM
10	They could aide the recipients by including them in access points, appropriate supports for people with mental illness, pre and post employment strategies for higher incentives where individuals can access monetary value and supports such as classes about the local labour market or chosen field individuals are going into.	Mar 7, 2012 2:47 PM
11	By not clawing back money from people that find jobs and allowing recipients to have an asset such as a car which helps with employment and training opportunities.	Mar 7, 2012 9:55 AM
12	targeted services to help individuals overcome barriers	Mar 7, 2012 8:16 AM
13	more workshops to get a recipient back into the workplace, also have jobs available that will actually help the person out finaniclally in order to get off of social assistance (they take a certain % of your cheque each pay) sometimes one who works isnt ahead at all (what they bring in from working vs social assistance)	Mar 7, 2012 8:06 AM
14	Include internships, mentoring, direct job creation and greater tax incentives for employers to offer training to and hire people facing employment barriers.	Mar 7, 2012 8:03 AM
15	more individual time helping a person with a mental disability or mental illness instead of looking for ways to cut them off of benefits, helpful intervention ,	Mar 6, 2012 7:47 PM

Page 4, Q1. In your opinion, how can employment services be made more effective for social assistance recipients?

	weekly meetings, social group activity for those with similar problems, learning to live on very limited means, and help with tuition for classes or courses needed to perform a job in their ability	
16	Accountability for each case, not by statistic and assumption only.	Mar 6, 2012 4:08 PM
17	A single entry point that retains information and doesn't require the person to re-story; respectful front-line staff who actively listen to the needs of people and create opportunities rather than barriers; application of guidelines that respond to the circumstances of the person rather than citing chapter and verse regulations to resolve the problem, often in a way that doesn't support or assist the individual; ensure the principle of 'customer service excellent' is foundational to employment services policies and practices.	Mar 6, 2012 2:16 PM
18	If you offered some type of post secondary help - it would be less likely to fall back onto assistance and more likely to help with a steady career instead of just a minimum wage job where you will be struggling for the rest of your life.	Mar 6, 2012 12:17 PM
19	it seems to me our work environment is all or nothing. either a person is capable of working and therefore expected to, or not. there is not much in between for those who need more flexibility. there also needs to be more incentives for those who haven't had a lot of success in the work force, to keep trying. finding ways to keep those on social assistance motivated and engaged - not just in the work force but in their communities - is something that would be helpful. having training opportunities etc. is great - but only if those who could most benefit have the self-confidence and comfort level to participate.	Mar 6, 2012 9:05 AM
20	Clear & seamless system to access all employment services for recipients. Benefit incentives for obtaining employment and transitions phase supports to support the shift back to employment.	Mar 6, 2012 8:55 AM
21	by providing monetary incentives. to work. by encouraging volunteerism where paid work may not be available	Mar 6, 2012 7:56 AM
22	Affordable education for those needing upgrading if they have been out of the workforce for a number of years. Take the social stigma away from those who are on social assistance. How about courses on self-esteem, dressing for success, etc these are also important when applying for and going out into the workforce.	Mar 6, 2012 3:02 AM
23	more independant access to recipients	Mar 5, 2012 11:15 AM
24	I think that people on Ontario Works need to be forced to work wherever they can. I have received OW for 4 years and the day I was able I went and got a job. There are to many people collecting OW that are perfectly able to work and just don't want to	Mar 4, 2012 7:41 PM
25	Full co operation with business, with respect to them hiring ,both professional and trades people,if the positions were posted at the same time,or prehaps before they went to the Newspaper,or where ever they post positions today,it might be one more thing we could add to the mix for a FULL EMPLOYMENT AGENDA.	Mar 2, 2012 4:01 PM

Page 4, Q1. In your opinion, how can employment services be made more effective for social assistance recipients?

26	Maintain durg and benefit cards until they can support themselves independently.	Mar 2, 2012 12:50 PM
27	individualized and wrap-around, integrated approach	Mar 2, 2012 11:59 AM
28	Increasing financial assistance, offering more opportunities in the work force for those with disabilities, increasing rather than decreasing food allowances as cost of living goes up.	Mar 2, 2012 9:42 AM
29	develop more practical jobs to tailor to the recipients' needs	Mar 1, 2012 1:47 PM
30	Re training	Mar 1, 2012 11:43 AM
31	Many of my client's have mental health disabilities and are unable to work. My client's would benefit most from being able to access appropriate mental health services, affordable housing and adequate healthy food. If these necessities were being met my clients would recover faster and be able to get back into the work force.	Mar 1, 2012 10:02 AM
32	For poeple with disabilities, the financial incentive to work must be strengthened. Employment programs must be more intensive and holisitc in their support, especially as concerns social awarness and work behaviours. Finally there needs to be more education for employers about disabilities to prepare our communities to accept people with disabilities.	Mar 1, 2012 7:22 AM
33	Provide skills training and or provide funding for that training, stop pushing receipients to finding any means of employment in my opinion they should be helping you obtain employment that's suitable for their needs. If you push receipient into employment they do not like, more often then not they will not be happy with their job which will result in more often then not them being back on assistance in the end.	Feb 29, 2012 7:55 PM
34	raise minimum wage and assistance programs to at least the poverty line so as not to compete with eah other	Feb 29, 2012 5:17 PM
35	In home services instead of clients attempting to navigate the system on thier own.	Feb 29, 2012 2:39 PM
36	Offer the courses that can train people to achieve living wage work. Offer the supports which would enable poeple to take the courses	Feb 29, 2012 2:20 PM
37	have more jobs available to ow receipients and helping people without experience to get a job.	Feb 29, 2012 12:49 PM
38	give recipients the same benefits as osdp recipients such as more frquent eye glasses and exams, cheap bus passes, reinstate the child benefit for children over the age of 6, pay the extra amount for laundry when not included in rent and help with retraining. Some how new Canadians and people on odsp can get training but not OW unless it is to get your gr 12.	Feb 29, 2012 6:52 AM
39	-in order to gain current employment people need to be computer literate and have access to the internet for information and training purposes. Currently internet is considered entertainment, but it is actually a job necessity in today's	Feb 28, 2012 11:57 AM

Page 4, Q1. In your opinion, how can employment services be made more effective for social assistance recipients?

	computer driven world.	
40	Provide motivation, counselling, education and training as stepping stones to employment	Feb 28, 2012 9:30 AM
41	I think that they employment services help, the problem I have is getting a full time job to support myself, at my age, there is discrimination..so it's really hard to get any employer to hire me.	Feb 27, 2012 12:48 PM
42	It must be education, training and employment services. the job you get must be worth leaving OW for.	Feb 27, 2012 12:09 PM
43	contact companies and suggest a work program between ow and company instead of temp services	Feb 27, 2012 10:48 AM
44	Typically I support people i=on Social Assistance who are waiting to be referred or accepted onto ODSP. The few that are in mental health services that are not eligible for ODSP and are on Social Services, they do have employment support at OW but they may not receive the intense support that they need to finding a job. They may need help finding a volunteer job to get work experience. They may need someone to give them possible available jobs for them to apply to. They need support doing a job interview. They need on going cheerleading to finding the right job. Therefore a lot of good planning is done with the individual to what to plan and what are the barriers. What I am saying is people dealing with mental health have often been out of work for many years, and need intense ongoing support from employment in order to have some success.	Feb 27, 2012 10:12 AM
45	Make appointments on same date as your intake appointment..	Feb 27, 2012 9:59 AM
46	more p/t jobs with training and coping workshops	Feb 27, 2012 7:40 AM
47	To be able to recruit potential employers that are aware and knowledgeable with individuals who have disabilities or live with a mental health diagnosis and accommodate them in providing special positions for these individuals. Make these employers understand that their communication skills may not be the best due to lack of experience for interviews. Make the experience of getting work run more smoothly to ensure success.	Feb 24, 2012 2:11 PM
48	Appropriate training programs and incentives such as no/lower clawback rates.	Feb 23, 2012 9:26 AM
49	Rates must keep up with inflation, and the real cost of housing, food and transportation. Better access to staff in the social assistance offices, and more help in completing paper work would also be helpful, so that there were fewer gaps in service.	Feb 23, 2012 7:21 AM
50	More caseworkers who truly take an interest in their clients individual needs, in training, on the job especially, Their Likes and interests etc.	Feb 22, 2012 2:56 PM

**Page 5, Q1. Please select the option that you think the Commission should recommend.
*If you're not sure, you can leave this question blank.**

1	incentive business's to grow in ways that create more (and greener) employment rather than reducing it. i the economy were a plant feed it at the root	Mar 8, 2012 1:48 PM
2	I think something is lost if bureaucracy becomes too top-heavy (i.e. shifting all responsibility upwards to EO), in that a lot of on the ground and realistic assessment of local job markets and situations are lost. At the same time, shifting all responsibility downwards runs the risk of losing sight of prospects and opportunities at a level above the local, such as regional, provincial, or even national. I believe that there has to be a balance in order to bring the widest possible picture into play.	Mar 8, 2012 7:09 AM
3	It would be easier for such participants to receive services from municipalities rather than EO, because EO seems like a big corporation that social assistance administrators might not care about their case loads. As well, municipalities would get to know the people they are serving, if enough time is spent with them.	Mar 7, 2012 2:56 PM
4	This needs to be coupled with much stronger linkages to chambers of commerce, business groups and employers to take on increased responsibilities for training and hiring OW and ODSP clients.	Mar 7, 2012 8:05 AM
5	Stict responsibility to employ according to education of the OW recipient. No symulation of services and no slavery push out.	Mar 6, 2012 4:12 PM
6	I don't have a specific recommendation for this item. I think the important principles are to make these services easier to understand while ensuring that the expertise associated with ODSP and disabilities is not lost to the system.	Mar 1, 2012 7:26 AM
7	Why is everyone getting extra help except Canaadians? What about people that have been born here?	Feb 29, 2012 6:53 AM
8	We should not limit collaboaration or the intentions of anyone to assist with employment services.	Feb 27, 2012 12:11 PM
9	Any of these could work if they are adequately staffed and funded.	Feb 23, 2012 7:23 AM

Page 6, Q1. Please indicate whether you AGREE with the following options:

1	There is no way I can afford to rent a place in Wellington County, my daughter is getting older and needs more/her own space and have been told the waiting list is long for housing - where do I live in the mean time ?!?	Mar 9, 2012 6:43 AM
2	There needs to be consideration for those who are unable to work. Possible recognition for volunteer hours.	Mar 8, 2012 7:30 PM
3	Currently, people have income deducted if they are working, even casually. This does support people in their attempt to enter the workforce more fully.	Mar 8, 2012 7:12 AM
4	Once again, it's a question of balance. The needs of those unable to work must be met, but at the same time, there needs to be ways of getting more people back into the workforce, or into gainful self-employment.	Mar 8, 2012 7:12 AM
5	Providing extended benefits to everyone with modest incomes that is phased out as incomes rise, coupled with the ability to earn income that is taxed back at no more than 50%. If a decision is made to re-establish a lower rate for employment ready OW clients it should be limited to 12 months, with the higher rate kicking in after that. Shelter allowances are a significant subsidy to private landlords with the risk of driving up rents to eat up all or part of the subsidy. A combination of strengthened rent controls coupled with purchase of rental housing stock as a public asset, with subsidies underwriting the cost of financing and maintaining the properties as renewable public assets makes more sense.	Mar 7, 2012 8:14 AM
6	The odsp rate is far too low for a person to live adequately on in this city. Rent anywhere is at least \$800 or more. Through no fault of their own disabled persons are unable to work and should not live under the constant stress of being impoverished on top of their disability.	Mar 6, 2012 7:54 PM
7	Provide guaranteed minimal income for all, and help to earn addition income with all possible selfemployment activities.	Mar 6, 2012 4:17 PM
8	i think there is a definite need to provide more assistance to the working poor, not just social assistance recipients.	Mar 6, 2012 9:09 AM
9	While the housing benefit is a nice start, it is not enough. Many of my clients have to choose between paying rent and eating.	Mar 1, 2012 10:05 AM
10	People on Odsp already recieve more money than OW recipients. A freind of mine is single and he recieves way more money than I do with a kid	Feb 29, 2012 6:57 AM
11	When people are permanently disabled or known to require long-term support, there is no benefit to having people wait 24 months for higher income support. question 3 does not apply, as I must remain at home on OW as primary caregiver to my son. I don't have an option to work, so an extra incentive doesn't apply	Feb 28, 2012 12:10 PM
12	Yes to all the above. We need to support people to finding work let alone being able to stay employed. the working poor need breaks in order to be able to stay working. The incentives are good to having people see the benefits of working. People on benefits are often afraid to start work in case they lose their benefits. Housing is important. Ontario is not building any more subsidized housing. Rents are high in this province. We need to have housing benefits for low	Feb 27, 2012 10:17 AM

Page 6, Q1. Please indicate whether you AGREE with the following options:

income people.

13	Allow people to have opposite sex room mates.. to not assume after 3 mths they are spouses	Feb 27, 2012 10:03 AM
14	dont understand rate structure	Feb 27, 2012 7:42 AM
15	I would have to say it is EXTREMELY difficult to find sutible housing with the amount an individual recieves on OW or ODSP. Individuals have no choice to to find housing in the only place a landlord will except them. (A landlord who doesn't care about their units, the people or what goes on in and outside of the building) re: drugs	Feb 24, 2012 2:22 PM
16	The minimum wage should be sufficiently high that there are no "low income workers".	Feb 23, 2012 7:27 AM

Page 6, Q2. In your opinion, how can the benefit structure be made adequate and fair for low-income earners and social assistance recipients?

1	Increase tax credits for low-income workers and provide incentives, including on the job training (and incentives for employers also to hire) for social assistance recipients to take on employment.	Mar 9, 2012 2:37 PM
2	An increase would be needed. Factor in cost of living.	Mar 9, 2012 12:20 PM
3	Why no routine dental for adults? ALL Rx medications should be covered.	Mar 9, 2012 6:43 AM
4	impliment a living wage	Mar 8, 2012 7:30 PM
5	dont duduct income until a certian percentage of their benifit. then use a gradual rate increase of the amont duducted (eg someone gets \$500. let them make 250 before deducting {one might even survive on 750} then start deducting at 25% for the next 100-250\$ then 50% then 75% work it out so a person is off assitance when there making around \$1,500 a month) if you do it right it can be a very smooth transition for the receiptent with just the right amount of incentive	Mar 8, 2012 1:59 PM
6	Higer rates from the beginning	Mar 8, 2012 7:12 AM
7	See previous comments	Mar 8, 2012 7:12 AM
8	What to ensure that people working make more than those that do not to encourage people to work. Also need to maintain benefits.	Mar 7, 2012 8:17 AM
9	Raise social assistance rates and raise minimum wage to more adequate levels that reflect the cost of a market basket of goods necessary to ensure full participation in the life of the community.	Mar 7, 2012 8:14 AM
10	The minimum per month should be the cost of rent for the area the person lives, for example, in Guelph it should be at least \$800 and then on top of that at least enough for food and transportation and clothing per week, at least \$100, this does not leave the person in luxury for sure but just surviving. Also they should be allowed to earn at least the amount of their rent on their own if they can without penalty.	Mar 6, 2012 7:54 PM
11	As above	Mar 6, 2012 4:17 PM
12	Understanding that poverty is a key factor in quality of life, second to poverty is shelter. Linking income to a benefit by using ratios or other formulae would be a start. This very good question may be best posed to economists who are better equipped to assess the economics and social value of this question	Mar 6, 2012 2:19 PM
13	Help with post secondary education to give people a better future. Start encouraging it instead of making it impossible to get a career	Mar 6, 2012 12:18 PM
14	ask them	Mar 6, 2012 9:09 AM
15	treat each case individually within reason instead of a pre figured general benefit structure	Mar 5, 2012 11:20 AM
16	Provide or suggest a Canadian Guarented Annual Income.	Mar 2, 2012 4:11 PM
17	It must be thought of as a cost of living situation. Benefits should not be	Mar 2, 2012 9:45 AM

Page 6, Q2. In your opinion, how can the benefit structure be made adequate and fair for low-income earners and social assistance recipients?

	decreased as the cost of living increases. A wider range of covered prescriptions should also be looked at. Based on an individuals financial needs and ability to work should be taken into account when offering benefits.	
18	The benefit rates are not covering client's basic needs. Many are forced to eat food supplied from foodbanks and most of that food is not healthy.	Mar 1, 2012 10:05 AM
19	It is impossible to pay rent bills and all that on what you receive. I get \$818.00 monthly, my rent alone i s \$985.00 + utilities. So an increase in the amount of funds delivered to the recipients to better support themselves and there families would be more adequate and fair. People living on social assistance at this point need another source of income other than assistance just to make it.	Feb 29, 2012 8:03 PM
20	raise the payment with incentives to work without being penalised for earning money	Feb 29, 2012 5:22 PM
21	sliding scales	Feb 29, 2012 2:41 PM
22	Social assistance recipients should recieve a fair amount but not as much as someone who actually out working. This could work for a period of time if the ow recipient is not really trying to find work	Feb 29, 2012 6:57 AM
23	Change the way that funds from OW , ODSP and other supports (like child support) are taken off ODSP cheques - this money is needed for things general cost of living for my disable son. Let people on ODSP have other income sources to look after these basic needs. I am trying to do my best to do the right thing in caring for my son, and it seems that the benefits are not arranged to support that. We don't even have enough grocery number to get through the month - this child support money arrange with my exhusbane would really change this if the system let us keep it.	Feb 28, 2012 12:10 PM
24	more money for the low income families	Feb 27, 2012 5:55 PM
25	Housing is a big problem..rooming with someone can be hazzardous and very tense.	Feb 27, 2012 12:51 PM
26	if you want people to gety off the system then make it easier buy letting them make more money then only 50% because people wont go to work because you take half	Feb 27, 2012 10:50 AM
27	Make it that the working poor have special benefits like those on assistance and or disability.	Feb 27, 2012 10:17 AM
28	lhelping low income earners work and not take dollar for dollar of there income if under 10,000 year	Feb 27, 2012 10:03 AM
29	Closer monitoring, OW/ODSP to work with landlords who have suitable housing and make arrangements so it's not so difficult to get in somewhere descent.	Feb 24, 2012 2:22 PM
30	a livable, responsible, dignified rate that covers basic expenses appropriately and leaves some room for things beyond the bare necessities.	Feb 23, 2012 9:27 AM
31	Health benefits (medications, dental,) should be available to social assistance	Feb 23, 2012 7:27 AM

Page 6, Q2. In your opinion, how can the benefit structure be made adequate and fair for low-income earners and social assistance recipients?

recipients, as well as housing benefits.

- | | | |
|----|--|----------------------|
| 32 | With O.W., Stop taking 50% of an employed workers salary, and say that they make it up in other benefits! Most people in need of O.W. had been employed at sometime for a long time & paid their taxes with contributes to O.W. benefits, These people are only getting back their own money owed to them since alot of us don't qualify for E.I., the set-up as it is now is a " keep the poor, poor"Situation. Most of us have to work min. wage jobs and at a50% reduction of their paycheque we are making the same amount or less then we collect in O.W. benefits! No incentive to work with this situation. | Feb 22, 2012 3:07 PM |
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Page 7, Q1. Please indicate whether you AGREE with the following options:

1	Basic income should be tied to the cost of living index. The biggest fear of most individuals on disability (according to clients) who genuinely want to get back into the workforce is losing their benefits and then not succeeding in the workforce (and then having to re-apply and wait a long time again for benefits to be re-instated).	Mar 9, 2012 2:46 PM
2	Depends what is meant by basic income. It should not place people below the poverty line.	Mar 8, 2012 7:14 AM
3	The second options should be more than basic. It should provide assured access to both adequate income and the supports necessary to participate as members of the larger society.	Mar 7, 2012 8:16 AM
4	Selfemployment help not only earn money it also provide sense for live and satisfaction. People with disabilities should benefit from the freedom and activity to earn additional small money from their selfeffort.	Mar 6, 2012 4:22 PM
5	Many of my clients would like to work however they are unable too. Many of my clients have to struggle almost every day for their basic needs which contributes added stress to either lives. The added stress of trying to survive increases their mental illness, which essentially means that they are unable to focus on recovering from their mental illness. It is a vicious cycle for my clients.	Mar 1, 2012 11:00 AM
6	Make sure people are really disabled. I see people with drug and alcohol problems on the system for years. Why should we pay for their drugs and alcohol? Other people have minor disabilities that could answer phones and so forth	Feb 29, 2012 7:01 AM
7	Include an income support for the primary home caregiver for people with disabilities that require 24 hour care. As the primary caregiver, I am unable to work outside the home, yet I do not get paid to provide this support. I work a full-time job caring for my son. As a consequence of this, we both live in poverty	Feb 28, 2012 12:15 PM

Page 7, Q2. How should income supplements for low-income people with disabilities be designed and delivered?

1	Not sure	Mar 9, 2012 2:46 PM
2	Monthly cheque based on income delivered by MOF	Mar 7, 2012 8:19 AM
3	A combination of one and two depending on the severity of the disability.	Mar 7, 2012 8:16 AM
4	Each individual is different and their diagnosis may not necessarily reflect the true nature of their ability to work or not. The person should be evaluated fairly individually by a panel of people to determine a course for them which could include a plan for education, support, end employment. The person may be deemed unable to work due to the nature of their illness and circumstances and this should be recognized as well and these people should be given fair income support for the remainder of their productive years without fear or concern over losing this support.	Mar 6, 2012 7:59 PM
5	This is a question for economists to ascertain the basic financial requirement and social value to give people a baseline of income from which to plan for their futures.	Mar 6, 2012 2:21 PM
6	ask them	Mar 6, 2012 9:10 AM
7	They need to be designed to assist recipients in having a standard of living that is respectful and meets their needs	Mar 6, 2012 9:01 AM
8	income offsets should not be dollar for dollar - thus providing some incentive to work	Mar 6, 2012 8:02 AM
9	Personal assessment by case workers, and delivered by the same office they receive their normal benefits from.	Mar 2, 2012 4:16 PM
10	Again it should be based on the constantly increasing cost of living and an individual's set of circumstances. As of now, most people cannot live on what is being offered in the way of benefits.	Mar 2, 2012 9:46 AM
11	ODSP recipients should see that when they do work, there is an immediate benefit to them in terms of receiving more of their earnings.	Mar 1, 2012 7:30 AM
12	make it easier to get	Feb 29, 2012 5:23 PM
13	They should have to be assessed more often by a doctor to determine the severity and assessed accordingly. If they are not disabled they would get less money so they will look for a job to supplement their income	Feb 29, 2012 7:01 AM
14	A basic income would need to be at least at or above the poverty line.	Feb 28, 2012 12:15 PM
15	I believe so, most people with disabilities want to work, but cannot find employment that pays enough to live on.	Feb 27, 2012 12:54 PM
16	allow spouses to work and not penalize them if make under 10,000	Feb 27, 2012 10:05 AM
17	with real p/t jobs	Feb 27, 2012 7:43 AM
18	Many blocks to the participation in society by people with disabilities can be overcome with sufficient funds...taxi, prepared meals, personal support workers'	Feb 23, 2012 7:32 AM

Page 7, Q2. How should income supplements for low-income people with disabilities be designed and delivered?

time, etc. Needs will vary with each individual. Staff time will be required to determine individual needs.

19 on a dollar for dollar bases to the equivalent of the average provincial income.

Feb 22, 2012 3:10 PM

Page 8, Q1. Please indicate whether you AGREE with the following options:

1	Why...this is all very confusing and does not speak to individual interest for all involved	Mar 12, 2012 11:26 AM
2	1) Clients need to be better made aware that special benefits are available to them - More transparency to the clients in need of special benefits. 2) Special diet allowance prescribed by a doctor's note should qualify them.	Mar 9, 2012 2:56 PM
3	Not sure of the pros and cons of one benefit rate.	Mar 8, 2012 7:14 AM
4	Simplify the rules and limitations. Focus on flexibility, maintaining stability and supporting transitions to employment, training and skill building and pursuing post-secondary education.	Mar 7, 2012 8:20 AM
5	i currently am on OW and living in housing so my shelter benefit part of my cheque goes directly to my housing provider and it also covers my renters insurance. i like seeing it on my cheque even though it goes out right away as a payment to my housing provider for my rent for the month. i think that basic needs rate needs to be improved a lot, doesnt provide enough for groceries for the month, medical expenses etc	Mar 7, 2012 8:13 AM
6	Costs vary by community so wary of combining benefits into a standard (presumably provincial) rate. Maybe a formula that includes local indices	Mar 2, 2012 12:04 PM
7	ODSP rates should be tied to cost of living indicators that fluctuate with the economy.	Mar 1, 2012 7:33 AM
8	Special diet is necessary for everyone as they price of fresh fruit and vegetables rise. Look at the increase in the price of bread in the past few years. It has went up \$2. How are we to work if we cannot afford a nutritious diet	Feb 29, 2012 7:04 AM
9	combing or not combing doesn't really matter as the rates are AWFUL and much lower than what is required to live. the idea of there being enough benefit money left for groceries is AWFUL. All the money goes to basic needs. I don't even have bus fair to get to the food bank.	Feb 28, 2012 12:19 PM
10	recipients shouldnt have to go into their basic needs to pay the rent. it leaves less for groceries and other needs for the rest of the month or unforeseen emergencies.	Feb 27, 2012 9:26 PM
11	as a single mother of 2 girls i live on nothing. I don't have enough money to buy the basic needs or to live....	Feb 27, 2012 5:58 PM
12	I think that more affordable housing for people who are only making minimum wage or low paying jobs would help out a lot. The cost of a decent place to live is next to impossible, and that makes it harder for people to think it will get better.	Feb 27, 2012 1:00 PM

Page 8, Q2. How can the current structure be changed to reduce complexity?

1	stop making everthing so comlex and deal with individual needs	Mar 12, 2012 11:26 AM
2	Take the decision-making out of the hands of the worker and standardize the process based on needs not individuals.	Mar 9, 2012 2:56 PM
3	Only gather relevant information and have clients report exceptions rather than the other way around	Mar 7, 2012 8:20 AM
4	The basic rate should be a standard \$800 or up for all, to cover rent and then a basic rate for needs.	Mar 6, 2012 8:00 PM
5	It's complicated because in the cities you live in, it would be better to research the prices of living costs in the area and adjust the rates according to the cities. It's hard having 575 for rent and one bedroom apartments start at \$700 then you have to choose whether to feed your bellies or have a roof over your head with heat and hydro.	Mar 6, 2012 12:21 PM
6	Make sure your employees are attainable and knowlagable	Mar 4, 2012 7:43 PM
7	This reminds me of the problem the health system had years ago with over qualified Nurses emptying bed pans and Dr.'s giving needles. Let your front line workers make more decisions freeing up the key administers to ADMINISTRATE..	Mar 2, 2012 7:34 PM
8	transparent for users is goog, but complex for agility is good too	Mar 2, 2012 12:04 PM
9	It will be complex whatever way you look at is as everyone's needs and disabilities are different. You have to look at it based on a household by household basis or an individual by individual basis. Plus, if a person requires a special diet allowance, it makes no sense to decrease it when food constantly increases in price. There is nowhere near enough money is this area.	Mar 2, 2012 9:49 AM
10	no need	Feb 29, 2012 5:42 PM
11	central point information services	Feb 29, 2012 2:42 PM
12	See above!!!	Feb 27, 2012 1:00 PM
13	by being transparent about the rate structure. If it is simple enough to explain it will be simple enough to administer correctly.	Feb 27, 2012 12:14 PM
14	do not assume spouse in house rule	Feb 27, 2012 10:06 AM
15	Look at the situation of the individual case, example, Housing, I receive \$ 599.00 @ month total benefits, My rent is \$660.00@month, and that is reasonably cheap to the average. My neighbor, single (same as myself) receives \$1200.00 @month from O.D.S.P. and pays less in rent???	Feb 22, 2012 3:16 PM

Page 9, Q1. Do you think an audit-based system is a good idea?

1	Is the audit-based system to be objective or subjective? Who administers the audit? Would it be an independent audit or the client's caseworker? If the scorecard is administered with predominantly quantifiable vs qualitative measurements, then yes, an objective audit would be acceptable.	Mar 9, 2012 3:13 PM
2	The current system may be considered intrusive by some people, but as a current recipient, I fully understand the need for such safeguards.	Mar 8, 2012 7:16 AM
3	Would need to know more about it.	Mar 8, 2012 7:15 AM
4	Although many people need assistance, there are those who need to understand that it is assistance and not an income. At this point I am finding that the workers are for the most part respectful, and I don't think it hurts for people to be accountable to the system. Of course some of the verification tools such as personal letters saying that people won't support you, or verification that humiliates the client should be removed, but pay slips, housing costs, childcare receipts are all appropriate.	Mar 7, 2012 10:26 AM
5	Audit based approach is an improvement on the surveillance approach. Shifting to quarterly or even annual reviews of some changes would also help.	Mar 7, 2012 8:22 AM
6	Some people I know have been on ODSP for many years and will always be they should not have to report every month but only when audited as their circumstances do not change year after year.	Mar 6, 2012 8:04 PM
7	Minimal guaranteed income and help with building selfemployment from scratch is the best. TAX BIG CORPORATIONS!!!!	Mar 6, 2012 4:27 PM
8	An audit system could be more effective and cost efficient but that would depend entirely upon how it is developed & administered	Mar 6, 2012 9:05 AM
9	audit could be compliance/power measure; need to match significance of risk and ability to remediate or rectify with measure to audit	Mar 2, 2012 12:07 PM
10	i dont like having to fill out the income form every month when my income has not changed	Feb 29, 2012 8:17 PM
11	For some dealing with an audit is beyond their skillset	Feb 29, 2012 2:43 PM
12	Every situation is different. Some people need more help than others. I see people cohabitating and receiving large benefits. It is not fair that they each receive the maximum benefits but only need an extra amount to supplement the extra person	Feb 29, 2012 7:08 AM
13	I get reviewed each year for the same thing, which is ridiculous. Anything that allows OW/ODSP to recognize that my son is fully dependent and I am his caregiver and there is no way us to defraud the system is a good thing.	Feb 28, 2012 12:22 PM
14	Everybody's case is different. I personally am having a hard time getting a job, and finding a decent place to live, that I could afford on my own.	Feb 27, 2012 1:03 PM

Page 10, Q1. What level of reporting/monitoring is necessary to maintain a system that is accountable to Ontario taxpayers?

1	-check in updates on a regular basis with workers -accountability	Mar 12, 2012 11:27 AM
2	3-months	Mar 9, 2012 12:25 PM
3	No comment at this time	Mar 9, 2012 6:45 AM
4	the one that exists	Mar 8, 2012 1:37 PM
5	basic reporting such as housing costs, child care and bus pass, proof with receipts that the money given out was used for the purpose intended on a monthly basis for a period of one year for new clients, once in each 6 month period of the next year and sporadically thereafter to ensure compliance with regulations	Mar 7, 2012 3:37 PM
6	I think that we should have majorly intrusive accountability practices, such as going to peoples homes or requiring personal references, but I think showing documentation of need is very valid.	Mar 7, 2012 10:29 AM
7	Quarterly and annually using an audit approach should provide adequate safeguards.	Mar 7, 2012 8:25 AM
8	A level that provides confidence that only those needing assistance receive it	Mar 7, 2012 8:24 AM
9	The first 18 months or so a monthly report, after if the person is a long term recipient twice yearly or when circumstances change for them would be sufficient.	Mar 6, 2012 8:06 PM
10	NON. This is not way to devide society. People will work for additional income if government will support that instead looking for cheep work force for BIG CORPORATIONS	Mar 6, 2012 4:32 PM
11	For the first two years - quarterly, and then semi-annually thereafter	Mar 6, 2012 2:22 PM
12	Every six months	Mar 6, 2012 1:24 PM
13	I think like halton hills, people should only have to use the reporting card if there is a change in income- otherwise every month they get the same amount. The reporting card is a huge hassle especially when it's saying the same thing every month.	Mar 6, 2012 12:24 PM
14	i'm not certain, but i would like to suggest that while be accountable to the taxpayer is important, there should also be a method to ensure accountability to the clients. as well some attention should be paid to how much the reporting to taxpayer process is costing. resources used for these administrative tasks take away from the programs.	Mar 6, 2012 9:25 AM
15	It should be transparent and the general public should be able to comprehend how it functions.	Mar 6, 2012 9:07 AM
16	careful screening of new people coming into the system should eliminate the need for extensive ongoing auditing	Mar 6, 2012 8:06 AM
17	I really don't know as I am currently in the system after leaving an abusive	Mar 6, 2012 3:23 AM

Page 10, Q1. What level of reporting/monitoring is necessary to maintain a system that is accountable to Ontario taxpayers?

	relationship and in some ways it seems so intrusive and while I understand it is to help discourage misusing the system. There are the same people systematically abusing the system year after year as they have "learned" the system and how to play it. I think the longer you are on assistance the more paperwork/auditing should be done. But it's hard to maintain a level of integrity for both the Ontario taxpayers who slander "welfare" recipients as lazy, etc and those who are in need of assistance and generally don't want to be there.	
18	I feel that we should report any and all earnings including people that work under the table.	Mar 4, 2012 7:44 PM
19	Monthly as per the current system.	Mar 2, 2012 7:40 PM
20	I think it is very important that individuals report what they are working towards achieving (work, school, social activity, etc). I do not think that people should be allowed to "sit" on the system if they can achieve goals that they have laid out to be important to them. I think that if someone is unable to work for what ever reason there should be some kind of mandatory participation in something that would be of a benefit to them (being; support groups, volunteering, social activities etc) in order to receive a portion of there assistance.	Mar 2, 2012 12:59 PM
21	combine evidence of monitoring with info on significance of level of any abuse compared to other systems like income tax, corporate fraud, etc.	Mar 2, 2012 12:09 PM
22	One should have to see their case worker at least once a year and be evaluated by their employment worker at least once every 3-6 months.	Mar 2, 2012 9:51 AM
23	I still feel that monthly reporting is necessary	Mar 1, 2012 11:03 AM
24	In my 30 + years of experience in working with people with disabilities, I have seen very little "intentional cheating" by my clients. Any monitoring system that is implemented must take into account the limited understanding of many recipients.	Mar 1, 2012 7:38 AM
25	income tax is adequate	Feb 29, 2012 5:46 PM
26	Unsure. The anonymous tip lines seem to perpetuate the problem. Single parents just trying to get by should not be subject to being threatened by the system that is suppose to serve them.	Feb 29, 2012 2:45 PM
27	more telephone calls to recipients so they know they are being monitored and would make it easier to get help	Feb 29, 2012 7:09 AM
28	I am so sick and tired of proving that my son is handicapped. Nothing has changed in 19 years, give it a rest.	Feb 28, 2012 12:24 PM
29	- spot check audits of those receiving social assistance - including unscheduled home visits.	Feb 28, 2012 9:39 AM
30	For all the years I did work, I thought, why can't these people work..now that I have been out of work for about a year and a half, I understand the frustration for people trying to get back into the workforce. Especially when you get a little older.	Feb 27, 2012 1:12 PM

Page 10, Q1. What level of reporting/monitoring is necessary to maintain a system that is accountable to Ontario taxpayers?

31	Bi annual or annual	Feb 27, 2012 12:21 PM
32	Report twice a year with an audit, but income statements monthly...	Feb 27, 2012 10:08 AM
33	make sure people are taking meds, have a dietician and are exercising	Feb 27, 2012 7:45 AM
34	While accountability is important and necessary, making people feel guilty before any type of misuse, making some rules feel punitive, will only cause mistrust.	Feb 23, 2012 9:29 AM
35	Only a minimum level of monitoring of recipients is needed.	Feb 23, 2012 7:36 AM

Page 10, Q2. What penalties would discourage others from misusing the system?

1	don't penalize/motivate and encourage accountability ie. incentives	Mar 12, 2012 11:27 AM
2	Misuse due to lack of understanding: Restitution, Garnishment, Misuse due to Fraud: Stiffer penalties including incarceration.	Mar 9, 2012 3:21 PM
3	Unsure	Mar 9, 2012 12:25 PM
4	No comment at this time	Mar 9, 2012 6:45 AM
5	Hefty fines for intentional misuse.	Mar 8, 2012 6:17 PM
6	currently .. there are no real penalties... no one will prosecute for fraud... it just doesn't happen enough	Mar 8, 2012 1:37 PM
7	It's hard to come up with a harsher penalty than cutting off someone's benefits, short of throwing them in jail.	Mar 8, 2012 7:18 AM
8	Withdrawal of support to those who abuse the system	Mar 8, 2012 7:02 AM
9	repayment and fines	Mar 7, 2012 3:37 PM
10	I think the current structure of needing to pay back if there is abuse and also being on a "list" is discouraging enough. If people are desperate for help, we should help them.	Mar 7, 2012 10:29 AM
11	Repeated research suggests that only 2-3% of recipients misuse the system. This is lower than the numbers of estimated under-reporting income for income and GST purposes. Penalties should be determined on a case by case basis, but there doesn't appear to be a widespread problem	Mar 7, 2012 8:25 AM
12	Depends, if someone is deperate than the misuse maybe explainable so perhaps a system where the penalty fits the crime	Mar 7, 2012 8:24 AM
13	if they misuse the system then they should be obligated to pay the system back what they owe to them	Mar 7, 2012 8:22 AM
14	The same type of penalty as is in place for EI, that the person would have to repay monies not owed and be penalized from the system.	Mar 6, 2012 8:06 PM
15	The economy can effort guarantied minimum incom if BIG CORPORATIONS WILL PAY TAXES	Mar 6, 2012 4:32 PM
16	A t'wo-strikes and then you are out' for a minimum of 3 years might be worth considering.	Mar 6, 2012 2:22 PM
17	suspension if in noncompliance	Mar 6, 2012 1:24 PM
18	I have no idea. People are always going to break the law regardless- and jail already exists .. It doesn't stop people from killing people or using drugs so it won't stop those who commit fraud. However, maybe a background check would be good as I've known plenty who use welfare to support their drug habit!	Mar 6, 2012 12:24 PM
19	there will always be those who abuse social assistance programs. making ALL recipients feel like criminals through excessive and invasive tatics is the one	Mar 6, 2012 9:25 AM

Page 10, Q2. What penalties would discourage others from misusing the system?

	thing we should NOT be doing. and why do we only consider penalties for those who misuse the system? what about some kind of reward as well as punishment? not sure how that would look - but why aren't we even asking the question??	
20	unsure	Mar 6, 2012 9:07 AM
21	none	Mar 6, 2012 8:06 AM
22	I don't know because I think there are abuses to every system and once you get to know the system, it becomes easy to adapt and slip through the system for people. I am also wondering if the "system" was paying money based on a reasonable wage their might not be misuse of some of the systems but to encourage people from misusing when they don't have a general need for assistance, I think no matter what the system is, there will always be the bad apples that will take advantage of it but why make those who genuinely need the assistance suffer for a small few who abuse it.	Mar 6, 2012 3:23 AM
23	Removing them from the system completely if they are found guilty and jail time along with paying back what they owe	Mar 4, 2012 7:44 PM
24	Disqualification and next of kin or legal guardian ,responsible for any financial misappropriation of funds.	Mar 2, 2012 7:40 PM
25	try incentives rather than penalties	Mar 2, 2012 12:09 PM
26	If a person is misusing the system they should be removed from the system. Having said that, getting any kind of permanent disability is almost impossible in this province and that has to change.	Mar 2, 2012 9:51 AM
27	I think the penalties in place now are discouraging enough, i had someone call in a false claim about me i wasn't receiving social assistance for 2 months until they sorted it out. Now I think that should change.	Feb 29, 2012 8:13 PM
28	none if the benefits were raised to at least the poverty line people wouldnt abuse the system	Feb 29, 2012 5:46 PM
29	Full disclosure of the penalties.	Feb 29, 2012 2:45 PM
30	No assistance for 2 yrs	Feb 29, 2012 7:09 AM
31	It is not worth it to defraud the system, this is not a quality life that people want to go after. The system keeps us POOR.	Feb 28, 2012 12:24 PM
32	Cut off from benefits for 5 years, repayment or restitution instituted with client	Feb 28, 2012 9:39 AM
33	Cut them off ?? Not sure, it may cause more problems...send them to jail...the cost doubles or triples...so, I'm not too sure what the penalty should be..but of course there should be one.	Feb 27, 2012 1:12 PM
34	This would be situational dependant and could include, cessation of benefits, repayment of incorrectly administered benefits and other legal action related to fraud.	Feb 27, 2012 12:21 PM

Page 10, Q2. What penalties would discourage others from misusing the system?

35	Not allow them benefits. For 3 mths and make them do community service...	Feb 27, 2012 10:08 AM
36	dont know	Feb 27, 2012 7:45 AM
37	Food Stamps which need proof of I.D. from the person receiving & using them. Rent Cheques issued directly to the Landlord	Feb 22, 2012 3:21 PM

**Page 11, Q1. The report suggests that following options to revise asset rules.
Please indicate if you AGREE with the following options:**

1	There should be definitive steps taken to get off of OW. There should be a maximum allowable time limit to receive OW benefits if no steps are taken for retraining, or education or employment opportunities.	Mar 9, 2012 3:29 PM
2	The biggest flaw in the asset rules is that it assumes that non-liquid assets can easily be made liquid. Especially in a challenging economy such as this one, such assumptions are often ridiculously naive. Appraised values placed on non-liquid assets are generally a best-case scenario. In a depressed economy, non-liquid assets on the real market tend to be worth a mere fraction of their appraised value. For example, a car appraised at \$12,000 might only bring \$3,000 or less on the open market in a depressed economy.	Mar 8, 2012 7:23 AM
3	People should be supported to retain sufficient assets to cover costs related to their retirement years, extraordinary health costs and their children's education. These asset limits should be realistic and based on solid actuarial analysis and not a minimal amount. They should also be able to maintain the asset value of their home up to a reasonable limit.	Mar 7, 2012 8:29 AM
4	Some people have put in many years of working or other that has allowed them to save or have RRSP's. I do not feel that because of a hardship people should have to relinquish their savings to get basic needs met. However, there has to be some cut off but feel it should be a sufficient amount instead of just maintaining poverty line.	Mar 2, 2012 1:04 PM
5	Do not take houses away from people that have earned them. This would make their situation worse. They would give up trying and get very depressed. Cars are needed to get the kids to school in time to get the individual to work	Feb 29, 2012 7:12 AM
6	Even though I'm not sure about the top two questions, I certainly don't want to pay for anybody RRSP's...I paid for my own.	Feb 27, 2012 1:15 PM

Page 11, Q2. Should people be required to spend down their assets before receiving social assistance? Why or why not?

1	the seems unfair for someone who is less fortunate to have to loose everything	Mar 12, 2012 11:28 AM
2	Yes, but only to a reasonable threshold and conditional on the type of asset (i.e. if liquidating an asset incurs financial hardship or reduces long-term security, then it should not be mandated).	Mar 9, 2012 3:29 PM
3	with-in reason ... a responsible adult would save what ever little money they may have saved just for that .. savings, emergency, a just in case backup, some people are scared to have NO money in the bank and live pay cheque to pay cheque ... what if ... you know	Mar 9, 2012 6:48 AM
4	I will no longer have anything towards retirement.	Mar 8, 2012 8:29 PM
5	If cash assets are still set at current levels ... it would be far far too easy for people to shelter cash assets into RRSPS and then apply to OW. Especially with an audit based approach!!!!	Mar 8, 2012 1:40 PM
6	depends on the value of assets there should be a limit to value established as to how much a person could have before having to use them up first	Mar 8, 2012 12:20 PM
7	I think people should be required to use some of their liquid assets, within reason. As for non-liquid, refer to my previous comment.	Mar 8, 2012 7:23 AM
8	Clients receiving legacies etc. should be allowed to keep those assets so that in time they may be able to obtain their own homes	Mar 8, 2012 7:04 AM
9	I know that some people have been forced to withdraw their RRSP or TFSA money before they were allowed to have social assistance. This will then leave them unprotected for their senior years and force them to remain on the system. Some people just have periods of need while they adjust to the change in their circumstances ie recovery from an accident, lay offs, mental health issues etc. Many adults can resume a very productive life afterwards and would therefore need their RRSP and TFSA money for their retirement.	Mar 7, 2012 3:40 PM
10	In most situations, retention of those assest such as a car or a home will allow the people to regain a position of independance more quickly. If we help people when they need it before they hit rock bottom, the ability to recover from a situation is greater. However, I would be concerned if they are purchasing further assets while on social assistance.	Mar 7, 2012 10:32 AM
11	People should be supported to retain sufficient assets to cover costs related to their retirement years, extraordinary health costs and their children's education. These asset limits should be realistic and based on solid actuarial analysis and not a minimal amount.	Mar 7, 2012 8:29 AM
12	To an extent, do not want individuals with a lot of assets collecting assistance but the asset level needs to be raised so when an individual finds employment they can get back on their feet quicker.	Mar 7, 2012 8:26 AM
13	no if they have a car or own a house i dont think that they should be obligated to sell all of these items before they can recieve social assistance, some people go on ow or odsp because they lost a job or was injured/disabled or have a mental	Mar 7, 2012 8:24 AM

Page 11, Q2. Should people be required to spend down their assets before receiving social assistance? Why or why not?

illness and i dont think they should be punished for that, they acquired those items before they had to resort to social assistance

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| 14 | Some people need Social Assistance for a very short time, they should not have to use up all their assets in order to qualify. People shouldn't have to sell their houses. | Mar 7, 2012 7:50 AM |
| 15 | This just impoverishes them even more, strips them of everything they have acquired when circumstances were better for them, it's demoralizing to have to be down to nothing in order to receive barely enough to live on in the end. Of course if they are extremely wealthy this doesn't really apply but most people requiring assistance don't have huge assets any way. | Mar 6, 2012 8:09 PM |
| 16 | Guaranteed minimal income is simplest and clear. Allowing people make additional small money and keep them is the way to encourage effort and develop new ideas up to employing others in future bussines. | Mar 6, 2012 4:36 PM |
| 17 | It depends - I don't think it would be fair to expect the taxpayer to support people when they have assets that can reasonably be liquidated. The exception to this would be shelter, though considering a lien again a home may be something to consider. | Mar 6, 2012 2:24 PM |
| 18 | Why? Propld need to have some sort of stability. If an emergency happens they fall onto their assets. For instant an "in trust" fund. People save it for emergencies. I needed glasses And your coverage only covered half the price. What would i do? Or you go off ow - you would then depend on that \$ | Mar 6, 2012 12:28 PM |
| 19 | how degrading to ask the recipient to have absolutely nothing before qualifying for help. of course if someone owns a 300,000 house or has excessive savings, that's a different situation, but to ask someone -who has so little to begin with- to be down to their last penny is barbaric. | Mar 6, 2012 9:25 AM |
| 20 | this approach typically places people in further risk of falling into poverty and eliminates the ability of a small financial safety net as they transition back to work. | Mar 6, 2012 9:10 AM |
| 21 | Not if it disability related | Mar 6, 2012 8:07 AM |
| 22 | You require assistance because you are financial need. The system was originally set up as an EMERGENCY requirement and if they have money/assets that are above a certain amount why do they "need" EMERGENCY assistance. I understand that once in the system it is hard to get off the system but it also defeats the purpose of EMERGENCY assistance. | Mar 6, 2012 3:26 AM |
| 23 | The further down people get pushed, the less likely they are to recover. | Mar 5, 2012 1:07 PM |
| 24 | not if those assets are child savings or house/ vehicle ownership etc. ontario works strives to push ppl in the direction of being self sufficient and in the future to hopefully meet the goals of saving etc, so why require someone to go backwards like that? if it were selling an asset such as a boat or an unnecessary novelty than yes. | Mar 5, 2012 11:27 AM |

Page 11, Q2. Should people be required to spend down their assets before receiving social assistance? Why or why not?

25	We are on OW because we need help through times of struggle not to make a buck. If you have the ability to sell things or remove things that can make you some money it is not up to the tax payers to pay you to eat when your driving a nice car and sitting in front of your big screen	Mar 4, 2012 7:46 PM
26	Just as a bank does not want your car , your boat, your ski doo ,etc. all they want is their money back. should you fall into a default situation with monies borrowed from them,although you used their money for those purchases'.Today's real world wants money now for the BARE BONE BASIC'S,for whatever reason the person is on OW or the other one is bad enough,the basic rule of thumb,even in a court of law is often " THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW ",so should it be here when one looks to "Appraise" one's eligibility. it's not what you were worth yesterday, it's what your worth now?	Mar 2, 2012 7:57 PM
27	See above comment.	Mar 2, 2012 1:04 PM
28	if necessary, try trust agreements so assets are not used for current needs but remain for future needs	Mar 2, 2012 12:10 PM
29	Depends on the type of assets	Mar 1, 2012 11:47 AM
30	I think it should depend on the type of assests the person has. Having a person sell an assest like their car will hinder them in returning to the work force because now they have the added problem of transportation when looking for employment.	Mar 1, 2012 11:05 AM
31	I think this is a question that will not benefiot from a yes or no answer. The principles are that the state does not want to fund people who can afford to pay their own way. At the same time, asset rules that are too stringent can actually hinder someone from eventually moving off state subsidies. The other consideration is a public relations matter. Protecting state funding from fraud is necessary but must be done without unfairly marking recipients as lazy cheaters, as Harris did in the past.	Mar 1, 2012 7:44 AM
32	Depending on what those assets are. ie: If that person has stocks in a company that can be sold to support them for months they should be sold first to support them and there family before turning to social assistance, but suppose if a family has multiple cars which are considered assets. The cars are all used on a daily basis for work, school, etc.... then they shouldnt be required to sell off those assets to an acceptable level.	Feb 29, 2012 8:19 PM
33	no one wants to be on assistance raise the amount to at least the poverty line so canadians can live in dignity. any assets prior to assistance can help lift up to the poverty line	Feb 29, 2012 5:52 PM
34	if it is all that they have why give it up in order to try to get back on their feet. They already have so little, why take away the last of they have.	Feb 29, 2012 2:47 PM
35	What about emergencies, then? People on OW have asset limit to 1650 per family which is basically one monthly spending for those families or even less depending on housing cost of family. Basic rule for everybody in making financial plan is to have emergency fond of three month expenses. For those	Feb 29, 2012 1:06 PM

Page 11, Q2. Should people be required to spend down their assets before receiving social assistance? Why or why not?

who receive financial assistance there in one month or less according to those limits. These people are forced spend to the last month and rely on eligibility rule that is so strict. What happens if they are not eligible and they spend even that amount? People are forced to sacrifice even last penny in times of employment hardship that falls upon them.

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| 36 | If they have money in the bank they don't need help. I spent all mine before I applied | Feb 29, 2012 7:12 AM |
| 37 | People who lose their jobs have lost enough, getting them to get rid of their assets is cruel. If people go right to the bottom, there is less chance of them coming back up. | Feb 28, 2012 12:27 PM |
| 38 | Being allowed some assets offers hope for the future and that receiving social assistance is a temporary set back. Having no assets simply makes people feel hopeless - and even more dependent and perhaps unmotivated to get back to where they were in life. | Feb 28, 2012 9:44 AM |
| 39 | social assistance is just that...assistance....not long term. people need to have some money put away for car repairs or vet bills that are not covered by social assistance. i do agree that there does have to be a cap on how much assets you have before you can apply for social assistance. | Feb 27, 2012 9:42 PM |
| 40 | I had to... | Feb 27, 2012 1:15 PM |
| 41 | It depends on the amount of assets. It would be hard to make a judgement. I imagine most people spend down their assets before subjecting themselves to OW already. | Feb 27, 2012 12:23 PM |
| 42 | For all the reasons that you stated above. It is harder to move forward in life financially and get off assistance when you have no assets especially a home. If you are always the have nots it is hard to change that self assessment psychologically as well. The gap between the poor and the well off just gets bigger. | Feb 27, 2012 10:26 AM |
| 43 | If an individual has money in the bank from past assets, they should not have to spend it all at once before they apply because they are scared of getting denied. | Feb 24, 2012 2:27 PM |
| 44 | There should be a limit on assets held when receiving social assistance, but it should be higher than it is for both OW and ODSP. | Feb 23, 2012 7:39 AM |
| 45 | Because O.W. benefits are not adequate enough to maintain a normal, average lifestyle. As mentioned before, I go to work, I make 10.25@hr for 40 hrs. O.W. takes 50% of my net earnings, Where is the Gas money to get to work coming from, where is the rent payments?etc: I'm worse off then I was, which was awful! | Feb 22, 2012 3:28 PM |

Page 12, Q1. The Commission's report outlines three approaches to improving integration and delivery to achieve long-term viability. Please select the option you think would improve delivery of OW and ODSP.

1	Again, would need to know pros and cons of each option. Overall, I think it's important to ensure a consistent service delivery approach across the province.	Mar 8, 2012 7:18 AM
2	Too often the client must move from agency to agency in order to obtain the benefits required. This costs time and money for transportation	Mar 8, 2012 7:05 AM
3	ensure that case management includes disability management	Mar 6, 2012 8:09 AM
4	It would help if we all got paid the same without having a seperate levle for each. Low income, is low income. we should all recieve the same. The cost of living is the same for each group	Feb 29, 2012 7:15 AM
5	dont' really know	Feb 28, 2012 12:28 PM
6	Keep separate the two agencies. When we become one big agency, often individual needs get lost.	Feb 27, 2012 10:28 AM

Page 13, Q1. In your opinion, how should INCOME supports be delivered?

1	By the province.	Mar 9, 2012 3:39 PM
2	On case by case basis	Mar 9, 2012 12:31 PM
3	Not sure	Mar 9, 2012 6:49 AM
4	Income supports should be delivered in such a way that it encourages the recipient to seek supplements, even if at first, they are only marginal, such as odd jobs, or part time employment.	Mar 8, 2012 7:27 AM
5	A debit card system could be developed which has funds added each month.	Mar 8, 2012 7:07 AM
6	Combined by the municipalities that know their clients needs best.	Mar 7, 2012 10:34 AM
7	Need to explore shifting to a tax delivered basic income amount for adults in parallel to the children's benefit. This would see OW focus on transitional supports to employment rather than the basic income support side.	Mar 7, 2012 8:38 AM
8	Monthly, by cheque	Mar 7, 2012 8:27 AM
9	Qualifying parties are seen as they are now by phone and at the office locally.	Mar 6, 2012 8:13 PM
10	Centralized through municipalities and/or their agents with accountability frameworks monitored by the provincial government. These should be support by counselling programs (a minimum of 1 -2) to support helping get people back on track.	Mar 6, 2012 2:26 PM
11	The same as they are. Except no reporting card every month unless something gets changed.	Mar 6, 2012 12:29 PM
12	ask recipients	Mar 6, 2012 9:27 AM
13	current system is not broken system should be fine tuned to provide for work incentives and for involvement in activities such as volunteerism	Mar 6, 2012 8:13 AM
14	Human one on one service and direct deposit works well	Mar 4, 2012 7:47 PM
15	I think income supports should be delivered where rent and utilities should be paid directly to the landlord and utility company. This would eliminate the problem of recipients getting themselves in trouble with their housing situation. Of course the need to revisit rental and utility amounts. Phone should be considered as a utility as it is essential tool needed for communication (whether it is for employment or meetings in regards to service and health).	Mar 1, 2012 11:16 AM
16	I think it is fine the way it is.	Feb 29, 2012 8:21 PM
17	federally through the provinces	Feb 29, 2012 5:55 PM
18	Centralized support	Feb 29, 2012 2:48 PM
19	bank	Feb 29, 2012 7:15 AM
20	-my son can't keep his Birthday or Christmas money from his Grandma because I have to claim it. This is not right. We have no dignity when asked to report	Feb 28, 2012 12:32 PM

Page 13, Q1. In your opinion, how should INCOME supports be delivered?

these gifts as income - My son deserves these same treats like any other child. - As a caregiver, I feel that I deserve a caregiver livable allowance. This is a tough job that I do for someone I love, but deserve compensation for. Also, there are no opportunities to be cared for or kept-occupied for someone his age, so I do it all, and no means to transport his - A supplement that took this into account would seriously change our quality of life.

21	?	Feb 27, 2012 12:24 PM
22	mail	Feb 27, 2012 10:52 AM
23	Not my expertise.	Feb 27, 2012 10:30 AM
24	with home visits to the receiptent	Feb 27, 2012 7:48 AM
25	I feel the rent should always be directly paid to the landlord to ensure non payment issues	Feb 24, 2012 2:39 PM
26	not sure	Feb 23, 2012 9:30 AM

Page 13, Q2. In your opinion, how should EMPLOYMENT supports be delivered?

1	At the local level - note: funds for training and education from the provincial level.	Mar 9, 2012 3:39 PM
2	One stop	Mar 9, 2012 12:31 PM
3	Not sure	Mar 9, 2012 6:49 AM
4	There should be an "easing-in" process, where the start up costs of a new job are covered, such as help with things like transit passes, safety boots, and such things for the first few months, and full support is continued until the new employee receives their first employment pay.	Mar 8, 2012 7:27 AM
5	Counsellors assigned to each client to follow the case through.	Mar 8, 2012 7:07 AM
6	Separate, but in partnership with OW and ODSP.	Mar 7, 2012 10:34 AM
7	There needs to be a paradigm shift in society's expectations of public sector, private sector and non-profit employers to take up the challenge of supporting OW and ODSP recipients to find and retain meaningful employment. This is as much about how employers are supported and expected to offer solutions as it is about helping clients to prepare themselves to be more employable.	Mar 7, 2012 8:38 AM
8	As required and to ensure success	Mar 7, 2012 8:27 AM
9	This could be local or provincial but a local person may have a better understanding of what is going on in a community, however, they may also be biased about individuals in a very small community and be unfair or not as fair as they could be. Just because people have children it does not prevent them from working which seems quite prevalent in some communities.	Mar 6, 2012 8:13 PM
10	Centralized with income support programs, supported by counselling programs by qualified people (not just employment) to support getting people back on track.	Mar 6, 2012 2:26 PM
11	In programs. Especially with post education support instead of discouraging it.	Mar 6, 2012 12:29 PM
12	ask recipients	Mar 6, 2012 9:27 AM
13	heavy emphasis on continual learning and skills upgrade.	Mar 6, 2012 8:13 AM
14	Human one on one and an automated service	Mar 4, 2012 7:47 PM
15	I think the current employment services are fairly good. Most services that I have knowledge of help client's look for employment and also provide financial support to obtain materials needed to start a job.	Mar 1, 2012 11:16 AM
16	municipality	Feb 29, 2012 5:55 PM
17	Community based agencies	Feb 29, 2012 2:48 PM
18	bank	Feb 29, 2012 7:15 AM
19	?	Feb 27, 2012 12:24 PM
20	mail	Feb 27, 2012 10:52 AM

Page 13, Q2. In your opinion, how should EMPLOYMENT supports be delivered?

21	Employment supports should support all individuals and their individual needs. And offer intensity of support when needed. Barriers being addressed and supported.	Feb 27, 2012 10:30 AM
22	with home visits to the recepoint	Feb 27, 2012 7:48 AM
23	not sure	Feb 23, 2012 9:30 AM

Page 14, Q1. What programs in the federal/provincial social safety net need to be improved in order to decrease reliance on social assistance?

1	not sure	Mar 12, 2012 10:55 AM
2	All of the above.	Mar 9, 2012 3:43 PM
3	Vision, Dental	Mar 9, 2012 12:33 PM
4	Not sure	Mar 9, 2012 6:49 AM
5	rent geared to income housing	Mar 8, 2012 8:32 PM
6	Availability of and funding for credential equivalency programs for immigrants should be increased, especially in the area of medicine.	Mar 8, 2012 6:24 PM
7	wsib labour laws unemployment ins	Mar 8, 2012 12:23 PM
8	They really need to reform EI, as it is the Byzantine EI system that forced me to go on welfare in the first place.	Mar 8, 2012 7:28 AM
9	Higher social assistance rates with improved dental and vision care Social housing	Mar 8, 2012 7:19 AM
10	all of the ones listed above.	Mar 7, 2012 3:41 PM
11	Support programs to those that are struggling, availability of all health benefits to Ontarians, and different types of housing depending on the need, eg. supported, transitional and co-op	Mar 7, 2012 10:37 AM
12	The erosion and inaction on the issues cited above are well known. It is the responsibility of any caring, compassionate and democratic society to ensure that these issues are addressed as bedrock commitments in building a society where everyone has equality of opportunity. For a generation, we have watched as the foundations of our social safety net have been allowed to weaken and falter. Its long past time to right the ship and get Canada and Ontario back on track. That means on aggressive, serious-minded action plan to address each of the areas listed above over the next 5 to 7 years.	Mar 7, 2012 8:44 AM
13	If the rate is increased to include adequate funds for housing, then private landlords would build affordable units and this would addressing the housing issue allowing individuals to concentrate on getting a job and moving forward. However, if you don't know where you are going to sleep that night or how long will stayed housed, this becomes your priority.	Mar 7, 2012 8:30 AM
14	improve the health benefits for OW recipients (basic prescription drug and dental for only children isnt enough! adults need dental too not just in an emergency (basic work done once a year etc) and also increase affordable government housing in all cities especially Guelph where the city is building tons of CONDOS for the rich and doing nothing for the low-income citizens	Mar 7, 2012 8:30 AM
15	Employment Insurance Affordable Housing Minimum Wage	Mar 7, 2012 7:52 AM
16	Healthcare,drug benefits, and dental benefits are so important to people and a family but most jobs these days do not provide this. Benefits should be made available to low income earners at no cost. Minimum wage would go a lot farther	Mar 6, 2012 8:17 PM

Page 14, Q1. What programs in the federal/provincial social safety net need to be improved in order to decrease reliance on social assistance?

if people weren't spending most of their earnings on shelter and were not able to go to the dentist or eye doctor or get their medications. I think just receiving the benefits for some would be enough and they could earn enough to live on at minimum wage if the housing was subsidized and benefits especially medication was free. Education should be subsidized as well.

17	Funded counselling programs through provincial ministries to support problem solving and linking people to required services to support independence and getting people back on track. Housing programs that are linked with income support programs to help those most vulnerable who linger at the margins. Incentives based on successes (employment that generates incomes, staged to support weaning off of income support rather than penalizing; incentives to attend employment programs; literacy programs, acculturation programs from new Canadians.	Mar 6, 2012 2:29 PM
18	Post secondary education funds or help or grants or loans or assistance!!!	Mar 6, 2012 12:30 PM
19	all of the above need to be reviewed and updated to meet current demands on the services.	Mar 6, 2012 9:12 AM
20	1. need a universal drug benefit program with claw back based on income 2. where income offsets are employed do not use dollar for dollar offsets- leave incentive to work	Mar 6, 2012 8:18 AM
21	Funding higher education levels not just for people who are needing a "second" career and have been laid off for a number of years. Affordable "benefit" plans for low income earners Supplement minimum wage earners or reduce/elminate their Income Tax deducted from their pay cheques. Fund affordable housing, also rebuild old factories/warehouses, etc into loft apartments or multiplex houses/apartments and set the prices of either rent or to purchase at a price for low income earners. Encourage these properties to be bought at less than market value and affordable. Sure sell a few units at above market value as well to try to off set the other houses sold at less than "value". Offer incentives to real estate companies and builders to sell houses at a less than rate for low income earners or MANDATE that they set so many houses aside to sell/rent to low income earners. Help people with credit issues re-establish credit quicker if they are low income earners or have been on social assistance. Let's face it that money isn't enough for anyone to live on. The choices that have to be made in these situation are often between food, housing, and heat. Especially if you must pay market rent.	Mar 6, 2012 3:37 AM
22	housing and wages- always is and always will be, cant increase living costs and not jobs or wages to match. every single person in the world will say that!	Mar 5, 2012 11:30 AM
23	In my opinion it is far to easy to come into Canada and expect the tax payyers to pay your way. If you are able there is an abundance of jobs that are available and immigrants should be working in whatever they can get to be allowed into the country. It is better to be an immagrent and you make more money and have better benifis than if you were born here.	Mar 4, 2012 7:49 PM
24	Many Ontarians are forced to turn to social assistance because they have limited access to Employment Insurance.	Mar 2, 2012 1:07 PM

Page 14, Q1. What programs in the federal/provincial social safety net need to be improved in order to decrease reliance on social assistance?

25	wage and benefit structures universal programs like pharmacare, child care, housinf availability, incentives for healthy eating	Mar 2, 2012 12:12 PM
26	I think that's a given. Once again, nobody seems to be looking at the realistic cost of living in Ontario. A single person cannot live on their own on minimum wage, but it's almost impossible (education or not) to find a job that pays more than the minimum. Affordable housing is a huge problem, as there is very little available. And unless you're on a number of medications, nobody seems to realize what a hefty cost that is to a person's finances. Forget when someone has to be on a specialized diet and tries to pay for that on a monthly basis.	Mar 2, 2012 10:04 AM
27	Affordable housing Affordable utilities Access to health food choices Inadequate benefit rates Access to prescription drugs and dental for people not on assistance that are low-income Having prescribed vitamins and supplements covered under the drug card when prescribed by a doctor. Stop claiming child support as income or only have half it deemed as income. Family Responsibilities Office needs to put stronger enforcement in place for parents that do not pay. My experience is that a lot of single parents on either system do not receive child support regularly. And when they do it is considered income which means it doesn't really benefit the child. My suggestion is that delinquent parents be forced to work for the province at a much cheaper rate than we are currently paying workers every month as many hours that are needed in order to pay their support amount. Child support enforcement needs to be looked at because the current system is not working.	Mar 1, 2012 11:32 AM
28	more employment oppportunities for people with disabilities.	Mar 1, 2012 7:47 AM
29	credentials should be examined and recognized affordable housing is important make all new apt. at least 10% social housing. drugs and dental and vision needs to be increased	Feb 29, 2012 6:03 PM
30	Counselling	Feb 29, 2012 2:25 PM
31	allow all low income earners to have basic access to drug, dental and vision care benefits. provide more assistance to people who lack experience in certain field	Feb 29, 2012 1:11 PM
32	College grants for recipients. If they do not complete they pay it ALL back. Wage increases	Feb 29, 2012 7:17 AM
33	-rates period need to be increased so people have time and energy to look for work etc -increase benefit to caregivers of people with permanent disabilities - eventually i hope to find a long term care facility for my son. I will then be expected to be in the job market - I will need extended supports at that time, but will not be given credit for the years of caring for my support	Feb 28, 2012 12:37 PM
34	EI needs to be extended for those unable to find work. Immigrants need to have language skills before coming to Canada, that should be a requirement. I would not expect to find a job in any country if I could not speak the language of that country. However, those immigrants with language skills and credentials should be offered upgrading by professional organizations immediately to get them into the workforce as soon as possible.	Feb 28, 2012 9:49 AM

Page 14, Q1. What programs in the federal/provincial social safety net need to be improved in order to decrease reliance on social assistance?

35	all employers should offer benefits. it is because of the inadequate minimum wage that low income earners need the availability of benefits.	Feb 27, 2012 9:56 PM
36	Get rid of the temp agencies, they seem to have taken over, so even if you work for them for years, your job is not secure..and you will never get benefits.	Feb 27, 2012 1:18 PM
37	Looking at the rules about being able to recieve training funding (ie OSAP) while on assistance benefit programs for all low income people Increase in minimum wage	Feb 27, 2012 12:27 PM
38	All the above.	Feb 27, 2012 10:31 AM
39	workshops	Feb 27, 2012 7:49 AM
40	Making employers aware of these barriers and to come on board with assisting individuals to get and keep employment.	Feb 24, 2012 2:40 PM
41	a livable wage across the board. affordable housing	Feb 23, 2012 9:30 AM
42	Higher Minimum Wage More staffing for immigrant services More health care services delivered through Ontario Health Insurance for everyone. Housing benefits	Feb 23, 2012 7:44 AM
43	E.I., Employment incentives, Health care coverage.	Feb 22, 2012 3:32 PM