
This coming October the Raise the Rates Campaign will be having a Provincial Week of Action – please join us and build mobilizations in your community to be part of this growing Provincial fightback! If you need more information or want to get involved, please contact us without delay.



**ONTARIO COALITION
AGAINST POVERTY**

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**Is the Ontario
Government Planning
to Merge Ontario Works
& ODSP?**

YES THEY ARE

and

**WE PLAN
TO STOP THEM!**

Disabled people who have to rely on ODSP know what an inadequate and discriminatory system it is. You have to jump through bureaucratic hoops to get onto it and the level of income it provides comes nowhere close to meeting your basic needs. However, the Ontario Works (OW) system is even less adequate and even more insecure.

Last year, the Liberal Government commissioned a report proposing a merger of OW and ODSP into one program. While the government claims this will make the system easier to administer and easier to access, it is really about cutting benefits. We do not know exactly how a new program will work, it is likely that people with disabilities will get tax credits instead of benefits payments.

The proposal has also called for increased measures to reassess whether people would be accepted as having disabilities and it urged the Government to set up “employers councils” as well as new form of a participation agreement called “Pathway to Employment Plan.” Using friendly sounding language about “focusing on ability,” the government claims this is about making work more accessible. However, in reality we will see disabled people forced to compete for the lowest paying jobs. “Focusing on ability” also erases the discrimination that disabled people place and individualizes our[*]/their] lack of inclusion. Many disabled people are unemployed because of discrimination and lack of accommodations not ‘ability.’

The plan to attack ODSP is based on measures that have been taken by the Government of David Cameron in the UK. There, private companies have been hired to reassess disability claims and huge numbers of people have been forced onto a benefit that is very similar to OW or left without any income whatsoever. Anyone familiar with what injured workers are facing in Ontario will know that the model is already being employed by the WSIB right here at home.

It is our clear understanding, from a well-placed source within Queen’s Park, that we will see legislation being introduced in the fall on the OW/ODSP merger. It is a very serious attack and people should be very concerned. However, we want to stress that we are putting out this information because we believe that we can organize to defeat the Government’s plans and stop this merger from going through.

Last year, OCAP and a wide range of union and community allies held a week of action and sustained mobilizations across Ontario in response to the decision by the Province to scrap the Community Start Up benefit and replace it with locally delivered programs. Community action forced them to put \$42 million into their new system. The attack on ODSP is many times more serious and we firmly believe that united, Province wide action can win.

This cut is not just a concern for disabled people but for all poor and working class people and our allies in Ontario for a number of reasons. Firstly, many of us are on ODSP or have neighbours, relatives and friends who are on ODSP. We need to protect each other and make sure that our communities are supported. Secondly, if tens of thousands of people are forced into menial paid labour at the same time, it will be easier for bosses to keep wages low and working conditions bad. Thirdly, poor people are more likely to be disabled and we know that poverty is one of the biggest causes of disability in the world. Keeping ODSP intact means that we can help ensure that it will be there if those of us who aren’t currently disabled ever need it. Lastly, beating the Liberals on this means that they will think twice before they come after poor people again. Building resistance and solidarity means making the province better for all of us and helping to ensure the whole social safety net remains intact.
