



**MAMAWESWEN, THE NORTH SHORE TRIBAL COUNCIL**  
**SEVEN FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES STRONG**

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**RAISE the RATES CAMPAIGN!**

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**Joint Statement by Mamaweswen, the North Shore Tribal Council and the Raise the Rates Campaign**  
**October 19, 2013**

We are determined to prevent any attempt to merge OW and ODSP which we see as a move in the direction of austerity based, UK style ‘welfare reform’. This would lead to the imposition of ‘work-fare’ onto people on ODSP, forcing people living with disabilities into working for very low wages with no adequate accommodations for their disabilities and cutting them off benefits if they are unable to keep these jobs. However, this opposition to merger does not at all mean that we accept the status quo of a system that so glaringly fails to meet the needs of disabled people. Based on this, we advance the following demands of the Government of Ontario.

1. Provide a clear undertaking that no legislation will be tabled to merge Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).
2. Revise the ODSP Act and regulations to:
  - i. Clearly differentiate support for disabled people living with disabilities that make it difficult if not impossible to be self-supporting, from support for unemployed people, and to provide decent and stable long-term financial support to people living with disabilities as a matter of social right.
  - ii. Restore the real income levels of people on ODSP and OW to at least where they stood before the Harris Tories froze them and Liberal Governments provided below inflation increases.
  - iii. Provide an accessible and fair application process for ODSP. At present, the system is so restrictive that appeals have become a de facto second stage in making an application.
  - iv. Recognize, under both a revised ODSP Act and the OW Act, that First Nations, given their inherent right to self-determination, have the right to design and deliver publicly funded programs, that they determine are best suited to their unique needs, of both long-term support to people living with disabilities and shorter-term support to unemployed people.