Improving Ontario's Social Assistance Programs

September 1, 2017 12:30 P.M.

The province is taking steps to build a fairer Ontario by making improvements to social assistance programs. Changes include:

**Increasing rates**

* Social assistance rates for all individuals receiving support from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works will be increased by two per cent starting in September 2017 for ODSP and October 2017 for Ontario Works.

**Helping people in remote and northern communities**

* The Remote Communities Allowance will increase by $50 for the first recipient and $25 for each additional family member starting in September 2017 for ODSP and October 2017 for Ontario Works. This allowance provides extra support for people living in remote and northern communities to help address the unique challenges they face.

**Increasing income and asset exemptions**

* In the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), asset limits will increase:
  + from $5,000 to $40,000 for single individuals
  + from $7,500 to $50,000 for couples
* In Ontario Works, asset limits will increase:
  + from $2,500 to $10,000 for single individuals
  + from $5,000 to $15,000 for couples
* As of September 1, 2017, the income exemption for cash gifts will increase from $6,000 to $10,000 for both ODSP and Ontario Works.
* As of August 1, 2017,  compensation awards for individuals receiving ODSP are fully exempt as income and assets and the exemption limit for individuals receiving Ontario Works will be increased to $50,000 from the previous $25,000 limit.
* As of September 1, 2017, the monthly maximum deduction for disability-related employment expenses will increase from $300 to $1,000.
* The Canada Pension Plan (CPP) Disabled Contributor’s Child Benefit and Quebec Pension Plan (QPP) Pension for a Disabled Person’s Child will be fully exempt from social assistance beginning October 2017. These benefits provide monthly financial support for the eligible child of a person receiving a CPP/QPP disability benefits.

**Making programs work better for people**

* As of September 1, 2017, former ODSP applicants who have been adjudicated and found to be a person with a disability - but were found ineligible for other reasons - can reapply without being re-adjudicated.
* Individuals on ODSP who leave the program and need to re-enter the program will be re-instated regardless of the reason they exited.
* As of July 1, 2017 a person can leave Ontario Works for up to six months instead of one month and come back onto the program without needing to re-apply. This makes it easier for people to return to Ontario Works for help without needing to complete an entirely new application or visit a local office.
* The government is increasing the ODSP Trusteeship budget by $300,000 to ensure vulnerable individuals receiving social assistance can get support from community-based agencies that can act as their trustees for ODSP purposes.
* The ODSP employment supports budget will increase by $2 million annually starting in 2017-18 to ensure service offerings can continue to meet demand and help persons with disabilities reach their employment goals.
* Batteries and repairs for mobility devices will be added to the list of benefits provided through ODSP under the Transitional Health Benefit which provides drug, dental and vision care benefits if individuals are no longer eligible for ODSP as a result of income from employment.