

**Ministry of Community  
and Social Services**

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April 3, 2014

To the Members of the General Advisory Council on Social Assistance Reform:

Dear Council Members:

Our government is committed to making Ontario's social assistance programs work better for clients who depend on them.

Our government's 2013 Budget took initial reform steps by investing more than \$400 million over the next three years. Our plan for further reform is guided by the advice our government received from the Lankin-Sheikh and Drummond reports, and also by the conversations we're having with clients, staff, advocates, academics, and municipal and First Nations partners.

Our multi-year reform plan has four objectives, building on the approach we began last year:

- We want to motivate and support people to be successful in the workforce.
- We want to provide adequate assistance.
- We want to deliver modern, responsive services.
- And we want to ensure public confidence in the system.

I have heard from many people who are concerned about the possibility of Ontario Works and ODSP being merged into one program. In some cases, they're responding to irresponsible rumours that our plan is focussed on cuts – bringing everyone down to the lowest common denominator and forcing everybody to look for work, regardless of their disability.

I hope you'll help me put an end to these unfounded rumours, which are causing needless anxiety for vulnerable people. That's not our plan. It never was. It never will be. We are focussed on moving toward adequacy for all, and removing obstacles for those who want and are able to work.

I can tell you clearly that having looked at the idea of a merger of these two programs, our government will not be going forward with that recommendation.

What we will do instead is focus on making both programs work better at supporting people and helping them find jobs. We'll work with social assistance clients, our staff, our municipal partners, employers and others about ways to provide a seamless and effective service experience.

Social assistance affects almost 900,000 people every day. Reform will take time and our government will build on our progress in a thoughtful and careful way.

I thank you for your continued support with our reform efforts.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ted McMeekin".

Ted McMeekin  
Minister