



Office of the Regional Chair | Jim Bradley

1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, PO Box 1042 Thorold, ON L2V 4T7

Telephone: 905-980-6000 Toll-free: 1-800-263-7215 Fax: 905-685-6243

Email: jim.bradley@niagararegion.ca

www.niagararegion.ca

July 11, 2024

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Bldg Rm 281, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Sent by e-mail: premier@ontario.ca

RE: Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy – Social Assistance Rates

A five-year community-led Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS) (2024-2028) was launched in March 2024 and approved by Niagara Regional Council.

The strategy reflects concerns, opportunities and actions identified by residents during a broad engagement process and outlines eight Areas of Focus with one recommendation for each area. The Areas of Focus are: Indigenous Well-Being, Housing, Income, Employment, Food Security, Early Child Development, Transportation, and Mental Health and Addiction. Each Area of Focus includes one recommendation and a set of actions that addresses the issue of poverty within that area.

Within the strategy, income was identified as the primary determinant of poverty. The recommendation that addresses income levels calls for Niagara to advocate for adequate, liveable rates from government income assistance programs.

At the June 27, 2024, meeting of Niagara Regional Council a motion was passed calling for a copy of the NPRS be circulated and for the provincial government to increase the Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) basic financial assistance rates and establish a policy to index rates to inflation for OW.

The approved motion is as follows:

1. That the Regional Chair **BE DIRECTED** to send correspondence to the Provincial Government requesting that action be taken to increase the Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) basic financial assistance rates and establish a policy to index rates to inflation for OW similar to ODSP, to mitigate further hardship that has resulted from frozen rates.

2. That the Regional Chair **BE DIRECTED** to circulate a copy of the Niagara Poverty Reduction Strategy and associated correspondence to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS), the Association of Municipalities Ontario (AMO), the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), local area MPs and MPPs and local area municipalities for consideration of further actions required to address poverty.

To this end, as directed by Regional Council, I want to formally request that the Provincial Government increase the Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) basic financial assistance rates and begin a collaborative process to develop and implement a policy to index rates to inflation for OW.

Sincerely,



Jim Bradley, Chair
Niagara Region

- cc: The Honourable Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health
The Honourable David Piccini, Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development
The Honourable Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
Sam Oosterhoff, MPP, Niagara West
Jeff Burch, MPP, Niagara Centre
Wayne Gates, MPP, Niagara Falls
Jennifer (Jennie) Stevens, MPP, St. Catharines