

**ONTARIO SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REVIEW**  
**Discussion Paper 2: Approaches for Reform**

**K-W Poverty Free Action Group**  
March 16, 2012

The Kitchener-Waterloo Poverty Free Action Group includes representatives of community organizations and poverty reduction advocate groups in Kitchener-Waterloo and area.

Members of the KW Poverty Free Action Group have met to discuss the 2<sup>nd</sup> discussion paper released by the Ontario Social Assistance Review Commission. A summary was prepared from the August 2011 K-W forum input to the Commission's 1<sup>st</sup> discussion paper which included feedback submitted to the Commission from across the province and the key directions from the Commission's 2<sup>nd</sup> discussion paper (Appendix A).

On Wednesday February 29<sup>th</sup>, the Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo and its partners in the K-W Poverty Free Action Group hosted a forum to engage members of the Kitchener-Waterloo community to discuss and give input on the first three chapters of the Social Assistance Review Commission discussion paper. More than 40 people participated, including those who receive support through Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program, interested community and family members, students, retired professionals, social service providers, faith community members, business and political representatives and social advocates.

The event was structured according to the Commission's workbook with discussion areas for the first three of the five main issue areas identified by the Commission: *Reasonable Expectations and Necessary Supports to Employment*; *Appropriate Benefit Structure*; and [making the system] *Easier to Understand*. There were also additional discussion areas focussed on 1) the context of the Commission's discussion paper and 2) the outcomes of a successful social assistance system. Participants were invited to circulate and join a discussion and leave their comments on any of the issues that were a priority for them. Facilitators were available to encourage discussion and support participation. At the end of the evening, the group came together as a whole to reflect on what had emerged in the discussions.

The following is a report prepared by the Social Planning Council of the discussions held by the KW Poverty Free Action Group and input received at the local session to give input to the Ontario Social Assistance Review.

## The Broader Context of the Social Assistance Review

There is a general concern that the Commission's 2<sup>nd</sup> discussion paper does not reflect the input received during the first stage of consultation and is based on inappropriate and misleading assumptions. When we engaged local discussion about the 2<sup>nd</sup> discussion paper, some expressed a readiness to give up – why bother when we aren't being listened to? There is dismay that giving input into this discussion paper is avoiding the real issues of inadequate social assistance rates, the negative impacts on the health and well being for those reliant on social assistance and on the external economic realities of increased costs and an insecure and poor employment environment.

Frustration and exhaustion were expressed by local advocates as well as by those who are surviving on social assistance. Poverty reduction advocates are discouraged because a lot of time and effort has been invested in participating in these consultations but, when community input is not reflected, they have little hope there will be constructive system change. On the other hand, those who are relying on social assistance are feeling exhausted and discouraged because they are struggling to survive on a day to day basis and they don't see any constructive way out of this situation.

Everyone that has taken part in local K-W discussions has been sincerely interested in giving input to help improve the life situation of those living on social assistance. However, on top of the daily struggle to survive, those who rely on social assistance must continually withstand negative stereotypes about poverty. Unfortunately, these myths are still evident in the principles and emphasis of the 2<sup>nd</sup> discussion paper.

Further points, raised during the February 29<sup>th</sup> community forum:

- The discussion paper directions are based on punitive assumptions
  - “Fairness” language pits the vulnerable against each other – those receiving social assistance should not be in competition with those who are working in part time, insecure and low paying jobs
  - Assumes an *'austerity' agenda*, with cuts to the most vulnerable and growing income inequality
  - The emphasis on employment is contradictory, as it does not address the employment environment and the Commission cannot make recommendations on employment issues such as minimum wage and the practices of temp agencies
  - Avoids talking about specific needs
  - Reopens the debate of defining poverty
  - Perpetuates a dichotomy of *'deserving'* and *'undeserving'* poor
- Should the Commission address the urgent need to increase social assistance rates?
  - Yes, without hesitation
  - In terms of costs: the long-term effects of low rates will cost us more in health care costs

Many observations during this stage of local consultations mirrored the comments from the community forum hosted in August 2011. There was also a concern that not only did the discussion paper present the wrong questions but the questions were too technical for the general population to have any true input without a great

deal of background knowledge. For those questions the participants in the February 29<sup>th</sup> forum felt confident in answering, the following was expressed:

- Current levels are not sufficient for recipients to live a healthy, full life
- There is too much focus on which Ministry should fund which service, rather than on providing adequate funding to recipients
- There is too much short-term thinking about costs, and we end up paying more in the long-term
- The austerity agenda is false – corporations and the wealthy could pay more taxes. “All of the people talking about austerity make over \$100,000 a year.”
- There is too much focus on getting employment without any focus on the type of jobs available
- “People should be encouraged to better themselves – volunteering, back to school – no one should feel like a burden, be made to feel like a burden. I’m on ODSP; sometimes I feel like a burden, even though I volunteer. I’m a case.” This isn’t addressed in the document or the discussion questions. People should be treated as individuals, not case numbers
- Survival is not enough – people should be able to live
- There is an over-emphasis on fraud, which contributes to the misconception of the public that fraud is rampant in the social assistance system
  - “The system pays more to detect fraud than we lost in fraud!”
  - This also leads to recipients feeling stigmatized within the system, and that they are treated as guilty unless proven innocent

## **Chapter 1: Reasonable Expectations and Necessary Supports to Employment**

- People with disabilities should not be forced to participate in employment activities
- Requirements should be individualized, on a case-by-case basis
- A standard tool to assess work capacity could be useful to help identify strengths, but no one tool could adequately assess everyone, and if a tool is implemented it must allow for exceptions
  - What is “standard” and who defines it?
- Employment supports could be more effective by:
  - Hiring more people to assist with job searches, particularly those who are currently unemployed and/or with lived experience of social assistance
  - A culture of encouragement instead of threat
  - A focus on finding good sustainable jobs, instead of any job
  - Giving employers incentives to hire social assistance recipients
- Employers could be encouraged to hire more social assistance recipients through:
  - Considering experience from outside Canada
  - Educating employers about the hidden stigma against recipients
  - Financial incentives, including funds for adapting a workplace to disabilities
- There should be a focus on other types of employment-related activities, such as volunteering, and on gaining sustainable employment, not any job
- A housing benefit could be useful, but would be difficult and confusing to implement

- Income supplements could be delivered via tax credits
- Incentive to work is not the problem, and an earned income supplement is an insult to those who want to work and cannot find it

## **Chapter 2: Appropriate Benefit Structure**

- All people should receive an adequate income to live a healthy life
- People should receive a fair wage compared to the general population – at least equivalent to minimum wage
- Minimum wage could be raised to balance “fairness”
- There should be no two-rate system – all Ontarians should be funded at an adequate level
  - If a two-rate system is implemented, there should be exemptions from starting at a lower rate for single parents and people with disabilities
- There should be a separate program for those with severe disabilities
- The basic rate should cover:
  - Transportation
  - Telephone service
  - Healthy food
- A Guaranteed Annual Income for all would reduce complexity
- All Ontarians should receive health benefits
  - The cost could be covered by closing the wealth gap and fair taxation, including reapplying the tax brackets which were discontinued in recent decades

## **Chapter 3: [Making the system] Easier to Understand**

- Asset limits should be raised or omitted
- The focus on fraud is a waste of resources which could be better used in focussing on reducing poverty
- An audit system would be better than the current approach, as it would not assume everyone is attempting to defraud the system, but the system requires a greater culture shift
- OW and ODSP should not be combined into a single program, as they have different priorities
- First Nations should be supported by:
  - Better access to medical care, housing, nutritious food, and educational opportunities
  - Eliminating social stigmas
  - Including First Nations in decision-making

## **Chapter 4: Viable over the Long Term and Chapter 5: An Integrated Ontario Position on Income Security**

Regardless of the approach the Commission decides to take, and however OW and ODSP may be integrated, the focus should be on providing recipients with adequate supports. Whether a person is on OW or ODSP, they should be able to access employment supports which will help them to find sustainable employment and to participate as active community members. They should have the financial supports to participate as full members of the community. The question of how these supports are best provided should be secondary to establishing a basic principle and policies to ensure adequate levels of support must be provided. Since the Low Income Measure has been adopted as the measure of poverty by the Government of Ontario, the LIM should be the guide for setting assistance rates and additional support levels.

In addition, in regards to the Commission's consultation process, the questions are being asked in a way that is overly technical and cannot be answered by those who should be specifically engaged in this review process. Many people with lived poverty experience who are supported within the system have barriers which would prevent them from being able to participate in the review as it has been set out by the Commission. A more diverse consultation process which actively invites the participation of as many community members as possible would produce the most thorough results.

The fact that other programs' shortcomings may increase the caseload of social assistance is problematic, but as the Commission has no authority over those other programs, it does not seem to be a very relevant topic for conversation. Why can the context of other programs be considered, but the context of the current labour market is not one to be commented on? The interactions between social assistance and other programs should be studied in a larger context. The great impact which the current labour market has on social assistance, particularly considering the reinforcement of the goal of getting people off of assistance and into the labour market, is one which should have had considerable impact on the review.

## **Chapter 6: First Nations and Social Assistance**

The K-W Poverty Free Action Group members preferred that the discussion on this chapter be done directly by local First Nations community members. Local groups were not able to coordinate this meeting within the timeframe of the consultation.

The comments that were received on this chapter were that the directions in this Chapter seemed to be more anchored in what First Nations communities experience and want to see happen. Furthermore, the Commission's consultation process with First Nations communities is a model to follow for all consultations with communities.

## Outcomes of a Successful System

As a way to help make this consultation more accessible, participants at the February 29<sup>th</sup> forum were invited to consider what a successful system would look like. It is hoped this can be the start for developing outcome measures to assess the system, however it is or is not changed through this review process. We believe it is imperative that the success of Ontario's social services support system be measured against how well it is working to improve the daily lives and life chances of those who must rely on the system, regardless of how long they need this assistance. To measure success through dollar costs or management efficiency is short sighted and not valid. We must assess success by considering how well the system makes a difference for people facing challenging life situations.

- What is the application process like in a successful system?
  - Applicants would be treated with respect and dignity
  - The process would be consistent and accessible
  - There would be only one application required
- What is the administration and reporting experience for recipients in a successful system?
  - Supports are individualized
  - Employment-related activities would focus on community engagement
  - The stigma would be minimized
  - It would be respectful
  - Support would be more than the bare minimum necessary to survive
- What are the outcomes in people's day to day lives with a successful system?
  - Recipients can access the supports they need
  - They would not feel stigmatized or belittled
  - They would be healthy and happy
  - Recipients would not be afraid to earn some minor income or receive gifts
  - They would be able to live independently

## A Final Comment

A key issue that continues to arise in our discussions is the importance of dignity and respect. The Commission's discussion paper refers frequently to a need for a *culture change* which we see as directly tied to how people are viewed and treated once they access the *system*. Second only to insufficient rates to support a healthful standard of living, being treated with dignity and respect is the most important system change need. Sadly, the costs to do this would be nothing.

Appendix A: Summary of Reports and Submissions re: the Social Assistance Review, February, 2012, Social Planning Council Kitchener-Waterloo

	Local Responses from August 2011 forum	Provincial Responses (from “What We Heard”)	Discussion Paper 2 Summary	Discussion Paper 2 Questions
Setting Adequate Assistance Rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rates are much too low, especially for single adults</li> <li>• Shelter allowance should reflect the cost of appropriate housing in the recipients region. It is currently falling very short.</li> <li>• Basic Needs allowance should be indexed to inflation, and raised to truly provide for a recipient’s basic needs, including costs involved in looking for work</li> <li>• Income levels should be rational, and should be based on researched costs</li> <li>• None of the following should be considered as income for a recipient: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Loans</li> <li>○ The income of a spouse of an ODSP recipient</li> <li>○ The income of a child of someone on social assistance</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Gift exemptions should be higher for those on OW</li> <li>• Income from EI should not be clawed back 100%</li> <li>• There should be no income claw backs until a person’s income reaches the Low Income Measure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All rates are too low, for OW and ODSP recipients <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rate of single adults on OW is especially inadequate</li> </ul> </li> <li>• People with lived experience identified housing costs as the greatest barrier to making ends meet</li> <li>• Transportation and telephone costs should be included in the basic rate</li> <li>• Immediately provide a \$100 a month healthy food supplement</li> <li>• Rates should be tied to the cost of living, and set above the poverty line</li> <li>• Take extra costs associated with having a disability into account in any new benefit structure</li> <li>• ODSP rates should be comparable to the level of support for seniors with no other income</li> <li>• Some agreed that the market wage and benefits should be higher than social assistance, and therefore the minimum wage should be raised</li> <li>• The idea of “fairness” pits the poor against the very poor</li> <li>• People should not lose all employment income in the first three months on OW</li> <li>• ODSP definition of the benefit unit means recipients cannot be economically independent if in a relationship</li> <li>• Changes to Living with Parents rules are needed – most recommended that all adults should receive the basic adult amount</li> <li>• Negative interactions between OW and Children’s Aid Society interventions – rates (especially shelter allowance) should not be reduced if children are temporarily removed from the home, so that parents can maintain the child’s place in the home</li> <li>• Negative interaction between social assistance and Rent Geared to Income housing: RGI is based on gross income, not net, and so does not account for participants 50% loss of income; this can cause rent costs to increase severely, and make working impossible</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequacy must be balanced by “fairness” (with other low income earners) and “work incentive”</li> <li>• The Commission acknowledges that this takes place in the context of poverty reduction, but there is no emphasis on reducing deep poverty</li> <li>• One standard rate for all adults, no separation of shelter and basic needs allowances</li> <li>• No “dependent adult” category for adults still living at home</li> <li>• Roll some “special benefits” into the basic rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which adequacy and wage benchmarks should be used to set rates? Are there other measures which should be considered? (Ch.2)</li> <li>• In a methodology for setting rates, what proportions would balance adequacy, fairness and incentives? (Ch.2)</li> <li>• Should Ontario use a two-rate approach, based on how long someone requires social assistance? If so, should there be exemptions from starting at the lower short-term rate? (Ch.2)</li> <li>• Should there be a separate basic income program for people with severe disabilities who are unlikely to generate significant earnings? (Ch.2)</li> <li>• Should some special benefits be rolled into a standard rate? If so, which ones? (Ch.2)</li> <li>• How should the different rates for different family types be established? (Ch.2)</li> </ul>

	Local Responses from August 2011 forum	Provincial Responses (from “What We Heard”)	Discussion Paper 2 Summary	Discussion Paper 2 Questions
Asset Limits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asset levels should be higher, so that someone does not have to liquidate their savings, a reasonable car, home, or RRSPs in order to be eligible for assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Asset levels should be raised <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Items necessary for Northern life, such as snowmobiles and hunting/fishing equipment, should be exempt as assets</li> <li>There is a need for more savings opportunities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making people spend down their assets is counter-productive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OW asset limits could be increased to ODSP levels</li> <li>Limit could be increased for an initial time period</li> <li>Increase limit on certain assets, such as RRSPs</li> </ul> </li> <li>Could follow the example of Quebec, where participants have a limit of \$60,000 of “liquefiable assets”, instead of the current long list of specific exemptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should asset limits be changed? If so, how? (Ch.3)</li> </ul>
Dealing with Employability Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no meaningful acknowledgement that many jobs are not secure and are low paying</li> <li>The minimum wage should be raised so that someone working full-time, full year is not living in poverty</li> <li>One in three jobs in Ontario today are either temporary, contract, part-time, or self-employed</li> <li>40% of cases return to the system within a 1 year period</li> <li>The age 60-64 category should be brought back to ODSP, to provide a maintenance allowance before eligibility for OAS - the system must recognize the difficulty in retraining at this stage of life</li> <li>An OW recipient should not lose their benefits if they are fired or quit</li> <li>Changes should be made to EI eligibility so that it reflects eligibility in other provinces (less than half of Ontario workers are eligible for EI, compared to ⅔ or workers in other provinces)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People on assistance want to work</li> <li>Barriers that prevent working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stigma of being “on assistance”</li> <li>Discrimination against people with disabilities, racialized populations</li> <li>Lack of public knowledge of “invisible” or episodic disabilities</li> <li>The effects of years of poverty (e.g. lack of dental care, depression and social isolation)</li> <li>Lack of skills and appropriate training*</li> <li>Lack of affordable childcare and transportation*</li> <li>Lack of attendant services for people with disabilities who require them*</li> <li>The nature of jobs available** <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*“These are the most frequently cited barriers”</li> <li>** This was “consistently highlighted”</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>Increased support for alternatives to traditional employment, such as self-employment</li> <li>Support for attending full-time post-secondary education</li> <li>People with disabilities should not be categorized as able/unable to work, especially as this does not account for the episodic and non-linear nature of mental health</li> <li>Participation Agreements and treatment should not be mandatory for people with disabilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should participation agreements be required for people with disabilities?</li> <li>There could be “employability assessments” to determine the work capacity of people with disabilities, and whether participation agreements are necessary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What should be considered appropriate employment-related activity participation requirements for people with disabilities? Should participation requirements for people with disabilities be different from those for other people receiving social assistance? (Ch.1)</li> <li>Should a tool be developed to assess the work capacity of people with disabilities? If so, how should the tool be developed and how should it be used? (Ch.1)</li> <li>What kinds of engagement strategies and incentives would be most effective in encouraging and supporting employers to hire more social assistance recipients? (Ch.1)</li> </ul>

	Local Responses from August 2011 forum	Provincial Responses (from “What We Heard”)	Discussion Paper 2 Summary	Discussion Paper 2 Questions
Complexity of Rate Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There must be flexibility for situations that “fall through the cracks”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>System is too complex; workers spend up to 70% of their time enforcing rules</li> <li>Consolidating to a standard rate for all adults</li> <li>More consistency is needed between municipalities</li> <li>Rules for defining spousal relationships are complex and intrusive – social assistance should use the same definition as the Family Law Act</li> <li>Users and administrators both objected to the numerous computer-generated letters which are automatically sent to recipients</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How should the current rate structure be changed to reduce complexity? (Ch.2)</li> </ul>
Fraud Protection		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social assistance has an overwhelming emphasis on monitoring eligibility and compliance, which makes recipients feel like “cheaters”</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move away from a surveillance model towards audits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should the social assistance system move from a surveillance approach toward an audit-based system of verification and monitoring? (Ch.3)</li> <li>What penalties would be required and feasible in an audit-based system? (Ch.3)</li> <li>What is the right level of risk tolerance, in either the current system or an audit-based system? (Ch.3)</li> </ul>

	Local Responses from August 2011 forum	Provincial Responses (from “What We Heard”)	Discussion Paper 2 Summary	Discussion Paper 2 Questions
Improving Employment Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy, upgrading, and specific skills training are all required elements of ensuring that individuals are prepared to participate in the labour market</li> <li>• More case workers should be hired, to allow them to provide individual support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One-size-fits-all approach doesn’t meet the diverse needs of clients (some of whom are job-ready, some of whom need more stabilization and pre-employment supports to assess and build life skills</li> <li>• Improved access to literacy and numeracy upgrading, high school completion, labour market training</li> <li>• More on-the-job training</li> <li>• Extended post-employment supports</li> <li>• Intensive support for people with multiple barriers who have been on assistance for many years</li> <li>• People should be assisted with the application process for OW and the application and appeals process for ODSP</li> <li>• They emphasize completing the Participation Agreement paperwork over finding supports that would help the client</li> <li>• Businesses in small communities receive resumes from the same clients every month due to Participation Agreement rules</li> <li>• Job training programs which don’t lead to jobs or fit clients’ needs</li> <li>• Supports are not always available across the province, or to people with disabilities</li> <li>• Increased access to employment services in rural areas, via online access and satellite offices</li> <li>• Expand ODSP mandate and funding to include more employment support services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Four aspects of effective services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consistent assessment/case management</li> <li>○ Integrated pre- and post-employment supports</li> <li>○ Strong connections with employers</li> <li>○ Provide the same level of service to People with Disabilities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can employment services be made more effective? (Ch.1)</li> <li>• What should the Commission recommend to encourage greater consistency in effective employment services and supports for social assistance recipients, while still allowing for local flexibility and innovation? (Ch.1)</li> <li>• Should standard assessment tools be used to identify people’s needs and match them to appropriate services and supports? (Ch.1)</li> <li>• Which approach would be most effective in improving the delivery of employment services? (Ch.1)</li> </ul>

	Local Responses from August 2011 forum	Provincial Responses (from “What We Heard”)	Discussion Paper 2 Summary	Discussion Paper 2 Questions
Additional Benefits		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of a housing benefit</li> <li>• Establishment of a Guaranteed Annual Income</li> <li>• Benefits provided through the tax system:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Pro: A way of treating all low-income people fairly, without the stigma of social assistance</li> <li>○ Con: Some low-income people don't file taxes because of complex histories or lack of knowledge, and some (First Nations) don't need to file them</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Delivering a guaranteed annual income through the tax system</li> <li>• Providing health benefits to all low-income Ontarians</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income for the “severely disabled” could be delivered outside the social assistance system, via income tax or as a pension, as in OAS/GIS</li> <li>• Move Temporary Care Allowance and Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities to the Ministry of Children and Youth</li> <li>• Move some benefits outside of social assistance and provide them to all low-income people:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Medical/extended health benefits</li> <li>○ Earned income supplement (create a new Ontario WITB, or improved federal WITB)</li> <li>○ Housing benefit</li> <li>○ Special Diet Allowance</li> <li>○ Create a new Disability Supplement to cover extra cost</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should health benefits be provided to all eligible low-income Ontarians? If so, how should the cost be covered? (Ch.2)</li> <li>• Would an earned income supplement be a good mechanism to increase the incentive to work? If so, how should it be designed? (Ch.2)</li> <li>• Would a housing benefit improve fairness and the incentive to work? If so, how should it be designed? (Ch.2)</li> <li>• How should income supplements for low-income people with disabilities be designed and delivered? Should such supplements be provided outside the social assistance system? (Ch.2)</li> <li>• Should the special dietary needs for all low-income people, including those receiving social assistance, be addressed through the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care? (Ch.2)</li> </ul>

	Local Responses from August 2011 forum	Provincial Responses (from “What We Heard”)	Discussion Paper 2 Summary	Discussion Paper 2 Questions
How should OW and ODSP be combined into a single program?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integration of OW/ODSP and EI employment supports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parts or all of OW/ODSP could be integrated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Separate income programs with integrated employment services</li> <li>Integrate OW/ODSP locally, with municipality/First Nation delivery</li> </ul> </li> <li>Integrate OW/ODSP, but have province in charge of administration and municipality/First Nation in charge of delivery</li> </ul>	
How should First Nations be supported?		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand Addiction Services Initiative to all First Nations delivery sites, and provide First Nations-specific services in urban centres</li> <li>Want flexibility to define their employment programs to better fit their cultural context</li> <li>Employment services should be better integrated with other First Nations social and economic development programs</li> <li>Cultural and community development activities should be recognized as part of the continuum of employment-related activities</li> <li>Recognize the barriers of lack of on-reserve employment, and concerns about leaving the cultural community on-reserve to find employment elsewhere</li> <li>Provide a supplement to address exceptionally high costs of food and goods in the North/remote communities</li> <li>Dependent Adult category is especially a problem in First Nations communities, where there are often dire housing shortages and children have no choice but to stay at home</li> <li>Barriers to accessing ODSP, as there is a lack of staff on-reserve, and difficulty accessing the medical resources required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current situation is a product of the historical relationship between First Nations and Canada via the Indian Act</li> </ul>	

## References

### Local Responses:

*Submission to the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario: Cambridge Community Conversation*, July 19, 2011. Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries and the Cambridge Roundtable for Poverty Eradication. <http://www.socialassistancereview.ca/uploads/File/Cambridge-Community-Dialogue-Outcomes.pdf>

*Ontario Social Assistance Review Consultation, Evaluation Tool for the Ontario Social Assistance Review Consultation*. Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo. August 9, 2011. <http://www.socialassistancereview.ca/uploads/File/Social-Planning-Council-of-Kitchener-Waterloo.pdf>

*A Waterloo Region Community Response to Ontario's Social Assistance Review Commission*, September 12, 2011. <http://www.socialassistancereview.ca/uploads/File/Opportunities-Waterloo-Region-ytp.pdf>

*Submission by Alliance Against Poverty*. <http://www.socialassistancereview.ca/uploads/File/Alliance-Against-Poverty-in--Kitchener-Waterloo.doc>

*ISARC Waterloo Region Social Audit*. Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition. <http://www.socialassistancereview.ca/uploads/File/Waterloo-Region-Social-Audit-Report.pdf>

### Provincial Responses:

*What We Heard: A summary of discussions on social assistance*. Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario. February 2012. [http://www.socialassistancereview.ca/uploads/File/What-We-Heard--A-Summary-of-Discussions-on-Social-Assistance\(1\).pdf](http://www.socialassistancereview.ca/uploads/File/What-We-Heard--A-Summary-of-Discussions-on-Social-Assistance(1).pdf)

**Discussion Paper and Questions:** *Discussion Paper 2: Approaches for Reform*. Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario. February 2012. <http://www.socialassistancereview.ca/uploads/File/Discussion-Paper-2---Approaches-for-Reform---FINAL2.pdf>