

**Pilon, Janet**

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**Subject:** Defend Disability

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**Sent:** December 18, 2019 1:53 PM

**To:** Holland, Andrea <[Andrea.Holland@hamilton.ca](mailto:Andrea.Holland@hamilton.ca)>; Bates, Tamara <[Tamara.Bates@hamilton.ca](mailto:Tamara.Bates@hamilton.ca)>

**Subject:** Defend Disability

To Mayor Fred Eisenberger and Members of Council

Doug Ford's announcement that there is to be a change to the definition of 'disability' has struck fear into the hearts of the vulnerable and cause many doctors, lawyers and academics to "defend disability" There is a mail list google group by that name.

Working to have municipalities and groups to sign the petition are meeting with success.

I've copied and pasted the Toronto motion following::

MOTION Moved by:

Seconded by:

WHEREAS the province of Ontario has announced \$1 billion cuts to social assistance over the next two years, including plans to narrow down the definition of disability used for the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);

WHEREAS, for reference, the new Official Poverty Line published in the 2019 federal Poverty Reduction Strategy has been set at \$1,699 per month for a single person; the maximum ODSP monthly allowance is \$1,169 (32% under the poverty line), the maximum Ontario Works (OW) monthly allowance is \$733 (57% under the poverty line);

WHEREAS narrowing down the definition of disability for ODSP would deny the more enhanced support of ODSP to a portion of future applicants living with disability and also to part of the current 120,000 ODSP recipients living in Toronto, if these recipients are not grand-fathered together with the definition that labelled them as "disabled" in the first place;

WHEREAS a narrowing down of the definition may particularly preclude the thousands of people in our community living with mental health conditions from keeping or accessing disability benefits; WHEREAS the change to the definition of disability may mean other vulnerable people with disabilities that are episodic, including people undergoing cancer treatments, people with Multiple Sclerosis, people suffering from AIDS-related illnesses, and people with arthritis or diabetes, will be denied benefits;

WHEREAS according to the Welfare in Canada Report, 2018, families on social assistance are already living on incomes that are below every measure of low income in Canada and a change in the ODSP definition of disability will only exacerbate the situation since those excluded from the program will have to rely on the lower OW allowances;

WHEREAS living below the poverty line is no adequate standard of living for anybody and that much more visibly for individuals and families who live with the extra stresses, barriers and costs of disability;

WHEREAS the upcoming changes in Employment Services cannot be considered as a replacement for the basic support that ODSP provides to individuals with a disability;

WHEREAS more people with disabilities relying on OW would inevitably increase the demands for Toronto Employment and Social Services, for services from food banks, homeless shelters, public health agencies and increase costs for the City of Toronto;

WHEREAS this city's Manager, in his 2019 Ontario Budget and Legislation Update, released on May 13, and this city's Poverty Reduction Strategy Action Plan for 2019-2022 have recognized that provincial regulatory and funding changes for social assistance will have detrimental consequences for Toronto's poor residents and for Toronto's ability to respond to the effects of poverty;

WHEREAS the Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2019-2022 specifies in its action plan that it is this city's responsibility to embed financial empowerment in its programs and to respond appropriately to proposed social assistance programs, more specifically to: 10.1. Assess and respond to social assistance rate, policy and program design changes to best support low-income residents 14. Create a seamless social support system 17. Dedicate funding to poverty reduction actions;

WHEREAS the most recent reviews of social assistance by the Income Security Reform Group, the First Nations Income Security Reform Working Group, and the Urban Indigenous Table on Income Security Reform, and by expert policy advisers at Ontario 360, all argue for social assistance reforms that keep the Ontario Disability Support Program and its definition of disability;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that City Council request the Mayor together with his allies at the Large Urban Mayor's Caucus of Ontario and the Ontario Municipal Association to formally call upon the Honourable Todd Smith, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services to: 1. Reverse the cuts done and planned for the budget of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services; 2. Maintain the current ODSP definition of disability; 3. Increase the social assistance rates; and 4. Meaningfully respect the established right of people living with disability to participate in the decisions that affect their lives by creating a meaningful process of co-reviewing and co-designing programs of social assistance and adjudication processes.

\_\_\_\_\_, December 8th, 2019 This motion is the result of a collaboration between agency, legal workers and ODSP recipients.

Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits

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