



Looking forward to the year ahead

A few words from Dr. Helena Jaczek, Minister of Community and Social Services

Spring has finally come, and with it, all of the anticipation and renewal of a new budget year at Queen's Park. Across government, ministries are gearing up to deliver on the government's priorities for the new fiscal year.

In developmental services, 2014-15 was a landmark year for our transformation plan. With the help of our community partners, we launched our three-year, \$810 million investment strategy. By the 2017 fiscal year, the Ontario government commitment for developmental services will be more than \$2 billion a year.

Our investment strategy has enabled us to put a very strong focus on:

- providing new direct funding for individuals and families
- getting new residential supports to as many people as possible, and
- working with employers and workers in the sector on an approach to support front-line staff.

But perhaps just as exciting as these achievements were the conversations about



change that I saw happening all across our developmental services sector. People are talking about person-centred services, more supports in the community, empowerment and competitive employment for people with developmental disabilities. It is simply fantastic.

As we continue to make progress on our transformation plan, I'm looking forward to some important work happening over the next several months.

First, the ministry is launching a new project to help more people plan for their futures and major life transitions using a person-directed planning process with independent facilitators.

(cont'd p2)

Independent facilitation and **person-directed planning** can give individuals greater choice and help them reach their goals. I expect you'll learn more about it in the pages of Spotlight soon.

The **Developmental Services Housing Task Force** is starting to review proposals it received for innovative housing solutions for adults with developmental disabilities. I met with the task force this past month and know they are as eager to get some great new housing projects underway as I am.

Also on the housing front, we will be working with agencies later this spring on a **multi-year plan for residential supports** funded by the investment strategy. This will help agencies better plan for and respond to support needs in their communities, and it will allow local communities to develop creative housing options that better meet the needs of individuals requiring residential services.

Finally, I'm hoping to get out around the province to learn more about the 38 projects we're funding through the [Developmental Services Employment and Modernization Fund](#). I'm particularly interested in finding out more about the many projects promoting competitive employment for individuals.

It's an exciting time for developmental services in Ontario. I'm honoured to continue working with you to build a stronger developmental services system and create a more inclusive Ontario.

The facts about ODSP and working



ODSP helped Carl Dalrymple get a job that matches his skills. Carl enjoys his job, and his employer values his work. [Check out Carl's story on YouTube.](#)

Some people think you can't work if you get support from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), or that you'll lose health benefits if you start working. That's not true. In fact, you will always have more money while working than you would from ODSP income support alone, and you can keep your health benefits.

Here are answers to common questions people have about ODSP and working.

Can I work and still get ODSP income support?

Yes! You can work while you are getting financial help from ODSP. And you will always have more money while working than you would from ODSP income support alone.

If you are on ODSP and you want to work, we can help with the costs of getting ready for, finding and starting a job.

Is working while on ODSP worthwhile?

Absolutely! Getting a job can be the next step towards a better life. Not only will it mean more money for you, but working can also:

- improve your health and well-being
- help you build skills and confidence, and
- lead to greater independence.

Having a job is also a great way to broaden your network and get involved in your community, which can help improve your overall quality of life.

How can I end up with more money by working?

People who work while they are on ODSP are always better off financially than people who don't.

Here's how it works:

- You – and each adult in your family – can earn up to \$200 each month without it changing your ODSP income support.
- Every dollar over \$200 only reduces your ODSP income support by 50 cents.

You can keep even more of your income support if you need disability-related items like specialized equipment to do your job.

Will I lose my health benefits if I work?

No. As long as you get income support from ODSP, you will continue to get health, dental and vision care benefits, even if you are working. And if you leave ODSP for paid work, you can still keep these benefits if you don't get them from your employer.

What if my new job pays enough to leave ODSP, but the job doesn't work out?

If you lose your job, stop working or your earnings decrease, you will be able to come back to ODSP for financial help quickly and easily, as long as you meet certain conditions.

Pierre, a single ODSP recipient, was not working and was receiving \$1098 a month in ODSP income support. Then he got a job. His take home pay was \$950.

This month he gets \$950 from working, and receives \$723 from ODSP, for a total of \$1,673.

That's an increase of about 50% in his monthly income.

What are ODSP employment supports?

ODSP employment supports can help you prepare for, get and keep a job – even if you have never worked before, or have been out of work for some time. You don't need to be receiving ODSP income support to get employment help.

Start by talking to a caseworker at your local ODSP office. They will help you pick a service provider in your community. That service provider will make sure you're ready to work. When you are ready, they will work with you to find a job that matches your skills, and can help support you to succeed on the job.

For more information:

Talk to your caseworker, call your local ODSP office, or check the ministry's website: ontario.ca/socialassistance

Housing Task Force receives 80 proposals

With its call for proposals now closed, the tough work is about to begin for the Developmental Services Housing Task Force.

The task force was pleased to receive 80 proposals on innovative housing solutions for adults with developmental disabilities.

In the coming weeks, members of the task force and external experts will review all of the

submissions and recommend the best projects to the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The ministry will make final decisions on which projects will be funded early this summer.

For more on the task force's call for proposals, see our [last issue of Spotlight](#). You can also connect with task force members and join the conversation on its [Facebook page](#).



Dr. Helena Jaczek (fourth from the right), Minister of Community and Social Services, with the Housing Task Force. Minister Jaczek dropped by the task force's April meeting in Toronto.

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