

SEP 27 2006

Ministry of Community  
and Social Services

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SEP 20 2006

His Worship Larry Di Ianni  
Mayor  
City of Hamilton  
71 Main Street West  
Hamilton, Ontario  
L8P 4Y5

Dear Mayor Di Ianni:

Thank you for your letter regarding transportation costs for recipients of social assistance. I am pleased to respond to the concerns raised in your letter and I apologize for the delay in my response.

For the second time in two years, the most vulnerable residents of our province have seen an increase in their assistance. We promised to raise social assistance rates and we are keeping our word. As you may be aware, we raised social assistance rates by three per cent in early 2005. We are now raising the rates by another two per cent, effective November 2006 for Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients and December 2006 for recipients of Ontario Works.

In line with the recommendations contained in Parliamentary Assistant Deb Matthews' report, my ministry has introduced a number of changes to social assistance that will help Ontario Works recipients make the transition to employment and financial independence.

With respect to your specific concerns about transportation costs, Ontario Works provides help with costs associated with employment-related activities, as well as initial start-up costs related to employment. For example, an employment benefit of up to \$500 was created to help recipients who obtain full-time employment pay for job-related expenses, such as transportation.

I am also pleased to announce that effective June 9, 2006, the asset limit for motor vehicles has been increased from \$5,000 to \$10,000. This new limit also applies to motor vehicles required for another person in the benefit unit to participate in an employment assistance activity, or assist them to maintain their current employment. This recognizes the importance of transportation when determining eligibility for social assistance.

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Under ODSP Mandatory Special Necessities, recipients can receive help with transportation costs to and from necessary medical treatment. Travel and transportation costs for medical treatment are covered whenever the costs exceed \$15 in a month, regardless of the length of the trips. The approved costs are based on the most economical mode of transportation (public transportation, private vehicle, taxi) that the approved health professional indicates the person can use. If the approved mode of transportation is a private vehicle, ODSP will provide coverage of 18 cents per kilometre.

In addition, effective November 1, 2006, a new work-related benefit will be available to ODSP recipients. The benefit recognizes the costs of working. The work-related benefit provides \$100 to each eligible adult member of the benefit unit who is working and earning employment income. The benefit can be used for any purpose, including transportation.

I recognize the importance of the issues that you raise. We want to help people get back on their feet, wherever possible, and make our services strong and sustainable for future generations. We will focus our efforts on achieving results that will make a positive difference in the lives of vulnerable people. I assure you that your concerns have been shared with the appropriate staff in the ministry.

Once again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,



Madeleine Meilleur  
Minister