

**Ministry of Community  
and Social Services**

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**MAY - 3 2010**

Ms. Linda Stewart  
Mr. Norman Giesbrecht  
Co-chairs  
Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance  
310-700 Lawrence Avenue West  
Toronto, Ontario  
M6A 3B4

Dear Ms. Stewart and Mr. Giesbrecht:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Ontario government Poverty Reduction Strategy and the social assistance review. I appreciate the time you have taken to write and welcome the opportunity to respond.

Our government is always looking for ways to improve our programs to more effectively support clients in moving to employment. As you are aware, the Poverty Reduction Strategy includes a review of social assistance with the goal of removing barriers, increasing people's opportunities for work, and guaranteeing security for those who cannot work.

The review will also make social assistance programs easier to understand, more transparent and sustainable, so that the system can continue to support vulnerable Ontarians. This complements the commitment we have made to work with our municipal partners to simplify and modernize social assistance, better integrate employment services and harmonize housing supports.

A group of highly experienced and committed community leaders, chaired by Gail Nyberg, Executive Director of the Daily Bread Food Bank, has been selected to provide advice for the review. My ministry will be proceeding with the policy work required to explore a number of improvements based on the recommendations of the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council. I note that you also sent your letter to Ms. Nyberg. I trust she will take your comments into consideration.

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Initial policy work will focus on:

- expanding the exemption of small payments and in-kind gifts;
- shortening the suspension periods for non-compliance with participation requirements;
- clarifying the rules for disposing of assets in relation to eligibility (e.g., for persons paying off a government debt); and
- changing the shelter allowance calculation for people who share the cost of their accommodation.

In addition, our government's 2010 Budget proposes to increase social assistance rates again this fall. This would be the sixth increase made to the rates since 2005, bringing the total increase to 12 per cent.

While we know we still have more work to do, our government is committed to making positive changes. You can learn more about the council's work and give them your feedback on my ministry's website at [www.ontario.ca/mcss](http://www.ontario.ca/mcss).

Once again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,



Madeleine Meilleur  
Minister

c: The Honourable Laurel Broten, Minister of Children and Youth Services  
Gail Nyberg