

Impact of September 1, 2017

ODSP Changes

1. **Increased Asset Limits:** Originally, the Provincial Government announced that the amount of assets that a person could own and still be eligible for ODSP limits would be increased in 2018. However, that date was pushed forward to September 1, 2017. People receiving ODSP benefits will now be able to own up to \$40,000 in liquid assets for a single person or up to \$50,000 for a couple. This means that people with modest amounts of savings will no longer have to fear the loss of their ODSP benefits. In the past, savings, or a gift or inheritance would often terminate ODSP benefits unless the money was spent in a way acceptable to the ODSP or placed into exempt assets like Segregated Funds or RDSP's. Now, these alternatives are not necessary for amounts up to the new limits.

Qualifying for benefits is also now being made available to more people with

disabilities since they are not ineligible if they have modest amounts of assets. This increase is a step forward in allowing people to have an enhanced quality of life without interference from the ODSP.

2. **Raising the Exempt Income Limits:** As of September 1, 2017, people can receive up to \$10,000 of voluntary gifts or withdrawals from trusts or segregated funds in a 12 month period without impacting their benefit amounts. Now families and friends can assist in enhancing a person's quality of life by providing money for the “extras” that ODSP won't provide.
3. **Certain Gifts are Now Exempt as Income:** Prior to the September 1 changes, many gifts received by an ODSP recipient were treated as income in the month that they were received and assets thereafter. The amount of the gift

deemed to be income would have been deducted from the ODSP benefit. Now, a gift in any amount will not reduce the ODSP entitlement if the funds are used to pay first and last month's rent, to purchase a vehicle or to purchase a principal residence. This will assist families in providing for their sons and daughters with disabilities by allowing us to contribute to their well being without the loss of one month's income.

- 4. Increased Rates:** In an attempt to keep pace with inflation, the ODSP rates have changed. Now, a single person can receive up to \$489 for shelter costs plus \$662 for basic needs for a total of \$1,151 per month if they are living independently. If a person is living in a room and board situation their total monthly amount has increased to \$881. These increases will help to put healthier food on the table but are still woefully inadequate especially for people living in high cost areas like Toronto where the \$489 per month Shelter Allowance doesn't come close to the actual cost of rent and other shelter related expenses.

The "Special Needs" Plan:

The "Special Needs" Planning Group was established with the sole purpose of assisting families in the provision of a secure financial future for their sons and daughters with disabilities. This is typically accomplished through the use of the Ontario Disability Support Program, Henson Trusts funded with low cost Life Insurance, Registered Disability Savings Plans, The Trustee Support Program and a whole host of other tools. The "Special Needs" Plan helps to provide the resources and expertise necessary for an enhanced quality of life for the person with the disability.

For more information or comments,

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*Life is not about waiting for the storms to pass...it's about
learning how to dance in the rain!*

