

# Disability support undergoing change in Ontario: employed people receiving disability keep more, but qualifying is more difficult

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Revisions to Ontario's Disability Support Program (ODSP) may see people receiving disability support earning up to \$6,000 per year before support is reduced — up from the current maximum \$200 per month. Under new reforms from the Ontario government, qualifications for disability support will change, making it both more difficult to benefit, while allowing more income before reduction. Both measures are designed to save taxpayers money — by qualifying fewer people and making it more attractive to earn income. However, it may leave some disability claimants in the cold.

***The spin from the Social Services Minister, Lisa MacLeod, is “reduced red tape” and incentives to get “back to work.” She explained, “The sad truth is that social assistance in Ontario is simply not working for the people it is intended to support. It traps people in a cycle of dependency and far too often it robs them of the dignity and independence of a job.” She indicated that the changes would be gradual, and that “we’re talking about a million people.”***



## Changes from Ontario include:

- People on disability support (ODSP) will be able to earn up to \$6000 a year (up from current \$200 per month)
- After \$6,000 they will receive an additional 25 percent exemption
- Under the Ontario Works program, they also see increases, but these are limited to \$300 per month (up from current \$200)
- Qualifications will be aligned to the Federal programs, which make it more difficult to qualify.

## Good news, bad news

For people on disability currently, if they continue to qualify, it's certainly good news. For those who lose qualification — and future applicants who do qualify — it's a lose situation.

***The NDP social services critic, Lisa Gretzky, calls it “a callous way to deliver a cut on the backs of the most vulnerable people in Ontario. It's taking Ontario's social services from bad to worse.” The raising of exemptions, they see as passing off cuts as compassionate reform increases. “For people in Ontario living with a disability or serious illness, this change is going to make them more destitute, and more desperate.”***

Another key objection is that access for disabled people will be more difficult since the CPP definition of disability is far more stringent. Opponents pointed out that even under the current system, some disabled people are “left out.”



# Payroll issues

While the added exemption is beneficial to people on disability who are able to work, Chris Beesley, CEO of Community Living Ontario pointed out: "for a lot of people who have had trouble getting work that would allow them to earn more than \$6,000 or have trouble being able to work, this really does nothing."

## CPP eligibility

With Ontario using the same or similar guidelines as CPP, they will be aligned to the CPP standard.

To qualify for a disability benefit under the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), a disability must be both "severe" and "prolonged", and it must prevent you from being able to work at any job on a regular basis.

- Severe means that you have a mental or physical disability that regularly stops you from doing any type of substantially gainful work.
- Prolonged means that your disability is long-term and of indefinite duration or is likely to result in death.
- be under age 65
- have earned a specified minimum amount and contributed to the CPP while working for a minimum number of years. For example, in 2017, the minimum amount of earnings to qualify for CPP disability benefits is \$5,500 (this amount is usually adjusted each year)
- have contributed to the CPP in four of the last six years at or above the minimum level of earnings or in three of the last six years if you have contributed at or above the minimum level of earnings for at least 25 years

To remain eligible, you must continue to have a disability as defined by the CPP legislation.

For full article:

[Disability support undergoing change in Ontario: employed people receiving disability keep more, but qualifying is more difficult - Pivotal Integrated HR Solutions \(pivotal.com\)](https://www.pivotal.com/blog/disability-support-undergoing-change-in-ontario-employed-people-receiving-disability-keep-more-but-qualifying-is-more-difficult)