



INCOME SECURITY ADVOCACY CENTRE  
Centre d'action pour la sécurité du revenu

1500 – 55 University Avenue  
Toronto, ON M5J 2H7  
Tel: 416-597-5820  
Fax: 416-597-5821  
Toll-free: 1-866-245-4072

## **2021 Ontario Economic Outlook: Inadequate for Low-Income Ontarians**

The 2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review was released on Thursday, November 5. It does not include meaningful investments or immediate action on programs or policies which would improve income security for low-income Ontarians. The government claims that it is “saying yes” to the needs of low-income Ontarians. This is a troublesome claim when the substance of the Economic Outlook says no to improving the lives of people receiving social assistance, no to helping people with disabilities, and no to low-wage precarious workers.

The Economic Outlook includes \$13 million for the transition of social assistance employment programs to Employment Ontario (124). Investing in a costly and flawed pay-per-performance and potentially privatized model that has not worked in the past and which has forced people into employment before they are ready is bad policy and a recipe for failure. With lower caseloads, this government has saved millions on social assistance costs during the pandemic. Still, they will not raise social assistance rates or fund wraparound services for social assistance recipients so they can move towards becoming job ready.

While the Economic Outlook increases the general minimum wage to \$15 per hour on January 1, 2022, we know this is an out-of-date increase that was originally scheduled for January 1, 2019. It is too little too late and does not account for the increased cost of living prior to or since January 2019. ISAC calls on the government to raise the minimum wage to a liveable rate for low-wage workers.

In terms of digital access, the government continues to avoid the point that simply building the infrastructure will not be enough. The \$2 billion in broadband infrastructure (133) provides no money to assist low-income Ontarians pay for Canada’s high internet and data costs. Considering the digital-first approach at Tribunals Ontario and as part of the social assistance recovery and renewal plan, investing in subsidizing internet costs for people on social assistance and all low-income Ontarians is a must, both for access to caseworkers and for access to justice.

One piece of good news is the \$1.1 million investment in inspections on temporary agencies and recruiters of migrant workers (69), which will proactively enforce the new licensing regime. This is an important step forward for marginalized workers. However, the pandemic has made clear that front-line, low-wage, precarious, and often racialized workers need permanent paid sick days. This is an investment that this government is still unwilling to make.

The full 2021 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review can be found here:  
<https://budget.ontario.ca/2021/fallstatement/pdf/2021-fall-statement-en.pdf>