

**A Critical Analysis of the  
Ontario Disability Support Program Act and  
Social Citizenship Rights in Ontario**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In 1998 the Government of Ontario proclaimed new legislation, the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, recognizing that disabled persons have unique needs that were unable to be met through generalized social assistance programs. This paper critically analyzes the ability of the Ontario Disability Support Program to protect the social citizenship rights of disabled persons aged 18 to 34 and argues that certain legislative factors prevent these individuals from actively participating in our society. After a critique of the work of T.H. Marshall and contemporary citizenship theorists, I propose that a new definition of social citizenship should be developed that recognizes that all citizens interact with society on varying levels and that socially sanctioned opportunities should be protected under this new definition so that all Ontarians are guaranteed the opportunity to be active social citizens.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ARCH:	Advocacy Research for the Handicapped
FBA:	Family Benefits Act
CILT:	Centre for Independent Living in Toronto, Inc.
GWA:	General Welfare Act
IL:	Independent Living
ILRC:	Independent Living Resource Centre
MCSS:	Ministry of Community and Social Services
ODA:	Ontarians with Disabilities Act
ODSP:	Ontario Disability Support Program
OPSEU:	Ontario Public Servants Employees Union
PWD:	Person with a Disability
SARA:	Social Assistance Reform Act
VRSA:	Vocational Rehabilitation Services Act

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## **Introduction**

### ***The Research Problem***

The purpose of this paper is to critically analyze the ability of the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) Act to support and protect the social citizenship rights of persons with disabilities aged 18 – 34<sup>1</sup> who receive income support through ODSP and to argue that a new definition of social citizenship must be developed. The basis of this paper grew out of a practical problem, as research on persons with a disability, social citizenship rights and a their right to an income is minimal. Furthermore, our present theoretical understanding of social citizenship does not theorize the daily life of persons with a disability in our society. Therefore, to bridge the expansive gap between theory and practice this paper will argue the theoretical underpinnings of social citizenship must be reconceptualized in conjunction with the attempt to solve a practical problem; that persons with disabilities aged 18 – 34 who receive income support from ODSP experience a decreased level in their social citizenship rights; a result which will be demonstrated to be directly related to their receiving income support from ODSP.

The restriction of the citizenship rights of persons with disabilities by our society, including the November 2000 setback experienced by the Ontarians with Disabilities Act<sup>2</sup> committee, has created an environment that accepts the contemptuous treatment and discrimination experienced by persons with disabilities. Daily discrimination endured by persons with disabilities is rampant and includes barriers to education, information,

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<sup>1</sup> ODSP provides income support and employment supports to people over the age of 18.

<sup>2</sup> The Ontarians with Disability Act (ODA) would force businesses and public spaces to become accessible, would improve accessibility of transportation systems and would create improved access to employment and educational opportunities for PWDs. For a detailed description of the ODA, please refer to “Making

employment, housing, transportation and the inaccessibility of public and private spaces. Each of these examples only serves to exacerbate the already precarious ability of a person with a disability to successfully practice the social rights of citizenship that are supposedly protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Choosing to focus this research on income support for persons with disabilities aged 18-34 evolved from the recognition that in Canada income acts as a fundamental determinant of one's life. Conducted by Statistics Canada in 1996-1997, the *National Population Health Survey* reports "Canadians who have activity limitations [a disability] were also more likely to have low incomes."<sup>3</sup> Supporting this claim, the Canadian Human Rights Act Review has released a report that demonstrates that "income inequality affects the lives of low-income Canadians in dramatic ways including their health, psycho-social development, education and subsequent income."<sup>4</sup> The findings of these two reports support this paper's argument that without access to an adequate level of income that meets their needs, the daily difficulties experienced by persons with disabilities who receive ODSP are compounded into a situation that restricts their ability to participate as social citizens. The decision to focus on income recognizes that we participate in a heavily commodified capitalist society, where the ability to sell one's labour is recognized as the only legitimate manner in which to derive an income. I am therefore choosing to advocate for change within our capitalist society, as this method would appear to have a more propitious outcome than if I were to work towards a

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Ontario Open for People with Disabilities: A Blueprint for a Strong and Effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act", ODA, April 22, 1998

<sup>3</sup> Federal, Provincial and Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health. Towards a Healthy Future: Second Report on the Health of Canadians, Ottawa: Health Canada, 1999. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Shillington, "Adding Social Condition to the Canadian Human Rights Act: Some Issues" Canadian Human Rights Act Review, Ottawa: Canadian Human Rights Act Review, 2000.

solution that would be completely incompatible for the environment in which we presently live.

Electing to focus specifically on the impact of ODSP and social citizenship on persons with disabilities aged 18-34 arose from the understanding that characteristically, individuals in this age group are beginning to make the move towards gaining more independence and persons with disabilities are not exempt from wanting to make these decisions. Moreover, this age group would not have had the work experience necessary to draw upon CPP disability benefits, nor would they have had sufficient time to contribute to a disability insurance plan that could provide an adequate income for the rest of their life. Furthermore, if the individual chose to attend a post-secondary educational institution, employment could be delayed until the mid-to-late 20s. In 1991, Gail Fawcett measured the labour force participation rates in Canada for adults with disabilities, or approximately 91% of the 4.2 million persons with disabilities living in Canada<sup>5</sup> and found that 56.3% of persons with disabilities were employed whereas, 80.9% of persons without disabilities are employed.<sup>6</sup> This difficulty in securing employment, coupled with the massive barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from gaining employment, has forced numerous persons with disabilities aged 18-34 to turn to ODSP. Consequently, for the 37 909<sup>7</sup> persons with disabilities aged 18-34 currently receiving income support, ODSP represents either a short-term relationship (for those who are able to work, but whom are unable to find employment) or a life-long

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<sup>5</sup> Gail Fawcett, Living with Disability in Canada: An Economic Portrait (Quebec: Office for Disability Issues, 1996) 11.

<sup>6</sup> Fawcett, 19.

<sup>7</sup> Debbie Moretta, Personal Letter, 12 July. 2001.

relationship (for those unable to participate in the work environment defined by our society) of receiving income support from the Ontario government.

Evolving out of the Social Assistance Reform Act (SARA) of 1997, ODSP was developed as a separate social policy explicitly for persons with disabilities. The purpose of ODSP is to:

- (a) provide income and employment supports to eligible persons with disabilities;
- (b) recognize that government, communities, families and individuals share in responsibility for providing such supports;
- (c) effectively serves persons with disabilities who need assistance; and
- (d) [be] accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario<sup>8</sup>

A fuller examination of ODSP will be presented in the second section of this paper, however suffice for now, the Harris government recognized that persons with disabilities had specific needs that were not capable of being fulfilled under the General Welfare Assistance (GWA) program. ODSP was developed as both an income and employment support program that was intended to offer improved levels of support to persons with disabilities in Ontario by allowing higher asset exemptions, by promoting and supporting the employment of persons with disabilities and by increasing monthly income support levels. Recognizing that persons with disabilities confront profound barriers in our society, part of the purpose of ODSP was to eliminate the stigma associated with receiving government income assistance and to officially state that there is a difference between the deserving and undeserving poor. Nevertheless, this stigma is not easily erased from the public's mind.

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<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 Chapter 25. Section 1. (Toronto: Ontario Publications, February 5, 1999)

### *Strategy*

This paper has been written with a varied audience in mind therefore the intention has been to explain in a manner as straightforward as possible, the arguments of this paper. This will assist in developing a wider understanding of the challenges that ODSP poses to social citizenship, with the hope that solutions can be drawn from all sectors of society. The path this paper will take is as follows: I will present the methodology and will map the tools of research that support and guide this paper. Then, after critiquing both the historical and current theoretical debates of disability and social citizenship, I will introduce my interpretation and definition of these concepts and relate them to the present situation of persons with disabilities in Ontario. Following an introduction to and brief discussion of the ODSP legislative Act, this paper will, with one foot firmly planted in my theoretically based findings, analyze the observations made by the fourteen persons with disabilities who have received ODSP. A dialogue between their responses, the concerns raised by Liberal MPP Michael Gravelle and the responses to my questions by ODSP director Debbie Moretta, coupled with my personal experiences will be presented and will demonstrate how ODSP restricts the social citizenship rights of persons with disabilities. Through examining the theoretical understandings of disability, social citizenship and the action research findings, this paper will move towards the development of a new model of social citizenship that recognizes the position of persons with disabilities in our society as active social citizens and will propose opportunities for further research in this field.

### ***Methodology***

I have chosen to use five principal tools to structure this research and each selected tool works as a building block of knowledge, designed to overlap and to inform another. Subsequently, the interplay between theoretically based and action research will be highlighted, as it will be demonstrated that the relationship between these approaches to research should be fluid as they both inform each other and have lessons to teach.

The first tool, a review of theoretically based literature on disability and social citizenship will act as the conceptual guideposts that will support the action research of this paper and will assist in developing a better understanding of what our idea of disability and social citizenship should entail. A discussion of disability literature will outline the processes through which contemporary disability theory has sought to challenge societal assumptions about disability. Jerome Bickenbach's Physical Disability and Social Policy, the seminal book on Canadian models of disability, provides the basis for the critique of the three dominant models, however the work of other disability theorists will also be discussed. Furthermore, this debate will also utilize the work of Sandra Carpenter, the Independent Living Skills Manager from the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT). Building upon this discussion of disability theory, the work of T.H. Marshall on social citizenship is examined in the context of current theoretical writings of political economists who consider the concepts of citizenship and social citizenship. Presented as a debate, the concepts of disability and social citizenship will be challenged by current considerations of how these concepts should be redefined to present an accurate picture of our society. This first tool was

chosen as the precursor to the action research findings and will be used to frame a dialogue between theory and these empirical findings to demonstrate that at both a conceptual and practical level, a redefinition social citizenship is necessary to reflect the daily experiences of persons with disabilities.

A review of the 1998 legislative act of ODSP was the second tool used to guide this research. Consulting the official legislation of ODSP was essential to the development of this paper as it was used to frame the questions posed to the key informants and as evidentiary support for the issues that they raised. The legislation was also used to outline the intended purposes of the Act, to demonstrate the differences between ODSP and its predecessor, the Family Benefits Act (FBA) and as an illustration of the restrictions and limitations placed upon persons with disabilities who receive income support. The bulk of information pertaining to the legislative differences between ODSP and FBA will be presented in Tables 2, 3 and 4 thereby presenting a considerable amount of information in a concise manner.

The third tool was the use of official and non-official statistical sources to support arguments made about the number of persons with disabilities aged 18-34 presently receiving income support. Statistics on income levels, poverty levels and the employment rate of persons with disabilities in Ontario will be drawn from Statistics Canada, the National Council of Welfare, Disability: An Economic Portrait and through direct contact with the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Statistics drawn from the Ontario Public Service Employee Union's "Business Practice Review of ODSP Offices" will also be used to support the observations made by the interview participants. I have chosen to use this statistical information as a quantitative tool to support the

observations made by the interview participants and by Michael Gravelle, Liberal MPP.

Fourthly, semi-structured interviews conducted with key informants, including fourteen persons with disabilities, a Liberal MPP, the Director of ODSP and disability advocates make up the action research aspect of this paper. This paper provides a forum for many different voices to be heard with a key goal to publicize the thoughts and frustrations of those who use the system.

Conducting semi-structured interviews with fourteen persons with disabilities who receive income support from ODSP generated original data that will be used to demonstrate the various ways in which ODSP affects the ability of these persons with disabilities to be active social citizens. The decision to engage in semi-structured interviews was made because personal information and questions about the participant's feelings about themselves and our society were asked. This was deemed the best approach for eliciting the individual thoughts of the participants, as it was unlikely that the same responses could have been achieved if a standardized questionnaire was used. Furthermore, this allowed for greater flexibility in the scope and direction of the conversation. The questions were grouped into five sections, Personal Information, Housing Arrangements, ODSP, Income Level and Citizenship and although I had developed a Guideline for Interview Questions (Appendix D) that I referred to in each interview, obtaining responses was best accomplished by conversing with each participant in a manner that allowed the participant to speak freely about their understanding of ODSP and social citizenship rights. Therefore, the questions were not necessarily asked in the same order as presented in the Guideline, as occasionally a participant made a statement that directly answered a question I had not yet asked and the

interview would change paths. At the close of the interview I gave the participant the opportunity to reflect upon their responses and asked if there was anything that they wished to add in conclusion.

By choosing to conduct semi-structured interviews, trust between each participant and myself had to be developed. This was established by first conversing with each participant about the research project and by stating what I wanted to achieve by completing this research. I also related my experiences with ODSP to impress upon the participants that I had a personal stake in the outcome of this research. It was also important that the participants understood my usage of the concepts of disability and social citizenship that framed this research, thus some discussion was needed prior to beginning each interview.

The participants, twelve of whom lived in the Greater Toronto Area, one in Eastern Ontario and one in Southwestern Ontario were recruited by drawing upon personal contacts, by contacting disability organizations and through the 'snowballing' technique. The participants ranged in age from 23 to 34 and each was either currently in receipt of, or had received ODSP income support since it was introduced in 1998. All of the participants had a physical disability and four cited having more than one disability. Unfortunately, I was unable to contact any individuals who had a mental or developmental disability. Six of the participants were male, eight female. Thirteen of the participants were single, one was married, although his wife was not a Canadian citizen and was unable to come to Canada. Ten of the participants lived alone and four lived with their families. Five of the participants were employed, three full-time, therefore they were no longer in receipt of ODSP income support. One participant was employed in a

summer position and freelanced and was able to retain the income support at the time of the interview and the other participant worked two part-time jobs and was able to retain their income support. Nine of the participants volunteered, many at more than one place. Five of the participants were attending post-secondary institutions, four participants had undergraduate university degrees, three had college diplomas, one completed high school and one had completed up until grade ten.

Interviews were also conducted with Michael Gravelle, the Liberal MPP critic for the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), Debbie Moretta, the Director of ODSP and CILT colleagues. I attempted to establish contact with a member of the New Democratic Party (NDP), in an effort to have the three major political parties of Ontario represented, however my requests were not responded to. The interview with Michael Gravelle will add an official political judgment of ODSP and will identify both the Liberal party's official and Gravelle's personal response to ODSP legislation. This will add political firepower to support the argument of this paper as Mr. Gravelle identifies his constituents' response to ODSP as well as his party's commitment to challenging the restrictive nature of this legislation. The interview conducted with Debbie Moretta, Director of ODSP, helped to determine the Harris government's official stance on ODSP. The questions directed towards Ms. Moretta asked that she respond to statements made by the interview participants that they feel like second-class citizens as a result of receiving ODSP, recount how ODSP does support social citizenship rights and indicate whether a cost of living increase to ODSP would occur. Lastly, CILT colleagues were consulted to add the perspective of those who work with persons with disabilities, advocating for changes in social, health and economic policy that are relevant and

meaningful. Combined with the responses made by the interview participants, these consultations challenge the official understanding of disability and the limitations upon social citizenship that ODSP imposes by illustrating the actual daily barriers that persons with disabilities confront on a daily basis.

The last tool used in this research will be drawn from my own participant observations gained from my position at the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto, (CILT) a disabled consumer organization. As program coordinator for an Attendant Services database for Supportive Housing and Outreach Attendant Care<sup>9</sup>, I communicate daily with persons with disabilities, their family members, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, social workers and community organizations. Including my work experiences will complement and enhance the responses made by the interview participants and will contribute additional evidence to the argument that ODSP recipients are greatly limited in their ability to participate in our society.

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<sup>9</sup> Attendant services assist individuals with physical disabilities by providing physical assistance in completing activities of daily living. In effect, the attendants become the “arms and legs” of the PWD. Supportive Housing projects are apartments that are integrated into regular apartment buildings, and Attendant services are provided on a scheduled and on-call 24-hour basis. Outreach attendant services are offered in the individual’s home on a scheduled basis. Attendant services are funded through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

## Literature Review

### *Disability Theory*

Disability has repeatedly been used as an exclusionary device that has prevented persons with disabilities from participating socially, civilly and politically.<sup>10</sup>

Traditionally, disability has been defined exclusively by the medical field as a physical and/or mental impairment that is located within the individual. As a demonstrative example of this approach to disability, ODSP legislation defines disability as follows:

- (a) the person has a substantial physical and mental impairment that is continuous or recurrent and expected to last one year or more;
- (b) the direct and cumulative effect of the impairment on the person's ability to attend to his or her personal care, function in the community, and function in the workplace, results in a substantial restriction of one or more of these activities of daily living; and
- (c) the impairment and its likely duration and the restriction in the person's activities of daily living have been verified by a person with prescribed qualifications.<sup>11</sup>

Although this definition recognizes that disability affects individuals on varying levels, it is still reminiscent of a narrow notion that sources the “problem” of the disability within the individual. As the ODSP definition of disability will be explored further in Section Two, the focus of this discussion will be to highlight the theoretical arguments that are responsible for our contemporary understanding of disability and to develop this paper's conceptual definition of disability.

In his book, Physical Disability and Social Policy, Jerome Bickenbach breaks down the three dominant theories of disability: biomedical, economic and social-political and argues that these “conceptual dimensions of disablement have, over time, initiated

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<sup>10</sup> See for example, Anne Crichton and Lyn Jongbloed, Disability and Social Policy in Canada and Jerome E. Bickenbach, Physical Disability and Social Policy

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Disability Support Program, 1997. Chapter 25. Section 4 (1).

three, seemingly self-sufficient, models of disablement.”<sup>12</sup> The features of these three models are presented on page 20 in Table One: Comparing Models of Disability and this section seeks to condense the work of Bickenbach into an understandable summary.<sup>13</sup> He presents the development of each of these theories and argues each have produced far-reaching consequences for how disability is viewed in our society and for how social policy is constructed on behalf of persons with disabilities. Bickenbach’s arguments will be supported by the work of Sandra Carpenter, from the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto (CILT).

### *The Biomedical Model of Disability*

Much of our understanding of disability has been dominated by the biomedical model, which sought to compartmentalize disability into the medical trilogy of sickness, disease and rehabilitation. The crux of this model is that persons with disabilities are sick and weak in their present state and that it is therefore necessary to improve their health so their entire self can be improved. Support for the biomedical model has been drawn from our unquestioning attitude towards the medical profession as the authoritative group. As Sandra Carpenter argues, what the biomedical model created was:

an essential power imbalance created by the so-called ‘helpers’ and the ‘helpees’, or by what has come to be known as the ‘mystification of professionalism.’ This mystification of professionalism can be maintained through language or jargon, and/or through education or credentialism and through a jealously guarded knowledge or expertise<sup>14</sup>

Our belief in the medical profession as the only legitimate source of medical knowledge is coupled with our society’s vision of what it means to be healthy, along with societal

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<sup>12</sup> Jerome E. Bickenbach, Physical Disability and Social Policy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993) 12.

<sup>13</sup> For a more detailed analysis of the three models of disability, refer to Bickenbach’s Physical Disability and Social Policy, one of the most well informed books on this subject.

pressure to achieve an acceptable level of healthfulness.

As the biomedical model defines disability as being contained strictly within the body, “the model does not represent the social environment as being part of the ‘problem’ of disablement, [as] it fosters and authorizes the assumption that obstacles are given and cannot, or need not, be altered in order to accommodate people with disabilities.”<sup>15</sup> The focus on the body as the site of the disability has led the biomedical theory to conclude that remedying the body of the disability was the best possible solution. Therefore rehabilitation has played a major role in trying to get a person with a disability to a healthy state, so that they may fit in with the rest of society and when this goal could not be accomplished, institutions became the answer. During this period, persons with disabilities had no choice over how to live their life, as the doctor was the “gatekeeper”<sup>16</sup>, acting as the expert who could determine the best course of action for resolving the person’s disability. Our society’s inability to accept difference among its citizens was responsible for ensuring that this approach to disability was all encompassing.

By reducing the identity of persons with disabilities to that of a patient only, the ability of persons with disabilities to participate in society was greatly restricted. As a result, social policy constructed persons with disabilities as an unemployable group, thereby increasing their dependence upon others for their survival and ODSP is just one example of the results of this narrow-minded understanding. By restricting their understanding of disability to the confining biomedical model, the state has been absolved of its responsibility to ensure that ours is a society where persons with

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<sup>14</sup> Sandra Carpenter, “Doing it the Independent Living Way” Navigating the Waters Conference, Toronto. 15 June 2001.

<sup>15</sup> Bickenbach, 90.

<sup>16</sup> Bickenbach, 73.

disabilities are valued members of their communities. Furthermore, as the biomedical model views disability as rooted solely within the body, there was no compulsion to ensure that persons with disabilities were part of our society. The response from the disability community to this theory has been to argue, “this medicalized representation is one of the major obstacles they face in the achievement of full participation in society.”<sup>17</sup> As Bickenbach argues, the role of a “sick” citizen came to be reflected in our social policy:

this so-called sick role is based on socially visible, physical differences that would usually constitute a form of social deviance, but that instead create a legitimating role exempting people from blame and normal role obligations. This exemption, however is conditional: to benefit from the role the sick individual must be a ‘good patient’ and actively seek to recover. The sick role, in other words, is premised on reversibility.<sup>18</sup>

Therefore, when applied to the development of social policy, the biomedical theory of disability concludes that a person with a disability is relieved of their citizenship duties, namely labour market participation as a consequence of their being disabled. The problem with this theory is that in turn, persons with disabilities must focus all their efforts on getting better and achieving a level of health that is acceptable to our society.

### *The Economic Model of Disability*

Simply stated, the economic model of disability measures how much it costs to be disabled. As Bickenbach states, “we are all too familiar with the economic interpretation of most aspects of social existence and are comfortable with the view that everything has a cost and that that cost is ultimately monetary.”<sup>19</sup> This model chooses to define persons with disabilities as workers and the definition of disability becomes the “limitation of a

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<sup>17</sup> Bickenbach, 68.

<sup>18</sup> Bickenbach, 82-83.

<sup>19</sup> Bickenbach, 103.

worker's repertoire of productive capabilities, abilities and skills."<sup>20</sup> In this model, a person with a disability "embodies an economic cost that must be factored into society-wide economic policy decisions."<sup>21</sup> As the majority of persons with disabilities are constructed as unemployable, the rest of society must bear the burden of making up for not only lost productivity, but also for providing an income for persons with disabilities. As Deborah Stone and Bickenbach have both argued this model is an obvious by-product of capitalism and is the result of "two distributive mechanisms, one based on work and the other on need."<sup>22</sup> Out of this system of distribution, the category of the "deserving poor" was created and persons with disabilities became the main beneficiaries of this category.

Whereas the biomedical model of disability chose to focus on repairing the body of persons with disabilities, the economic model sought to repair the gaps in economic productivity by spreading out the costs of disability across society by applying a cost-benefit analysis and by developing job training programs that enabled persons with disabilities to make up for their minimal contribution to the productivity levels of our society. Economic participation as an employed individual is the goal of this policy, as contributing to the labour market as a paid worker is viewed as the only option for gaining full citizenship rights. As a result of this belief the federal and provincial government have developed numerous vocational training schemes that produce minimal results, as persons with disabilities remain one of the highest unemployed groups in

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<sup>20</sup> Bickenbach, 12.

<sup>21</sup> Bickenbach, 13.

<sup>22</sup> Bickenbach, 94. and Deborah Stone, The Disabled State (Philadelphia: University of Temple Press, 1984)

Canada.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, to challenge these two narrow-minded theories of disability developed on behalf of them, persons with disabilities began to organize themselves and embarked upon developing a theory of disability that accurately reflected the picture that they had of themselves.

### *The Social-Political Model of Disability*

Despite advancements in opportunities for persons with disabilities, the idea of second-class citizenship prevails; rehabilitation hospitals still exist, paternal charities continue to rely upon the public's pity of persons with disabilities for donations and the Harris government's delay in passing the ODA speaks volumes about how unconcerned Ontarians are towards trying to protect and uphold the citizenship rights of persons with disabilities. As the province's understanding of disability has been confined to the body and our economic policy strives towards ever increasing efficiency, they have been able to ignore the social conditions that aggravate the ability of a person with a disability to function in the 'normal' world.

In the late 1960s, persons with disabilities began to respond to the exclusionary nature of our society as the Independent Living (IL) philosophy was developed in California and began to grow at a grassroots level in North America.<sup>24</sup> The philosophy of this movement is to challenge society, not disability, in an attempt to reclaim lost citizenship, the right to participate and as Carpenter states, "put knowledge and therefore power in the hands of the consumers."<sup>25</sup> Prior to IL, persons with disabilities were completely segregated from the rest of society and the majority of their social contact was

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<sup>23</sup> Fawcett, 19.

<sup>24</sup> For a history of the Independent Living Movement, refer to Rene Gadacz's Rethinking Dis-ability: New Structures, New Relationships, Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres, "What is Independent Living" and "What is CAILC?"

derived from other persons with disabilities, social workers and doctors. The opportunity to interact with other members of society was rare and IL sought to build opportunities for the inclusion of persons with disabilities into society on the basis that they too were citizens deserving of the opportunity to participate. The goal of IL was empowerment and as Carpenter recounts, this goal was achieved by answering this seemingly straightforward question:

what gives people a sense of power? Firstly, control. Secondly, knowledge or information. Thirdly, community. In other words, a person in isolation is at great risk of being vulnerable which is the opposite of being empowered.<sup>26</sup>

By empowering persons with disabilities through a networked community of other persons with disabilities, the IL philosophy forces society to reconsider our conception of disability by illustrating that they are capable of living independently, of taking risks and making decisions on their own, without the advice of medical professionals.

The IL philosophy provides a theoretical and practical framework for promoting the full participation of persons with disabilities in our society by developing a supportive network of Independent Living Resource Centres (ILRC) that each share the same vision: that persons with disabilities are full members of their respective communities and are deserving of the respect and space to act as civil, political, economic and social citizens. The purpose of the ILRCs is to provide a person with a disability with the necessary information and tools that they require to begin thinking as independent individuals who have the right to decide for themselves how they wish to live their life.

It is out of this social-political definition of disability and IL philosophy that this paper's conceptual understanding of disability arose. The role that IL has played in

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<sup>25</sup> Carpenter, "Doing it the Independent Living Way" 15 June 2001.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

changing societal attitudes and policy is tremendous and the paths that the IL pioneers have carved serve as a message to society that the rest of society must recognize persons with disabilities as citizens who possess the same rights and responsibilities as others. Therefore, this paper uses the definition of a person with a disability who as a citizen, possesses the same rights and privileges as all other citizens and whose difference from other citizens should not be ignored, however it should not be their only defining feature. Excluding difference among people creates chasms in our society and teaches us that what society identifies as different is something that should be marginalized. The reclaiming of disability by persons with disabilities challenges government and society to accept them as citizens first and to take responsibility for their underestimation of what a person with a disability can accomplish by changing laws and societal attitudes that have been responsible for the oppression of persons with disabilities. Disability is thusly a proactive term, in which a person with a disability independently chooses the best route for their life to take and that works to establish a society that is accepting of disability not as a hindrance, but as a difference that is valued and contributive to the growth of our society as a whole.

**Table 1. Comparing Models of Disability**

<b>Model</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Effect on Social Policy</b>	<b>Consequences</b>
Biomedical Model	<p>A PWD is viewed as a patient only as this model asserts that disability resides solely within their body. Medical professionals are the gatekeepers of information and determine the best course of action for ridding the body of the disability.</p> <p>Social and economic factors are not considered as contributing factors to disability.</p>	<p>PWD are viewed as unemployable and therefore a category of non-citizen has been attached to PWDs as a whole. PWDs are suspended from social obligations, but in turn, they must dedicate themselves to bettering their health by following medical advice.<sup>27</sup></p> <p>Medical professionals define and develop tools to measure disability in the development of social policy.</p>	<p>This theory does not consider external factors that socially construct disability. As a result, PWDs have no control over their lives, as they must adhere to the advice of medical professionals. “The main consequence of the medicalization of disablement is that a disease-centred methodology is imposed on social policy and attention is directed to the ‘patient’ and his or her special needs and away from the social environment.”<sup>28</sup></p>
Economic Model	<p>The focus rests upon how much it costs to be disabled in terms of lost productivity and works to reconcile this loss into social policy. PWDs are viewed as an “economic cost that must be factored into society-wide economic policy decisions.”<sup>29</sup></p> <p>Economic experts use a cost-benefit rationale to determine the most cost efficient scenario.</p>	<p>The goal of social policy is to counteract the lost productivity created as a result of disability, in the most efficient manner possible. Social policies try to develop vocational training programs to create employment opportunities for PWDs to increase their productivity and to lessen their dependence upon social welfare programs.</p>	<p>The economic model assumes that PWDs are incapable of working as productive employees in our traditional understanding of the labour market. “Disablement entitlements are entirely derivative from and conditional upon some level of macro economic analysis founded ultimately in considerations of efficiency.”<sup>30</sup> Therefore, these entitlements are not the result of any right to use the social welfare system, but rather are the result of the efficiency of the state.</p>

<sup>27</sup> Bickenbach, 82.

<sup>28</sup> Bickenbach, 67.

<sup>29</sup> Bickenbach, 13.

<sup>30</sup> Bickenbach, 133.

<b>Model</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Effect on Social Policy</b>	<b>Consequences</b>
Social-Political Model	This model focuses on the 'handicapping phenomena, views disablement as a form of social injustice attributable to the stigmatizing attitudes and discriminatory practices of society at large." <sup>31</sup> The goal of this model is to attain rights and equality of citizenship that have been denied to PWDs.	The goal of this social policy is to ameliorate the social, economic and civil position of PWDs by changing policies that challenge "stereotypes and institutionalized obstacles that make the experience of disablement what it is." <sup>32</sup> The idea is that if perceptions can change, so to can policy.	This model is the youngest of the three and therefore its effects upon PWDs cannot be fully measured. One of the major questions that must be addressed is whether this policy should ignore or emphasize the differences created by disability.

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<sup>31</sup> Bickenbach, 13.

### **Theories of Social Citizenship**

At the core of this paper rests the question, what is social citizenship? Defining what it means to be a social citizen involves an awareness of the history of this contentious concept as well as an understanding of the complex relations between the welfare state and economic, political and social policy. Citizenship has unfolded differently in each state and as Jenson argues, the history of the idea of Western citizenship can be thought of as “a by-product of the invention of the national state, an idea that parallels the history of the modern European state and capitalism.”<sup>33</sup> The evolution of the idea of social citizenship is fundamentally linked with the development of the economic processes of capitalism and the relevance of this relationship is too great to ignore. Therefore, the intention of this section is to analyze the writings of T.H. Marshall and contemporary political economists in an effort to build a new understanding social citizenship. This new definition will then, in conjunction with the responses from the interview participants, be used to demonstrate that ODSP does not support the social citizenship rights of persons with disabilities aged 18-34.

#### ***T.H. Marshall***

T.H. Marshall’s influential writing on social citizenship will operate as the theoretical springboard for this discussion as Marshall's writing has dominated the citizenship discourse and therefore cannot be ignored when considering questions of social citizenship. Furthermore, it will be argued that Marshall’s theory of citizenship is antiquated and exclusionary, as his conception of social citizenship is notably silent on

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<sup>32</sup> Bickenbach, 14.

<sup>33</sup> Jane Jenson, “Fated to Live in Interesting Times: Canada’s Changing Citizenship Regimes” Canadian

persons with disabilities. Therefore, a vital question to address is whether this shortcoming in Marshall's work is merely a roadblock that can be patched up with an injection of feminist, racial and disability theory? Or, does his work require a fundamental rethinking that amends these shortcomings by rewriting Marshall to include these intersections? It is the argument of this paper that treating persons with disabilities, women and minorities as add-on's negates the relevance of their contributions and minimizes the problems associated with Marshall's silence. What needs to be created is a stripping down of Marshall's theory so only the foundations of the *idea* of civil, political and social citizenship remains. Marshall's theory then needs to be rewritten to incorporate the missing link of persons with disabilities in a manner that captures the importance of their inclusion, while developing a new understanding of social citizenship that is reflective of the experiences of persons with disabilities in Ontario.

Writing at the end of the 1940's in Britain, the work of Marshall has been the touchstone of the majority of research on citizenship, as he was the first to distinguish the three elements that together make up the traditional idea of citizenship:

- Civil: *composed of the rights necessary for individual freedom - liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and to conclude valid contracts and the right to justice*
- Political: *right to participate in the exercise of political power, as a member of a body invested with political authority or an elector of the members of such a body*
- Social: *right to a modicum of economic welfare and security and the right to share to the fill in social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society*<sup>34</sup>

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Journal of Political Science XXX:4 (December 1997) 631.

<sup>34</sup> T.H. Marshall, "Citizenship and Social Class" Citizenship and Social Class ed. Tom Bottomore (London,

Marshall's citizenship theory is predicated upon the balance of these three elements and if this equilibrium were interrupted, it would substantially affect the ability of the individual to properly attain the other two elements of citizenship. However, it has been repeatedly argued that when Marshall's theory is translated into reality, a citizen's ability to exercise the elements that make up social citizenship are superseded by societal support for civil and political rights.<sup>35</sup> Marshall assumes that if a citizen has the opportunity to act upon their civil and political rights, that their social rights would automatically follow. He concludes that social citizenship rights were the last to be developed out of the three elements of citizenship and "were at a minimum and were not woven into the fabric of citizenship."<sup>36</sup> This detachment of the social rights of citizenship from the civil and political elements has yet to be repaired. Nevertheless, Marshall had based his theory on the assumption that as individuals gain their civil and political rights that their social rights would naturally follow.

Secondly, Marshall states that traditionally, social citizenship rights were developed through membership in one's community, most often through one's Church and therefore these rights did not need protection. Furthermore, central to Marshall's argument is the statement, "citizenship is a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community"<sup>37</sup>, which evokes a level of duty and responsibility necessary to receive the benefits of citizenship. But what is the criterion that defines full membership? A full member of society is an individual who is employed, who is involved in their community and as Marshall states "all who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed."<sup>38</sup> What is fundamental about this societal membership is that one must participate at a level in

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Eng.: Pluto Press, 1992) 8.

<sup>35</sup> See for example the work of Jane Jenson, Iris Marion Young and Anna Yeatman.

<sup>36</sup> Marshall, 27.

<sup>37</sup> Marshall, 87.

<sup>38</sup> Marshall, 87.

society that is deemed acceptable by other members prior to having their societal rights of citizenship confirmed. Marshall assumes that individuals automatically possess the ability and the means to join their community and to be accepted. This idea of community has held different meanings throughout history and during the time period that Marshall was writing communities were smaller and there were often common links, such as farming or religion that tied individuals to one another. Currently, with the shrinking of the world's economy and joining of political forces, it could be argued that maintaining a sense of community has become difficult, yet the idea of community still exists today as evidenced by the numerous religious, ethnic, racial and social justice communities that have all reached the same conclusion: that building an identity through a community is a fundamental step towards gaining full social rights from the remainder of society. As Jenson argues, "it is only by naming themselves that groups and individuals can identify themselves and their interest and hope to gain recognition from others."<sup>39</sup> By building strong communities that share fundamental aspirations for recognition, groups are able to present a united and strong presence to the rest of society and will hopefully begin to influence society and gain social rights as a result.

The relationship between citizenship and social class has been the focus of much of Marshall's writing and in comparing these two elements, Marshall has stated that citizenship is a system of burgeoning equality, whereas the basis of social class is inequality.<sup>40</sup> Combining these two elements within the spectrum of capitalism, Marshall recognizes that although they work as opposing forces, they still co-exist and operate as a basis for the capitalist system. To benefit from Marshall's work, we must remember the context in which Marshall was writing, the end of the 1940s, and researching, the beginnings of capitalism in the nineteenth century. Marshall argues that there were various intersecting forces that made the co-existence of citizenship rights and social

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<sup>39</sup> Jenson, 632.

<sup>40</sup> Marshall, 87.

class inequality possible, namely the focus on developing civil rights and the attempt by the state to lessen the poverty experienced by the lower class. As Marshall argues, the development of civil rights was “indispensable to a competitive market economy.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, civil rights “gave to each man the power to engage as an independent unit in the economic struggle and made it possible to deny to him social protection on the ground that he was equipped with the means to protect himself.”<sup>42</sup> Therefore, employment was the force that determined one’s ability to care for their own social needs and the wage became the tool that was the prerequisite to societal participation. Furthermore, it was the underdevelopment of social rights that supported this system in which employment was the only option to improve one’s social class position. Unfortunately, these circumstances remain the force that determines one’s ability to improve their social class standing and their ability to practice the social rights that did eventually sprout.

Placing Marshall’s theory in a contemporary setting, it is obvious that it is blinded to the position of persons with disabilities in our society as he refuses to highlight any barriers, aside from social class, that may hinder an individual from actively participating in their own community. Marshall’s silence on these individuals has contributed to the long-standing acceptance in our society that certain people are incapable of actively contributing to our society. Further to this, there have been widespread efforts to forcefully erect barriers that ensure that attempts by persons with disabilities, women and other minority groups to participate are defeated. For Marshall, social rights included the “right to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society.”<sup>43</sup> However, his definition of societal standards needs to be expanded to specify what these standards are. For example, are life opportunities and choices such as marriage, owning a home, having personal savings and cohabitation included as social

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<sup>41</sup> Marshall, 90.

<sup>42</sup> Marshall, 90.

<sup>43</sup> Marshall, 74.

rights? The idea of societal standards implies that members of our society should have the same opportunity to pursue and experience the life choices that are defined by the standards of our society. However, Marshall's theory does not explicitly detail the barriers that have perpetually prevented a large segment of our society from actively pursuing the societal standards that are recognized by our society.

Writing at the end of WWII, when minority groups were excluded from theoretical questions, Marshall focused solely upon working white men. Therefore, at the foundation of Marshall's citizenship lies his conception of the ideal citizen: a white able-bodied male, who is capable and willing to sell his labour on the capitalist market. Furthermore, this ideal citizen needs to expend a level of duty and obligation that is reflective of the standards set by his society. This is one of the fundamental problems faced when considering the relevance of Marshall's work for contemporary theorists, as Fraser and Gordon argue that Marshall theorized "only a minority of the population."<sup>44</sup> Therefore his theory needs to be expanded to consider how people who do not meet this criterion can be in receipt of the three elements of citizenship. In tracing the historical development of the idea of citizenship, Marshall states that "citizenship has been a developing institution in England since at least since the latter part of the seventeenth century, then it is clear that its growth coincides with the rise of capitalism, which is a system not of equality, but of inequality."<sup>45</sup> Aside from Marshall's recognition that inequality is inherent in capitalism, participating in the capitalist market has nevertheless been the ideal approach for completing the duty of citizenship. As Marshall states, quite simply in "Citizenship and Social Rights" and with apparently little regard for individuals who are unable to compete in the environment created by capitalism that "to have and hold a job is quite simple."<sup>46</sup> The assumption that citizens can participate equally in an

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<sup>44</sup> Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon, "Contract vs. Charity: Why is there no Social Citizenship in the United States" ed. Gershon Shafir *The Citizenship Debates: A Reader* (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minneapolis Press, 1998) 116.

<sup>45</sup> Marshall, 18.

<sup>46</sup> Marshall, 46.

unequal environment has perpetuated the belief that paid work is the only tool that can measure one's ability to expend the duties of citizenship in return for the rights of citizenship. Moreover, Marshall assumes that employment is not only a viable option for all, but that gaining employment is an easy path for all citizens to navigate. Marshall has argued that "equality of status is more important than equality of income"<sup>47</sup>, however in our society, our status is dictated by income; the two are indivisible. Resultantly, if Marshall's citizenship theory continues to be used as a defining theoretical basis for research, it needs to be reconceptualized to reflect the diversified abilities of Canada's citizens, including the recognition that work and employment are an unequal measurement of one's worth as a citizen. Marshall's ignorant statement that finding and holding a job "is quite simple" does not reflect the immense challenges faced by individuals in our society to find employment, notwithstanding the difficulties that are added to this struggle if it is a person with a disability searching for employment. What needs to be acknowledged is that the structure of work in Canada and in Ontario is such that discrimination towards persons with disabilities ensures that the availability of positions that could accommodate the individual needs of persons with disabilities are minimal and that the acceptance of persons with disabilities in the workplace is limited.

The basis for Marshall's development of degrees of citizenship is embedded in the belief that relying upon government assistance removes the individual or family from the rights and benefits associated with his initial conception of citizenship. These degrees of citizenship are indicative of the intensive focus and pressure that Marshall's theory places upon being socially and economically responsible for oneself and one's family through paid employment, rather than relying upon social assistance schemes. Dwyer identifies a contemporary growth in the conception of the "active citizen", as an individual "who recognizes that (s)he must accept, first and foremost, responsibility for their own (and

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<sup>47</sup> Marshall, 33.

their family's) welfare. Recourse to limited state provision is viewed as a last resort.<sup>48</sup> For those unable to join the ranks of the active citizenry and who as a result rely upon social assistance schemes, an identity of second-class citizenship is attached. This moniker stems from the insistence of government and society that if one receives social income assistance that they must in return accept some level of limitation placed upon how they can live. As Marshall illustrated, with historical reference to the Poor Laws, "the stigma which clung to poor relief expressed the deep feelings of a people who understood that those who accepted relief must cross the road that separated the community of citizens from the outcast company of the destitute."<sup>49</sup> This description can certainly be applied to the current climate surrounding social assistance as at present the demarcation line between those who receive income support from the Ontario government and those who do not, has grown increasingly to resemble a society that is divided between citizens and non-citizens.

Marshall's only attempt to recognize difference among citizens stems from his interpretation of the social class system. He makes the argument that the "inequality of the social class system may be acceptable provided the equality of citizenship is recognized."<sup>50</sup> This statement only holds true for Marshall's ideal citizen, as equality of citizenship has rarely been applicable to, a result of the differentiation set by our society that persons with disabilities are a group that needed to be segregated from the rest of society. However, rather than acknowledge that inequalities greatly impede one's ability to be an active citizen, Marshall argues that inequalities among citizens are justifiable if they provoke the individual to better themselves.<sup>51</sup> Marshall roots the problem of inequality with the individual and their inability to adapt themselves to the standards set by society, rather than faulting society for not adapting to the demands of its citizens.

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<sup>48</sup> Paul Dwyer, "Conditional Citizens? Welfare Rights and Responsibilities in the Late 1990s" *Critical Social Policy* 57 (1998) 497.

<sup>49</sup> Marshall, 83

<sup>50</sup> Marshall, 72.

<sup>51</sup> Marshall, 44.

Much like the biomedical definition of disability, citizens are unable to challenge the inequalities that they face because they have been stripped of the power needed to force societal change. It is therefore necessary to begin to seriously work towards a redefinition of citizenship that embraces difference, empowers citizens and is representative of the diversified abilities of Canadian citizens.

### ***Contemporary Theories of Social Citizenship***

As much as Marshall's writing has dominated the debate of social citizenship, the understanding of this issue has evolved as contemporary theorists continue to wrestle with these questions. The complexities of this issue point to the fact that a bandage solution is not an option. Theorists return to these questions in an attempt to further a wider and more educated understanding among all members of our society that the relationship between citizenship, social rights and citizens, is a relationship that needs to be continually discussed and supported at both the theoretical and practical level of debate. Without debate, the relationship becomes static and the evolution of our understanding crumbles. The focus of this section is to highlight the work of contemporary theorists who remind us of the importance of tending to the precarious relationship between citizenship, social rights and our society and to build upon their work to develop an improved definition of social citizenship.

Jane Jenson has written extensively on the state of citizenship in Canada and although she focuses the majority of her argument on the battle between Anglophone and Francophone citizenship systems, the force of her understanding of citizenship as it exists in Canada today is too influential to ignore. Jenson's understanding of citizenship is informed by political economy and she argues that citizenship is a social construction that has fundamental repercussions for how an individual is treated in our society. For Jenson, 'citizenship as identity' holds major consequences for one's place as a citizen in Canadian society. In an article co-authored with Susan Phillips, they argue

citizenship establishes a system of inclusion and exclusion. It defines boundaries, recognizing that citizenship status of the included and denying the same to the excluded. Boundaries have never been confined to national frontiers; internal borders have always separated the *full citizen* from that of the second class citizen<sup>52</sup>

What is notable about Jenson's work is that she argues that instead of accepting the status of second-class citizenship, these groups should cultivate their own identity through a process she terms 'naming themselves', a concept addressed earlier in this paper. Similar to Young's politics of difference, Jenson advocates for the state and in turn, for society, to embrace difference and to build a society that recognizes and values difference among its citizens. Jenson argues that accepting difference would "extend the politics of dignity to all citizens".<sup>53</sup> Additionally, as Young argues, "instead of a universal citizenship in the sense of this generality, we need a group-differentiated citizenship and a heterogeneous public. In a heterogeneous public, differences are publicly recognized and acknowledged as irreducible."<sup>54</sup> Yet, recognizing difference and engaging in Jenson's "politics of recognition" has proven to be a difficult practice for persons with disabilities. The unwillingness of our society to recognize the barriers faced by persons with disabilities are confirmed on a daily basis by our disregard for creating and renovating public and private spaces to be accessible, by the continued delay of the ODA and by the experiences of persons with disabilities who have had to turn down employment opportunities because the supports that they require are either under funded or completely closed. Although the mission of social justice advocates to build a society that is socially

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<sup>52</sup> Jane Jenson and Susan Phillips, "Regime Shift: New Citizenship Practices in Canada" International Journal of Canadian Studies 14 Fall 1996 114.

<sup>53</sup> Jenson, 644.

equitable has made significant strides, the Ontario government's curtailment of the funding necessary to support these advances is indicative of their desire to continue to ignore the problems that persons with disabilities face on a daily basis. As Vic Willi, Executive Director of CILT states, "we find that we are now fighting to keep the rights that we earned twenty-five years ago."<sup>55</sup> While persons with disabilities have formed advocacy groups, notably the Independent Living movement, the ODA and ARCH (Advocacy Research for the Handicapped) their claims have consistently been ignored. Despite taking the first step by recognizing themselves as a rights-claiming group, the vital next step, gaining society's recognition, has continually been denied. Marshall had argued that once one had obtained their civil and political rights, that their social rights would automatically follow, however as the aforementioned barriers demonstrate, even gaining one's civil and political rights has proved a difficult task for persons with disabilities.

Canadian society exists in contractual terms and reciprocity is a dominating theme, an obvious example being that our labour market is based upon receiving a wage for service. In a 1991 report released by the Federal government the following statement appeared:

employment is a fundamental form of social participation and source of personal satisfaction. It is also a prerequisite for access to the cornucopia of goods, services, opportunities and experiences that are available in an affluent society *to those who have the money*. (Emphasis Added).<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Iris Marion Young, "Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship" The Citizenship Debates: A Reader ed. Gershon Shafir. (Minneapolis, Minn.: University of Minneapolis Press, 1998) 271.

<sup>55</sup> Vic Willi. Personal communication. July 5, 2001.

<sup>56</sup> House of Common Standing Committee on Human Rights and the Status of Disabled Persons, A Consensus for Action: The Economic Integration of Disabled Persons (Ottawa: House of Commons) 1990. 1.

Therefore for individuals who do not participate in the labour force and who rely upon social assistance programs, their social citizenship rights are severely diminished as they are excluded from accessing the aforementioned opportunities. Moreover, in a recent statement made to the Ontario Legislature during Question Period, John Baird, the Minister of Community and Social Services echoed this point as he declared the following:

what is needed is a government that will continue to make job creation and economic growth and take-home pay a priority. That's our commitment: to try and ensure that more people can take advantage of a growing economy and more people can *realize the dignity that comes with a job and the pride that comes with independence.*<sup>57</sup> (Emphasis added)

It is not without consequence and judgment that this thinking spills over into how we view social assistance. Supporting an earlier argument made by Dwyer about second-class citizenship, Fraser and Gordon argue, “the contract norm continues to hamper the attempts to expand social provision today. Since the wage appears as an exchange in return for labour, it is argued that all resources should be appropriated in terms of exchange.”<sup>58</sup> Even the foundations of Marshall’s theory of citizenship rested upon his creation of the ideal citizen, as one who was employed. Consequentially, income support is not termed as a right of social citizenship because the reciprocity that engages the rest of society is also used to develop these social assistance policies. Using the above example, that we gain employment under the agreement that we are compensated for our labour, this ideal has been translated into social assistance policy as: ‘you do not work, you receive income from the government, therefore, as you are getting something for nothing, you must accept and live with restrictions placed upon your life.’ Fraser and

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<sup>57</sup> Hon. John Baird, “Question Period” 38<sup>th</sup> Legislature, Toronto: Ontario Legislature 28 June 2001.

<sup>58</sup> Fraser and Gordon, 125.

Gordon argue “the widespread fear that ‘welfare’ recipients are getting ‘something for nothing’ is an understandably embittered response from those who work hard and get little; and they see themselves cheated by welfare clients rather than by their employers.”<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, the rules and regulations that ground social assistance programs are founded on the notion that when one is in receipt of income from the government that they must in turn cross over Marshall’s theoretical road into second-class citizenship. As Fraser and Gordon argue, “receipt of welfare is usually considered grounds for disrespect, a threat to, rather than a realization of, citizenship.”<sup>60</sup> Once a citizen is stripped of their ability to make decisions about how they wish to live their life, it becomes increasingly difficult to fight against the system that has taken your rights. While Jenson’s argument of developing one’s own identity is theoretically valid and reasonable, when placed in the context of real life, coupled with the fears that there may not be enough money to pay the rent, buy groceries and pay the bills, the idealism of this argument fades into the background, while the realities of having little or no money occupies the foreground of daily life. This highlights a common problem one faces when attempting to theorize daily life, as quite often theories do not reflect the realities of life as a person with a disability experiences it. Despite these daily barriers, disability advocate groups and anti-poverty organizations have grown in membership, signaling that a changing tide is hovering in the background, as these groups refuse to accept the second-class citizenship that has been tossed to them by the Ontario government and its social institutions.

Fraser and Gordon argue that our understanding of social citizenship has changed

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<sup>59</sup> Fraser and Gordon, 125.

<sup>60</sup> Fraser and Gordon, 114.

because it has been repackaged and presented back to us by government in the manner that best suits their interests. They state:

the cultural mythology of civil citizenship stands in a tense, often obstructing relationship to social citizenship...where the dominant understanding of civil citizenship remains strongly inflected by notions of contract and independence, while social provision has been constructed to connote charity and dependence.<sup>61</sup>

Fraser and Gordon argue that “a public language” is needed to remedy the public’s understanding of social rights and citizenship. They state that the “connotations of citizenship are positive, powerful and proud, while those of welfare are so negative, weak and degraded that ‘social citizenship’ sounds almost oxymoronic”.<sup>62</sup> In changing the language of welfare by replacing “charity and dependence” with “solidarity, noncontractual reciprocity and interdependence”<sup>63</sup> our understanding and methods of describing social assistance are completely transformed. However, the MCSS has already changed the language from general welfare to social assistance, illustrating this government’s intensive focus upon removing as many people off assistance as possible. The question then becomes, how can *our* language be changed to reflect a society that is accepting of citizens who receive income support from the government as a legitimate form of income? If “citizenship is a social construction that varies across time and space”<sup>64</sup>, as Jenson and Phillips argue that it is, then our society needs to work towards constructing an idea of citizenship that recognizes that societal participation occurs at varying levels and that there cannot be a standard cookie-cutter approach that determines how a citizen can participate in society.

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<sup>61</sup> Fraser and Gordon, 125-126.

<sup>62</sup> Fraser and Gordon, 114.

<sup>63</sup> Fraser and Gordon, 126.

<sup>64</sup> Jenson and Phillips, 113.

In attempting to develop a new understanding of social citizenship there are numerous factors to consider, including the history of the concept, societal expectations, the current social climate and the practical details of everyday life that are most often overlooked. Of great importance to the evolution of our idea of social citizenship is the distinction between the inclusion and exclusion of individuals and the rationale that has supported this distinction throughout our history and to consider how it continues to be made today. The ability to form or be given an identity as someone who belongs raises a fundamental question: how and by who is it decided who belongs and who does not? Yeatman has argued that the exclusion from citizenship of persons with disabilities, women, children, racial and ethnic minorities and those who survive on the lowest rung of the labour market ladder “has historical roots in the way in which modern civilization necessarily operated to divide the world into those who were the givers of civilization and those who required to be given civilization.”<sup>65</sup> This review of Marshall and the work of contemporary political economists demonstrates that our current definition of social citizenship is in Marshall’s case, overlooked and that all theorists agree it is linked to our performance in the labour market. Consequentially, our understanding of social citizenship has suffered as it is dominated by the belief that paid employment represents the best method to prove that one is an active citizen. As Dean and Melrose argue, “the creation or development of social rights is dependent upon the political process, whose centre of gravity reflects the dominant economic class and the needs of the comfortable majority. There is a very real sense that social rights are boxed in.”<sup>66</sup> Therefore, in return for paid employment, the citizen is granted the rights of citizenship and it is the

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<sup>65</sup> Anna Yeatman, Postmodern Revisionings of the Political (New York.: Routledge, 1994) 84.

<sup>66</sup> Hartley Dean and Margaret Melrose, Poverty, Riches and Social Citizenship (New York: St. Martin’s

granting of these rights that allows the citizen to feel a sense of belonging. Yet, for individuals who receive income support, this sense of belonging has been stunted. Much like a parent who stays home to raise children and maintain a home, their efforts are not recognized and have no monetary value attached, therefore their contribution to society cannot be measured with the tools that we presently possess. As Twine argues, “a social right should be a right of citizenship not of labour market participation.”<sup>67</sup> This paper argues that the right to participate in one’s community as a social citizen is a social right of citizenship and all present ties of this right to one’s performance in the labour market should be severed.

The review of the work by the contemporary theorists demonstrates that they have successfully drawn our attention to the link between theoretical understandings of social citizenship and the realities of how social citizenship is played out on a daily basis. Building upon their work, this paper takes the definition of social citizenship and brings it down to a practical and tangible level, as social citizenship needs to be broadened to include the right to choose how to live and participate in society. For example, socially sanctioned life choices and opportunities such as education, marriage, cohabitation, personal relationships, personal finances, volunteering, reading a newspaper, going to a movie or the library are all examples of us participating as social beings, yet these examples are not duly noted at the theoretical level. Moreover, for citizens who do not receive income support from the Ontario government, their ability to make these decisions does not involve the complexity of having to consult legislation to see if they could retain their income level while choosing for example to pursue a personal

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Press, 1999) 90.

<sup>67</sup> Fred Twine, Citizenship and Social Rights (London: Sage Publishing, 1994) 5.

relationship or to continue their education. Fraser and Gordon eloquently state how social citizenship should operate as they argue the following:

social citizenship would convey the idea that in a welfare state, citizenship includes entitlements to social provision [and] the guarantee of a decent standard of living. It would bring such social provision within the aura of dignity surrounding citizenship and rights. They receive aid while maintaining their status as full members of society entitled to equal respect. And they share a common set of institutions and services designed for all citizens, the use of which constitutes the practise of social citizenship<sup>68</sup>

By removing the prerequisite of labour market participation from the citizenship equation, we are able to concentrate our efforts on building an idea of social citizenship that plays a pivotal role in ensuring our shared equal status as citizens. The accessibility of social opportunities creates an environment in which all members of society support our social selves. The social right to define our lives on our own terms must be given the same accordance and respect that is allocated to our civil and political rights. As Twine states, “when social rights are added to civil and political rights we start to move from treating human beings as ‘things’ to be bought and sold, to a consideration of their essential humanity.”<sup>69</sup> In challenging our current understanding of social citizenship by forcing our society to consider social activities and opportunities as legitimate forms of participation, another step is taken towards developing a society that recognizes that its citizens intersect with the idea of citizenship at varying points.

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<sup>68</sup> Fraser and Gordon, 113.

<sup>69</sup> Twine, 103.

## **The Ontario Disability Support Program Act**

### ***Introduction to the Ontario Disability Support Program***

In 1995, when the Harris government was first elected in Ontario, one of the main platforms that guided their social and economic policy was to concentrate on overhauling the 30 year old<sup>70</sup> social assistance programs by making eligibility requirements stricter, introducing workfare legislation, by adopting zero tolerance for fraud and to create a separate income and employment support program for persons with disabilities. The logic behind this platform was to reduce overall spending on social programs, to create better employment opportunities for people receiving social assistance and most of all, to be accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario. In 1997, the Social Assistance Reform Act (SARA) was unveiled by the Harris government and was heralded as a return to “the fundamental principles of which the welfare system was created.”<sup>71</sup> SARA replaced the General Welfare Assistance Act (GWA), the Family Benefits Act (FBA) and the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Act (VRSA) with two newly developed pieces of legislation: the Ontario Works Act (OWA) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). For this research, what is most important about SARA was the development and implementation of the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, a program designed specifically to meet the needs of persons with disabilities in Ontario who required income and employment supports. The purpose of this section is to provide a synopsis of the major differences between FBA and ODSP by drawing upon “Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997”, various government documents and speeches as well as the “Family Benefits Act” legislation. This summary will provide a framework for Section Three of

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<sup>70</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, Social Assistance Reform Act, 1997 News Release Toronto: June 12, 1997. 1.

this paper, when the responses to ODSP expressed by the interview participants and other key informants will be revealed.

Prior to the implementation of the ODSP Act, persons with disabilities received income support through the FBA and received employment support through the VRSA. The regulations governing the FBA and VRSA did not match the needs, nor the realities faced by persons with disabilities, as the restrictions and labels that guided this policy forced them into accepting the government's view of how they were to be treated by the rest of our society. FBA was administered as a welfare program therefore the level of allowable assets, level of income provided and the focus on the inability of the person to actively participate in society through employment forced persons with disabilities into a dire situation. Under FBA, persons with disabilities did not have enough money to meet the costs associated with having a disability or the costs of living and were left feeling that as a result of their disability, our society did not want them participating as economic and social beings, as under FBA legislation persons with disabilities were labeled as permanently unemployable. The development and implementation of ODSP signaled the government's acceptance that persons with disabilities had particular needs that could not be met through FBA. This was one time that the government listened to its citizens, as after numerous consultations with persons with disabilities, government branches, disability organizations and legislative readings, ODSP was finally introduced as legislation on June 1, 1998.

In her speech to the Ontario Legislature, Janet Ecker, then Minister of Community and Social Services, introduced ODSP with the following declaration:

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

for years, people with disabilities in Ontario have said that their needs were not being met through the welfare system. They said it was time for government to focus on the supports that they required to participate fully in Ontario society. The proclamation of the Ontario Disability Support Program marks the start of a new era of fair treatment and opportunity for people with disabilities in Ontario.<sup>72</sup>

This supposed commitment to ensuring that persons with disabilities would be able to actively participate as citizens was an important verbal acknowledgement of the fact that they have, in the past been denied the ability to participate. Developed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Table 2: Legislative Definitions of the Family Benefits Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act on page 45, illustrates the immense differences between the FBA and ODSP. The most important difference between the two programs was that ODSP operated as a separate program from OWA and therefore persons with disabilities were supposedly removed from the welfare system, “where they never should have been in the first place.”<sup>73</sup>

As Table 3 on page 45 demonstrates, a further difference between FBA and ODSP was that after consultations with disability organizations, medical practitioners and persons with disabilities, the definition of disability was transformed. What is important about this is the recognition that disabilities affect people in various ways and that persons with disabilities cannot be viewed as a homogeneous group. For example, Cerebral Palsy affects individuals on many different levels and the level of functioning that one person may have, may not be available to another person who has Cerebral Palsy. This was an important recognition for persons with disabilities, as although they are often grouped together by virtue of society defining them as disabled, it is nevertheless finally recognized that their personal circumstances and life choices are

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<sup>72</sup> Janet Ecker, “Ontario Disability Support Program”, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 36<sup>th</sup> Parliament (Toronto, Government of Ontario, June 2, 1998)

unique. Also recognized in this new definition, is that disabilities cannot be easily compartmentalized into physical versus mental disabilities, as many persons with disabilities experience cyclical impairments or chronic illnesses that did not fit with our society's notion of what a disabled person looked like. Therefore, "the word 'recurrent' has been added to the disability definition which means that cyclical or episodic disabilities such as Bipolar mood disorder and Multiple Sclerosis are recognized."<sup>74</sup> Included in these important changes to the definition of disability, the government also explicitly stated which types of disabilities would not warrant income support. As stated in the legislation the following individuals are not eligible to receive ODSP:

- (a) the person is dependent on or addicted to alcohol, a drug or some other chemically active substance,
- (b) the alcohol, drug or other substance has not been authorized by prescription as provided for in the regulations; and
- (c) the only substantial restriction in activities of daily living is attributable to the use or cessation of the use of the alcohol, drug or other substance at the time of determining or reviewing eligibility<sup>75</sup>

The only circumstance in which these individuals would be eligible is if they have a "substantial physical or mental impairment, whether or not that impairment is caused by the use of alcohol, a drug or some other chemically active substance."<sup>76</sup> By rewriting the definition of disability, the MCSS attempted to recognize that disability was more than a medical condition and that the effects of disability upon an individual's life were just that, individual. Moreover, this definition recognized that our approach to disabilities has limited the ability of persons with disabilities to participate in our society, either through employment, volunteering, or by going to a park or a social outing. What is important

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<sup>73</sup> Ecker, June 2, 1998.

<sup>74</sup> Harry Beatty, Positive Changes of the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, (Toronto, ON: ARCH, n.d) n. pg.

<sup>75</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 Chapter 25,

about this definition is that to be eligible for ODSP, a person with a disability must demonstrate that they experience a “substantial restriction in *one or more* of these activities of daily living (personal care, community participation or workplace)”<sup>77</sup> (emphasis added), whereas under FBA, eligibility was determined if a person with a disability was “severely limited in activities pertaining to normal living.”<sup>78</sup> FBA legislation did not explicitly state what normal living activities were therefore eligibility decisions were often arbitrary and could vary from each applicant. By recognizing in legislation that persons with disabilities confronted barriers to participating in their community, in the labour market and in attending to their personal care, the Ontario government has decided to recognize persons with disabilities as whole individuals, who have the right to participate as full citizens of Ontario, with the assistance of ODSP.

The main legislative differences between FBA and ODSP are demonstrated on page 46 in Table 4: Legislative Differences between the Family Benefits Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, and as Harry Beatty from ARCH has stated, “ODSP rules and entitlements are much more favourable to applicants”<sup>79</sup>, than those that governed FBA. Liquid asset levels are higher, medical and dental benefits are provided, limited cash gifts from family are accepted, a primary vehicle may be owned and ODSP covers 100% of the cost of Assistive Devices that are required by the person with a disability, provided that ODSP feels that the device is necessary. It cannot be denied that the above examples are definite improvements over FBA and have beneficial outcomes for persons with disabilities and that ODSP recognizes that they have unique needs that

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Section 5(2) February 1999.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. Chapter 25, Section 5(2) February 1999.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. Chapter 25, Section 4(1), February 1999.

<sup>78</sup> Advocacy Research for the Handicapped, The Social Assistance Reform Act, 1997 (Toronto: ON: n.d) 2.

could not be met under a traditional social assistance scheme. Nevertheless, some of these seemingly improvements, when actually utilized in daily life, greatly deter and limit the ability of persons with disabilities to participate as social citizens in Ontario. These features are presented in the discussion that follows.

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<sup>79</sup> Advocacy Research for the Handicapped, Ontario Disability Support Program: A Summary of Changes to the disability income and employment services system (Toronto: ON: September 24, 1998) n.p. 1.

**Table 2. Legislative definitions of the Family Benefits Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act**

<b>Family Benefits Act</b>	<b>Ontario Disability Support Program Act</b>
Major physical or mental impairment	Substantial physical or mental impairment
Likely to continue for a prolonged period	Expected to last one year or more
As a result, is severely limited in activities pertaining to normal living.	Direct and cumulative effect on the person's <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ability to attend to personal care</li> <li>▪ function in the community; and</li> <li>▪ function in the workplace;</li> </ul> results in a substantial restriction in activities of daily living.
No mention of cyclical impairments	Includes continuous or recurrent impairments
No mention of substance abuse	Clarification that substance abuse is not an impairment.
Labels people "permanently unemployable" <sup>80</sup>	No longer labels people <sup>81</sup>

**Table 3. Definitions of Disability**

<b>Family Benefits Act</b>	<b>Ontario Disability Support Program</b>
"disabled person" means a person who has a major physical or mental impairment that is likely to continue for a prolonged period of time and who, as a result thereof, is severely limited in activities pertaining to normal living, as verified by objective medical findings accepted by the medical advisory board <sup>82</sup>	A person is a person with a disability if, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the person has a substantial physical or mental impairment that is continuous or recurrent and expected to last one year or more;</li> <li>▪ the direct and cumulative effect of the impairment on the person's ability to attend to his or her personal care, function in the community, and function in the workplace, results in the substantial restriction of one or more of these activities of daily living;</li> <li>▪ and the impairment and its likely duration and the restriction in the person's activities of daily living have been verified by a person with prescribed qualifications<sup>83</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>80</sup> Advocacy Research for the Handicapped, The Social Assistance Reform Act, 1997 n.p.

<sup>81</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, Social Assistance Reform Act, 1997 News Release

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 Chapter 25, Section 4 (1)

**Table 4. Legislative differences between the Family Benefits Act and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act**

<b>Legislation</b>	<b>Family Benefits Act</b>	<b>Ontario Disability Support Program</b>
Liquid Asset Levels	\$3000 for a single person \$5000 for a couple with one disabled person; and \$500 for each child	\$5000 for a single person \$7500 for a couple with one disabled person; and \$500 for each child <sup>84</sup>
Exemptions from Assets and Income	“Liquid asset calculation includes cash surrender value of life insurance policies together with other cashable assets, gifts made by family members or others will reduce a client’s cheque unless made on an irregular basis, and kept to small cash payments or donated by charity, can keep a vehicle of up to \$10000 net value for a primary necessary vehicle.” <sup>85</sup>	Allowed the ability to retain the cash surrender value of a life insurance policy, so long as it is under \$100,000; up to \$4000 a year can be given by family for unrelated costs, a motor vehicle of any value <sup>86</sup>
Definition of Spouse	“A spouse can be a person of the opposite sex who declares with the applicant or recipient that they are spouses; a person who is required under provision of a court order to support the applicant and [any] dependent children, a person who has an obligation to support the applicant under the Family Law Act, or a person of the opposite sex, who has resided continuously with the applicant for not less than three years.” <sup>87</sup>	A spouse under ODSP is subject to being defined as either “dependent” or as the financial supporter of the benefit unit. “The definition of spouse was clarified to specify circumstances under which people living together are not eligible for assistance.” <sup>88</sup> Common-law rules have been shortened so a couple living together is automatically considered common-law regardless of the length of time they have resided together.
Health Benefits	“Only clients with disabilities and dependent children are eligible for dental benefits, no special diet maximum” <sup>89</sup>	“All who receive ODSP will receive dental and medical benefits. The special diet benefit will be capped at \$250” <sup>90</sup>
Assistive Devices	Assistive Device Program covers 75% of costs up to a maximum. Clients must apply to the municipality for the other 25%. There is no guarantee that municipal funding would be granted. <sup>91</sup>	ODSP will pay “the amount a member of a benefit unit is required to pay for the consumer contribution for an Assistive Device under the Assistive Device program” <sup>92</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 Ontario Legislation 222/98, Part 4, Section 27(1)

<sup>85</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, Background Document: Ontario Disability Support Program Act (Toronto: ON June 1, 1998) np.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Advisory Group on New Social Assistance Legislation, Time for Action: principal Report of the Action Group on New Social Assistance Legislation legislative reform (Toronto: ON: Queen’s Printer) May 1992. 52.

<sup>88</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, Social Assistance Reform Act, 1997 News Release

<sup>89</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, Background Document: Ontario Disability Support Program Act June 1, 1998.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 Ontario

### *A Brief Analysis of Legislative Pitfalls*

In keeping with the Harris government's commitment to being accountable to Ontario taxpayers, what Table 4 overlooks is a large component of how ODSP has been presented to these taxpayers. In her introductory speech, Ecker stated that ODSP "meets all the criteria we set for public policies and programs in the Common Sense Revolution. ODSP is fair and accountable to the people it is designed to service. It respects taxpayers' dollars."<sup>93</sup> This commitment to taxpayer accountability is heavily entrenched in ODSP, as stated in the legislation, two of the guiding principles of the program are to recognize that "government, communities, families and individuals share responsibility for providing such supports; and to be [sic] accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario"<sup>94</sup>. The first purpose, recognizing the role that our society plays in assisting persons with disabilities, has connotations that the income support is viewed as charity, or as commonly perceived, receiving something for nothing. The following example demonstrates just how little this support amounts to be.

The maximum monthly income support that a single person with a disability can receive from ODSP is \$960.00<sup>95</sup> and over a 12-month period, this amounts to \$11520. Out of this monthly amount, rent and bills must be paid, groceries, medications, and disability related items must be purchased, transportation must be covered, among other economic necessities and emergencies that may arise. Most persons with disabilities do not have enough money to make it through the month, thereby forcing them into a dependent position upon their families, friends, communities and charitable

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Regulation 222/98, Part 6, Section 44 (5)

<sup>93</sup> Ecker, June 1, 1998.

<sup>94</sup> Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 Chapter 25, Section 1.

organizations. When specifically asked about this issue of familial and community reliance, the Director of ODSP Debbie Moretta responded:

prior to the creation of ODSP, formal consultations were carried out with persons with disabilities and groups representing their interests to determine the kind of system they wanted. People with disabilities and advocacy groups told us that they wanted a program that allowed the family and community to participate in providing additional support.<sup>96</sup>

Despite community consultations, the Ontario government nevertheless has the final involvement in determining legislation and has the opportunity to interpret these consultations as they wish. The reality is that although persons with disabilities did want to be able to accept additional financial assistance from their families and community as the need arose, it was not expected that the ODSP income rates would be so low as to not meet their most basic needs. It is as a result of these low-income rates that persons with disabilities must rely upon family and community supports. By explicitly declaring that families and communities play a role in providing income support for a person with a disability the Ontario government is stating that they do not have the same autonomous and independent rights as other citizens. By pointing the finger at the families of persons with disabilities by saying that they must financially assist, the Ontario government is taking away the independence that they have struggled to gain. The responsibility borne by families of persons with disabilities is immense and quite often financially, physically and emotionally draining. Furthermore, by declaring in the Act that persons with disabilities must depend upon their families and community for financial support, this only increases society's misconception that persons with disabilities are incapable of living independent lives.

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. Ontario Regulation 222/98, Part 5.

<sup>96</sup> Debbie Moretta, Personal Correspondence, 12 July. 2001.

A second illustration of the amount of income support actually received is to look at how this amount is determined. Despite much promotion to the contrary by the Ontario government, ODSP is very much a welfare system, as means testing determines the amount of income support that a person with a disability would receive. As Twine states, “means-tested benefits are considered inferior applicants [as they are] required to go through a detailed examination not only of their financial means, but also, due to the rules of eligibility, into many aspects of their private life and personal behaviour.”<sup>97</sup> To be eligible for ODSP, a single person with a disability must have below \$5000 in liquid assets, for married couples and common-law partners the limit is \$7500, must demonstrate financial need and must submit any and all requested documents that attest to their financial status. In his review of ODSP legislation, Harry Beatty of ARCH concluded that the effects of ODSP upon personal relationships are dramatic:

if a person with a disability has a spouse or live-in partner that is making more than a certain amount of money, the applicant will not qualify for income assistance-even if he or she is unable to work at all. This places a substantial burden on the person’s spouse, whereby the spouse would have to make a substantial income in order to meet the needs of the disabled spouse, or not earn very much at all, in order to [qualify]. This also restricts the spouse from securing additional financial savings, such as RRSPs and mutual funds to support the family in the future. I have known people with disabilities that have changed their minds about getting married to an individual who may have been earning \$20000 a year due to the fear they would lose their benefits, thus their independence.<sup>98</sup>

Means-testing for benefits ensures that persons with disabilities are restricted in their ability to pursue and maintain personal relationships, for fear that they would lose their income or the medical benefits that are attached to this income support. The government

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<sup>97</sup> Twine, 97.

<sup>98</sup> Advocacy Research for the Handicapped, Social Assistance Reform Act, 1997: Impact Analysis for People with Disabilities. (Toronto: ON n.p.) nd. 15.

is thus stating that persons with a disability who are married or involved in a common-law relationship are not individuals deserving of financial independence, as they are forced to rely upon their spouse for their financial needs. This reliance only reinforces the dependency role that has been assigned to persons with disabilities by our society. As Twine argues, means-testing directly affects a person with a disability's ability to engage as a citizen as "the processes attached to proving you are deserving of means-tested benefits are processes of social exclusion. The stigma attached to means-testing threatens not only the applicants sense of self, but their ability to function as human beings."<sup>99</sup> This discussion will be returned to in Section Three, when the views of the interview participants will articulate how this affects their daily life.

The second tenet of the Act, accountability to taxpayers, has been the slogan of the Harris government, as they continue to curb spending on social programs. The price borne by persons with disabilities for this government's supposed fiscal responsibility has been the cessation of increases to income support and the adoption of a zero tolerance for accusations of fraud, the establishment of a fraud hotline and the closing of local ODSP offices. Each month, the Harris government publicly announces how many individuals have been moved off the social assistance rolls of Ontario and although ODSP is technically described as not being a social assistance program, the connotations that persons with disabilities should also be trying to get off the system do exist. The legislation that governs ODSP has thusly been framed in a negative light as the language used has contributed to society's belief that individuals who use the government's social policy system are not worthy of being treated as full citizens of Ontario. The conclusion to Ecker's earlier statement about persons with disabilities deserving the rights to act as

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<sup>99</sup> Twine, 97.

full citizens of Ontario was that “our government agreed.”<sup>100</sup> This statement of intent will now be placed under a microscope to ensure that the Ontario government is keeping their pledge, as this paper asks: does ODSP support the ability of persons with disabilities to participate as full social citizens?

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<sup>100</sup> Ecker, June 2, 2001.

**ODSP and the Rights of Social Citizenship: Reflections from Interview Participants and Key Informants**

This section will draw upon the statements and observations gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted with fourteen persons with disabilities who have or who continue to receive income support from ODSP. This section will also detail the results of the interviews conducted with Michael Gravelle, Liberal MPP and Debbie Moretta, the ODSP Director, as well as my personal reflections drawn from my position at CILT and statistics and comments from an OPSEU report on the business practices adopted by the MCSS. The purposes of using this report will be to comment on the immense structural changes that the MCSS has implemented and to illustrate how these changes have affected the ability of ODSP field workers to serve persons with disabilities. Three of the five sections of the interview questions posed will be explored in detail in this section. They include the participant's understanding of ODSP, how receiving ODSP has impacted upon their life and thirdly, their understanding of the rights of social citizenship and whether they feel that they have access to these rights. Responses to questions about personal information, housing arrangements and income levels are presented in Appendices D, E and F. It is of interest to note that the majority of participants shared similar observations and statements when responding to the questions. The consensus of this albeit small group of people nevertheless contributes to the evidence already developed in this paper that ODSP does not support the social citizenship rights of persons with disabilities.

***“I know as much as they want me to know”***

Each participant was asked a series of questions regarding ODSP legislation and their responses indicated that they each possessed a very limited understanding of the official ODSP legislation and that their inability to access the legislation contributed to this minimal comprehension. Ten of the participants have not read any aspect of the legislation, while the remaining four have read sections of the legislation. Of these four individuals, they each stated that they have only read the parts that apply directly to their circumstances, therefore they do not possess a comprehensive understanding of the legislation that governs all aspects of ODSP. The ten who have not read the legislation stated that they did not know that they were able to have the information and that they did not know where to get the documents. One participant stated that “ODSP was not very supportive”<sup>101</sup> in ensuring that she had access to this information. I purchased the legislation through the Government of Ontario’s Publications website and keep up to date with changes to the program through the MCSS website and through contact with various disability organizations. However, for individuals without access to the Internet, money to purchase this information or community support, they are left without the necessary tools to navigate this complex program. Furthermore, for the participants whose disability is visual, they are unable to receive any information whether it be the initial application, correspondence, policy directives or legislation from ODSP in alternate formats, such as Braille, large print or by disk to scan into a computer. Some participants were fortunate as they had a computer and a scanner that allowed them to scan the documents onto their computer and use a computer application to read the information.

However, having a computer and scanner is a luxury that is often too expensive for persons with disabilities who receive ODSP to purchase. Therefore, for those unable to visually read correspondence, these participants are unprepared to promptly respond to the requests of ODSP. One participant in particular stated that an ODSP field worker had threatened to terminate her benefits because she had not responded to a letter that had been sent, as she was unable to read the letter herself.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, for the participants with a visual disability without the necessary tools, they are left relying upon family and friends to assist by reading the correspondence to them. But as one participant asks, “if no one is around [to read the correspondence] what do you do?”<sup>103</sup> Without access to this information, the participants are unaware of their rights and responsibilities and could face the termination of their benefits due to ODSP’s inflexibility with the dissemination of significant information. How can a program that is designed to assist people with disabilities not provide important information in alternate formats, especially as a key factor in ODSP’s definition of disability is the recognition that disabilities affect individuals in varying ways? The unresponsiveness of ODSP to the needs of the persons with disabilities that it is serving is one example of how ODSP restricts their ability to participate in society. Without access to, or an understanding of their rights and responsibilities, the participants stated that they are fearful of doing something that would strip them of their income.

When questioned about their level of understanding about ODSP and the process by which they reached this understanding, the consensus among the participants was that they each possessed a minimal understanding of the legislation and policy directives of

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<sup>101</sup> Participant Three, Personal Interview, 10 May. 2001.

<sup>102</sup> Participant Ten, Personal Interview, 22 July. 2001

ODSP. One participant remarked, “ I know as much as they want me to know.”<sup>104</sup>

Overall, the participants stated that they understood what they could and could not do, in order to maintain their income. They each knew about the level of assets allowed and that they must report any change in their circumstances or any earnings. Frustrated, one participant said that she “doesn’t understand the legal aspects and that they don’t put it [the information] in a language that you can understand.”<sup>105</sup> She concluded her answer by stating that she “knows enough to keep [her]self out of trouble.”<sup>106</sup> In reaching a basic understanding of the rules of ODSP, seven of the participants stated they have called their local ODSP office with specific questions and have pieced together their understanding through these responses. However, even when approaching the field workers directly, some participants stated that the replies to their questions depended upon whom they spoke to in the office. Supporting these comments is a June 2000 survey completed by the Ontario Public Servants Employees Union (OPSEU) that reviewed the significant structural changes that the MCSS has implemented since ODSP had been in operation. OPSEU found that “55% of the offices surveyed report that there are temporary agency staff working within their offices [and] that this creates problems in terms of continuity and consistency.”<sup>107</sup> Through no fault of their own, the ODSP field workers are unprepared to deal with the amount of work that is necessary to ensure that ODSP is properly administered, as they must adapt their work patterns to the new standard set by the MCSS. What this indicates for the participants is that they are unable to receive a

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<sup>103</sup> Participant Six, Personal Interview, 22 June. 2001.

<sup>104</sup> Participant One, Personal Interview, 5 May. 2001.

<sup>105</sup> Participant Thirteen, Personal Interview, 28 July. 2001.

<sup>106</sup> Participant Thirteen, 28 July. 2001.

<sup>107</sup> Ontario Public Servants Employees Union, OPSEU Business Practice Review of Ontario Disability Support Program Offices. (Online) Available: <http://www.opseu.org/ops/ministry/odspreview.pdf> [August 23, 2001]

definitive answer from one worker and that they are powerless in holding the workers accountable for their responses. The field workers concur with this claim as they state, “there is no accountability without caseloads.”<sup>108</sup> The remaining participants cited asking their peers and consulting disability organizations and community legal clinics as the method by which they developed an understanding. In my work at CILT, I receive numerous calls on a weekly basis in which persons with disabilities are unsure of the regulations because they have either not been able to reach a field worker at their local ODSP office or because their field worker has relayed inaccurate information to them. Many of the consumers are surprised when I tell them, for example that they are entitled to having \$5000 in liquid assets or that their diabetic supplies are covered under ODSP medical benefits. The interview participants also stated that they were guarded about asking specific questions for fear of raising an alarm regarding their income. As one participant states, “the accessibility of information is three-fold. There is what I know, what the ODSP workers know and then the actual Act. I chose not to ask the workers specific questions because of the risk of a penalty.”<sup>109</sup> Another participant stated that she had learned about ODSP “through default. I have had to learn on my own, you have to keep pushing [otherwise] they leave you blind [but] at the same time they say we’re here to help.”<sup>110</sup> The apprehension on the part of these participants to approach ODSP with questions speaks to the degree to which this program defines how they are able to live their lives.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Participant Eight, Personal Interview, 10 July. 2001.

<sup>110</sup> Participant Eleven, Personal Interview, 24 July. 2001.

### *The Relationship between the ‘Helpers’ and the ‘Helpees’*

The actual relationship that the participants have with their local ODSP office and its field workers is strained and promotes overall feelings of anxiety. Each participant echoed the sentiment that the field workers did not understand how their disability affected their daily life. In their report, OPSEU found that field workers reported that “not knowing the client’s actual disability impacts on our ability to properly accommodate.”<sup>111</sup> One participant revealed that she felt that she was treated as “just another number and not as a human being.”<sup>112</sup> Another participant stated that when she has gone to her ODSP office that some of the field workers “spoke loudly because I am legally blind.”<sup>113</sup> Two participants commented that field workers should have to take sensitivity training to learn how to effectively serve people with disabilities as “a lot of workers are not trained in disability issues [and they] make generalizations when dealing with clients. They don’t understand the difficulty experienced by people with disabilities to access their community at large.”<sup>114</sup> One participant expressed her frustration with having to repeatedly explain her disability to field workers and being asked if she “has ever had surgery to try and correct her eyesight.”<sup>115</sup> This participant questioned how well the workers were equipped to deal with people with disabilities if they themselves did not have a disability. She says, “what do they know about being disabled? They don’t know anything about what it is like to be disabled.”<sup>116</sup> The viewpoints of the field workers towards these participants are a microcosmic example of the daily discrimination endured

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<sup>111</sup> Ontario Public Servants Employees Union, OPSEU Business Practice Review of Ontario Disability Support Program Offices (Online)

<sup>112</sup> Participant Three, 10 May. 2001.

<sup>113</sup> Participant Nine, Personal Interview, 18 July. 2001.

<sup>114</sup> Participant Seven, Personal Interview, 6 July. 2001.

<sup>115</sup> Participant Six, 22 June. 2001.

<sup>116</sup> Participant Six, 22 June. 2001.

by people with disabilities and contribute to the feelings of low self-worth reported by the participants. Voicing her frustrations, one participant stated that the problem is rooted in how our society views disability as “some workers you have to hold by the hand. You almost have to make yourself more pitiful for them to believe you [that you need the income.]”<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, the participants referred to the tone of voice that the field workers used when speaking with him or her as a major factor that made the participant feel they were doing something wrong. One participant remarked that due to her learning disability, it often takes her longer to understand what the workers are explaining to her and that the ODSP workers “don’t take the time to fully explain information to me, like how to fill out forms properly. I feel that their tone of voice is rude and I feel rushed off the phone.”<sup>118</sup> For this participant in particular, not being able to comprehend the information that is relayed to her greatly impedes her ability to ensure that her rights are being protected. For their part, the field workers reported to OPSEU that they are under increased pressure from the MCSS to meet “artificial and unrealistic deadlines”, that “65.9% indicate that they are still in the process of receiving training” and that as a result of “office closures there are increased activities around phone calls and mail.”<sup>119</sup> It is not the intent of this paper to fault the field workers as the source of the problems that persons with disabilities experience with ODSP as they must follow the service delivery changes implemented by the MCSS. However, what the OPSEU survey illustrates is that both parties are equally frustrated with a system that they are powerless to change and unfortunately, the outcome for persons with disabilities is that they are unable to receive

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<sup>117</sup> Participant Eleven, 24 July. 2001.

<sup>118</sup> Participant Three, 10 May. 2001.

<sup>119</sup> Ontario Public Servants Employees Union, OPSEU Business Practice Review of Ontario Disability Support Program Offices (Online)

a level of service that adequately addresses the concerns that they have. Without a supportive system in place for the delivery of the program, the people who rely upon ODSP for monthly income support end up suffering the most.

***Service Delivery Differences between FBA and ODSP***

For the twelve participants who received FBA prior to ODSP, they each remarked how differently the two programs operated. Under FBA, each person with a disability was assigned a caseworker that they continually dealt with, whereas with ODSP, a team management model has been adopted along with the closing of local offices, the implementation of call centres and the Interactive Voice Response system. Therefore, thirteen out of the fourteen participants speak with a different worker each time they call or go to the office. Michael Gravelle, when asked to recount specific examples of the differences between FBA and ODSP made the following comments:

the system now is designed to eliminate, frustrate and keep people down. It is not designed to work and the language is demeaning. ODSP has been set up as a cruel system that is designed to get as many people off of welfare as possible. With the adoption of the interactive voice response (IVR) system, the closing of offices, and the inaccessibility of offices and staff, the demands of these people cannot be met.<sup>120</sup>

One participant noted how differently she is treated by ODSP compared to FBA: “Now they [ODSP] function as a team, but before [FBA] you could build a relationship and there was a sense of trust. They knew that I was not there to screw the system.”<sup>121</sup> The field workers acknowledge this problem as they reported to the OPSEU survey that they “no longer had familiarity with clients” and that being responsible for specific “caseloads was more beneficial for client service delivery.”<sup>122</sup> Gravelle supports building personal

<sup>120</sup> Michael Gravelle, Personal Interview, 20 June. 2001.

<sup>121</sup> Participant Eleven, 24 July. 2001.

<sup>122</sup> Ontario Public Servants Employees Union, OPSEU Business Practices Review of Ontario Disability

relationships and argues that he would like to see “personal support workers that are assigned a number of individuals who they see on a consistent basis. This would help to improve service, to put a face to the circumstances, and the workers would be more sensitive to the needs of each individual.”<sup>123</sup> Ten of the participants remarked that they have received conflicting answers to their questions and that a major problem is that there is “no communication between ODSP staff because one person says one thing and another says [something else].”<sup>124</sup> Regarding the actual physical space of the offices themselves, one participant who has low vision observed, “inside the office is not visually accessible. There is a piece of glass separating the worker from me and I cannot read through the window. For persons who have hearing impairments, there is no privacy because the workers are stating your personal information out loud.”<sup>125</sup> Whereas eleven of the participants observed that their local ODSP office was wheelchair accessible, very few were sure if other disabilities could be accommodated. One participant stated that the accessibility problem, whether it be physical accessibility or accommodations for individuals with visual or hearing disabilities, is a result of our misconception of what being disabled means: “it’s not just about accessibility and ramps and power door openers, but that there is a handrail. And what about people with visual impairments? All they need to do is ask.”<sup>126</sup> These problems highlight the difficulties experienced by these participants and other people with disabilities in accessing an income support program that specifically targets them. By making these participants feel that they are asking for extraordinary accommodations in service, the level of self-worth that a person with a

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Support Program Offices (Online)

<sup>123</sup> Michael Gravelle, 20 June. 2001.

<sup>124</sup> Participant Three, 10 May. 2001.

<sup>125</sup> Participant Eight, 10 July. 2001.

disability has begins to decline and negatively affects their ability to actively participate in society. If a program that was designed specifically to assist people with disabilities cannot make the necessary accommodations and rethink their procedures to better serve its community, it is possible to speculate that ODSP's unresponsiveness is a mirror of our society's response to persons with disabilities.

***Disclosure: How much is too much?***

Each participant was asked how they felt about having to reveal a large amount of information about their personal life, their assets, their living arrangements and their daily activities and the participants shared a similar response. They each understood why they were asked about their financial situation because they have to prove their financial need, however all the participants stated that they felt that the questions regarding their personal circumstances were inappropriate. One participant commented that being asked questions about her personal life and daily activities made her “feel like I am cheating the system and that I have no privacy. I feel like a child or a subordinate and I feel humiliated.”<sup>127</sup> The intrusiveness of the questions asked by field workers both prior to qualifying for the program and throughout the time that they are on the program made the participants feel like they had no right to decline to answer. When the person who decides if you are going to get your next cheque is asking personal questions, that to individuals not on ODSP would be deemed to be an invasion of privacy, there is little choice in determining if you will answer the questions. Furthermore, without a clear understanding of the legislation and their rights and responsibilities, persons with disabilities who receive ODSP are unequipped to protect themselves from receiving and

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<sup>126</sup> Participant Eleven, 24 July. 2001.

<sup>127</sup> Participant Eight, 10 July. 2001.

following misinformation. The fear of losing income and medical benefits is a fear that each participant reported and it is offensive that they would be made to feel this way. One participant was asked numerous questions regarding a personal relationship and stated “they were asking me personal questions about my personal life and wanted me to explain my situation with my girlfriend. This has nothing to do with me having [a disability] and needing some money to live on. They don’t want to hear the truth and they automatically assume that I am lying.”<sup>128</sup> The number of personal questions posed to the participants made them feel that they had done something wrong, or that they were undeserving of the income. When asked how it made him feel having to answer these questions, one participant expressed that he “felt like I have been registered as a deviant. It’s similar to welfare, [because] you have to take a [means] test to qualify.”<sup>129</sup> As Twine argues, even proving eligibility for social assistance distances you from the rest of society:

the processes attached to proving you are deserving of means tested benefits are processes of social exclusion. The stigma attached to means testing threatens not only the applicants sense of self, but their ability to function as normal human beings. Applicants are required to go through a detailed examination of not only their financial means but also, due to the rules of eligibility, into many aspects of their private life and personal behaviour<sup>130</sup>

What these responses reveal about the participant’s ability to participate in our society is that they face numerous blocks that when added together obstructs their ability to participate. When repeatedly asked to prove their need and to address questions very personal in their nature by strangers, who threaten to cut off their income, the participants cannot help but feel their self-worth slip away.

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<sup>128</sup> Participant One, 5 May. 2001.

<sup>129</sup> Participant Five, 13 June. 2001.

<sup>130</sup> Twine, 97.

The overall impact of receiving income support from ODSP upon the lives of these fourteen participants is immeasurable and chisels away at their ability to be active social citizens. Each participant reported that they wished that they did not have to receive this income but as the alternative was to be on social assistance or not to have any income of their own, they felt they had no other option. Citing inflexible work environments, transportation and housing issues, barriers to finding employment and pursuing educational opportunities, the participants felt they had little choice but to receive ODSP. One participant, when asked to describe an average day, expressed the following:

It's normally filled with a lot of frustration and nonsense. About three years ago I was asked not to return to high school due to my age and I tried to get into adult education, but they cannot assist me because of my disability. I can't find work that is meaningful. What it all boils down to is my age, that I don't have the experience and the fact that I am blind. I got married a year ago, and we went through the immigration process and they knew that I was on ODSP. My wife has been denied a landing visa because I am on ODSP. My days are filled with stress, heartache and there is no let up.<sup>131</sup>

Other participants, when questioned about the impact of ODSP upon their lives, stated that they are forced to live frugally and without spontaneity, having to account for each dollar that leaves their bank account, while ensuring that there is enough money to pay the rent, buy groceries, purchase medications and pay bills. Of particular concern is that although the cost of living has increased, ODSP rates have remained the same. I asked Moretta about the possibility of the MCSS increasing the income rates and her response was "ODSP rates remain the highest among the provinces and were protected when recipients were transferred from the Family Benefits Program to ODSP on June 1,

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<sup>131</sup> Participant Eleven, 31 July. 2001.

1998.”<sup>132</sup> This stagnation is incredibly frustrating to these participants, as they are unable to keep up with increases in their rent, in the price of groceries or with changes to their utilities, not to mention being completely devoid of the opportunity save money. Moretta states “ODSP recipients are not prevented from maintaining savings”, however most ODSP participants are unable to even afford the basic necessities of life with the level monthly income received. For example, as a Project Coordinator at CILT, I assist persons with disabilities on a daily basis who are trying to locate subsidized housing because the amount of income they receive from ODSP does not meet the soaring rent increases in cities. Moreover, in Toronto the waiting list for social housing that is wheelchair accessible is currently seven to ten years and for regular subsidized apartments it is even longer. Furthermore, as Fawcett has demonstrated in her book Living With Disability In Canada: “persons with disabilities who must rely on social assistance for their income support have by far the greatest likelihood of living in poverty.”<sup>133</sup> For example, the maximum monthly income is \$960 therefore the annual income of the five participants who receive this maximum monthly amount is \$11,520. In 2000, the National Council of Welfare calculated the Poverty Lines for a city of 500,000+ to be \$17,060, thusly there is a \$5540 discrepancy between the Poverty Line for 2000 and the annual income of a person with a disability on ODSP who actually receives the full monthly amount. How can the MCSS expect people with disabilities on ODSP to save and accumulate assets if they fall this far below recognized poverty lines? One participant reported that she often “doesn’t eat properly [because she] doesn’t have

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<sup>132</sup> Debbie Moretta, 12 July. 2001.

<sup>133</sup> Fawcett, 145.

enough money to buy food.”<sup>134</sup> Another participant stated that living on a limited budget affected her social participation at her church because she was unable to donate the accepted amount: “in church you’re supposed to give 10% of your earnings to the church, but if you only get \$930 a month how in goodness name are you to do that? [Also] sometimes if you don’t get a lot [of money] you wear the clothes that you always wear. I got blasted for having holes in my shorts, but it’s kind of hard to just go out and get something.”<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, the participants reported that their feelings of self-worth had declined since receiving ODSP, especially as they were made to feel that they were receiving ‘something for nothing.’ One participant stated that he felt restricted in his ability to maintain a personal relationship because “I can’t get married. I feel low about myself [because] I don’t have enough money to save. It determines who I can live with.”<sup>136</sup> Echoing these comments, another participant stated “ODSP has a huge impact upon my life” and gave the following illustration:

relationships are hard, there is the fear of becoming intimate with someone and getting used to it, then having to leave. I can’t live common-law without losing my benefits, so I stay out of relationships. This forces me to study, because with my education, it gives me the experience of functioning in society. I’m already at the bottom, so there is nowhere to go but up. It affects where I live, my family life. I can’t visit as often and I cannot be as responsible for them as I need to be.<sup>137</sup>

Gravelle’s response to ODSP legislation regarding common-law and married couples was that “this legislation is stating that you are not an individual with individual, autonomous rights. You are not a ‘real human being’, you cease to exist. The idea that your right to income should be attached to your spouse’s is ridiculous. It forces dependence.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Participant Eight, 10 July. 2001.

<sup>135</sup> Participant Ten, 22 July. 2001.

<sup>136</sup> Participant One, 5, May. 2001.

<sup>137</sup> Participant Eight, 10 July. 2001.

<sup>138</sup> Michael Gravelle, 20 June. 2001.

Furthermore, the Ontario Divisional Court recently presided over a case of four women who challenged the Harris government's definition of spouse. The Court declared that the 'spouse-in-the-house' legislation "exact[s] a price from those women for their relationships which it does not exact from other women in society with similar relationships: the financial independence. The price so exacted is payable in human dignity."<sup>139</sup> However, the MCSS responded that:

the government's position before the Court continues to be that it is fair to treat couples who live together in a spousal relationship, but are not married, in the same way as couples who are married, when they apply for social assistance. This ensures that social assistance is there for those who are truly in need.<sup>140</sup>

Therefore, as a result of ODSP policies these fourteen participants experience feelings of social and economic isolation that reside in the forefront of their daily life. Living in a society that respects and highlights material possessions and a strong work ethic, these participants are made to feel as outsiders and the doors to social participation are locked from the inside of our society. One participant stated that she felt "shameful"<sup>141</sup> for receiving this money and that society viewed her as "an invalid and a charity because they constantly focus on my disability. I'm the poor blind girl." Some participants however, expressed hope that through their education they will be able to leave ODSP and join the work force, although one participant admits "it is very difficult to be in school and have money worries all the time. It is very distracting and I feel that I am not living up to what I feel I could be achieving if I didn't have these worries."<sup>142</sup> And for the three participants who have left ODSP for employment, the relief with which they

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<sup>139</sup> "Single Mothers win Charter Challenge to Welfare Definition of Spouse." (Online) Available: [www.welfarewatch.Toronto.on.ca](http://www.welfarewatch.Toronto.on.ca) [29, June 2001]

<sup>140</sup> Debbie Moretta, 12 July. 2001.

<sup>141</sup> Participant Six, 22 July. 2001.

<sup>142</sup> Participant Nine, 18 July. 2001.

speak is extraordinary, as one participant commented that although he was “thankful for the program, [now I] don’t have to notify anyone of any changes [and] I can do everything I have to do.”<sup>143</sup> Another participant stated that the greatest difference between ODSP and working is that “in society if you are working and you are financially independent, you move into another level of society, where people look past your disability and look more at your education and intelligence. On ODSP you don’t experience this and you’re stuck at the lower end of society.”<sup>144</sup> However, for those who remain on the program and who live without the financial resources to ensure that they can eat properly or buy new clothes when needed, these participants are forced into situations that leave them socially and economically vulnerable.

### ***Citizenship and Social Rights***

Of particular importance to this research were the questions asked regarding what the participants thought their citizenship and social rights were and if they felt that they had access to the rights while being on ODSP. As this section will demonstrate, their similar responses support this paper’s argument that ODSP does not protect or support the social citizenship rights of these participants. On a whole, the participants agreed upon what it meant to be a Canadian citizen and their responses ranged from experiencing a “high level of freedom, diversity and tolerance”<sup>145</sup>, “peacefulness and Medicare”<sup>146</sup> to “being able to work, to learn, to marry, to save money to plan for the future.”<sup>147</sup> And when asked about how they contribute to Canadian society, they responded by telling me about their volunteerism, which plays an important role in eleven

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<sup>143</sup> Participant Two, 6 May. 2001.

<sup>144</sup> Participant Five, 13 June. 2001.

<sup>145</sup> Participant Two, 6 May. 2001.

<sup>146</sup> Participant Ten, 22 July. 2001.

of the participants' lives, as some volunteer in more than one place. The participants spoke of going to a movie, or reading a paper, or attending school and socializing all as forms of their social participation. However, when pressed for details about the level at which they participate and if there are barriers to their participating, a different story unfolded.

Echoed throughout their replies was the idea of second-class citizenship, a sentiment that each participant brought up on their own accord, without prodding from myself. When asked to describe what was meant by this phrase of second-class citizenship, most participants responded that these feelings developed as a result of their not working and therefore they didn't feel as though they were treated as a 'first-class' citizen. One participant stated that because she volunteers and is unpaid for her efforts, that society does not view her as a working individual, despite the contribution that she is making through her volunteer work. This particular participant felt a great amount of pressure to find employment so that she might begin to feel valued and believed that people would like her more if she had a job, because as she stated: "nobody likes to be on a system if they can help it."<sup>148</sup> Our society is dominated by the link between self-worth and employment and as Fraser and Gordon argue "no decent welfare policy can emerge without a vision of honourable entitlement for those who require help. It assumes there can be relations among members of society that are neither contractual nor charitable."<sup>149</sup> By continuing to promote a citizen's worth as being directly tied to their ability to work, persons with disabilities on ODSP are being told that they are not worthy of citizenship. Another participant related their feelings of second-class citizenship to the "rules and

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<sup>147</sup> Participant Fourteen, 31 July. 2001.

<sup>148</sup> Participant Three, 10 May. 2001.

regulations of all the Ministries that lead to a very restrictive guideline to living my life. For example, my rights are not being met in terms of transportation, attendant care, housing or the amount of economic support I receive.”<sup>150</sup> For the participants whose disability requires physical accommodations, they expressed their anger at the inaccessibility of our society as a major factor that restricts their ability to participate. In particular, one participant had this to say:

information is not available in alternate formats. The technology and knowledge exists to incorporate accessibility into everything made, but this is not done. This is overt discrimination. The government is now about the survival of the fittest, they don't care if you die, they don't support you. There is inappropriate signage, lighting, banking, stairs, printed material (newspapers, prices, prescriptions) and I don't have access to this information<sup>151</sup>

Although not all these barriers can be linked to ODSP, what they illustrate is the basis upon which ODSP was designed, as our society continues to ignore basic social and civil rights of movement and to information that are available to able bodied citizens. By experiencing social isolation and economic vulnerability on a daily basis, these participants and other persons with disabilities who receive ODSP are discouraged from actively participating in our society. Without having the money necessary to purchase groceries, clothing, a newspaper, to attend a movie, or to use public transportation these individuals are further removed from our society and end up feeling “cut off, isolated and dumb. I can't keep up and I feel like I no longer understand the concept of money.”<sup>152</sup> These experiences and feelings of isolation only reinforce the importance of redefining how our society views social participation and to broaden our understanding of what our social rights should be. As already discussed in previous sections, our existing

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<sup>149</sup> Fraser and Gordon, 115.

<sup>150</sup> Participant Four, Personal Interview, 7 June. 2001.

<sup>151</sup> Participant Eight, 10 July. 2001.

conception of social citizenship is tied to our economic participation which minimizes any contributions that take place outside of the economic realm. These participants have each attempted to be socially active and yet they have been told by our society that their attempts have not been good enough. Until these participants are employed and contributing their labour power to our society, their ability to engage their social rights will remain stunted, as demonstrated by the examples cited by the participants.

Responding to my questions about what he felt were the necessary changes that must be made to ODSP, Gravelle stated that he would concentrate on:

the operational aspects of ODSP and to push for a social audit to prove to us how well the programs are working. Anytime you change the social welfare system, you should take a look at how well the system is working. I believe that the Harris government is afraid of what the audit will show: poverty levels are high, there is an increase in food bank usage...<sup>153</sup>

As the MCSS critic, it is obviously Gravelle's role to propose such options and to critique the actions of the Harris government, but this criticism does not necessarily ensure that if the Liberals won the next provincial election that these changes would be automatically implemented. Gravelle admitted that the ideas that he expressed in our interview were his own personal opinions and that they had not been adopted as Liberal party policy. Nevertheless, without adequate societal and governmental support, these participants will continue to exist on the fringes of our society, teetering between second-class citizenship and complete isolation. Unfortunately, change does not appear to be around the next corner and the struggle for equity will continue until serious dialogue between people with disabilities, disability advocates, all levels of government, the employment sector and members of our society recognizes that the first step towards restructuring our

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<sup>152</sup> Participant Eight, 10 July. 2001.

<sup>153</sup> Michael Gravelle, 20 June. 2001.

society into a society is the acceptance of difference. Gravelle believes that change can occur, but that it takes a willing public. He states:

the ODA must be passed and we have to recognize our obligations to society. The goal is equality, something we all believe in, but not everyone has this. Persons with disabilities do not have freedom of mobility, rights to accessible housing, rights that if I did not have, I would be outraged. The ODA is a great place to start to reach towards the goal of full social citizenship. But we have to continue to advocate and pressure the government for change.<sup>154</sup>

However, for this vision to materialize our society will have to adopt Jenson's politics of recognition and embrace Yeatman's politics of difference as two acceptable paths that will help to contribute to the development of our society.

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<sup>154</sup> Michael Gravelle, 20 June. 2001.

## *Conclusion*

As the statements and observations provided by the fourteen interview participants can attest, this paper has successfully argued that ODSP does not support the social citizenship rights of persons with disabilities aged 18-34. What is revealed in these interviews is that ODSP actively prohibits persons with disabilities from experiencing an acceptable level of social citizenship participation due to a variety of legislative and service delivery factors, most notably, the minimal monthly income that ODSP provides. As I stated at the beginning of this paper, money lies at the root of our society, therefore to have little or no money means that the opportunities for involvement in one's community or in society at large are greatly restricted. Therefore, I have argued that we must extend our understanding of social citizenship beyond our current acceptance of employment as the primary form of legitimate social participation.

What we need to recognize is that all members of society intersect on different levels and that this interaction cannot be measured solely in terms of productivity and labour market participation. There are members of our society who will never be able to be employed in the traditional labour market, but they are still able to make positive contributions and participate socially through volunteerism, social activities, going to a community centre or to a park. This is where true dignity develops, not from our employment, despite what the federal and provincial governments continue to state. Marshall's theory of social citizenship does not allow us to picture a society such as this, as his very definition of citizenship entailed that of a citizen who was employed. However, by drawing upon the work of Marshall, arguably one of the most influential citizenship theorists and the work of contemporary political theorists, this paper was able

to illustrate not only the immense challenges that the idea of citizenship has faced since Marshall, but that it is possible for our understanding of citizenship to change.

Marshall's theory was silent on women, minorities and persons with disabilities, however today, the field for this research has been cultivated and our awareness of this once invisible sector of society is now deafening. The theorists used in this paper each approach citizenship uniquely: Jenson focuses on Anglo versus Francophone citizenship regimes, Yeatman makes the link between second-class citizenship and un-or under employment and Fraser and Gordon argue that at present, social citizenship and welfare benefits do not exist on equal terrain. Nevertheless, despite their varied backgrounds, these theorists all agree that acknowledging difference among citizens would create opportunities for engaging in social citizenship that extends beyond the workplace and this acceptance could alleviate the immense divide presently witnessed in the practice of social citizenship rights between those employed versus those not employed.

Therefore, our definition of ourselves needs to be stretched beyond where we receive our pay cheque from to include other forms of social participation. To achieve this ideal we only have to look back through the history of the Independent Living movement for guidance, as this movement relied upon two important keys to success: advocacy and what Jenson identifies as the cultivation of a strong self-identity. Since the 1960s, IL has dramatically challenged societal perceptions of what it means to be disabled and the continued work of this movement is a vital force in developing a society that accepts that its citizens are distinct and interact differently in society. Furthermore, the tremendous work the ODA committee has completed towards raising awareness of

people with disabilities in Ontario has forced us to stop and consider what it would be like to have basic activities of our daily life suddenly inaccessible to us.

I have already alluded to one of the greatest barriers to active social citizenship described by the fourteen interview participants and that is income, but there are other factors contained within ODSP policy that are not as explicitly defined. For example, although persons with disabilities are not prohibited from pursuing a personal relationship while receiving ODSP, they are penalized as they face the possibility of losing their income if they chose to live together or get married. The inaccessibility of information and the confusion surrounding the rights and responsibilities of persons with disabilities further impedes their ability to actively participate due to an intense fear that they will do something that threatens their income. Moreover, they are greatly restricted in their ability to accumulate assets, as the level of income that they receive is too low to meet even their basic needs, which lessens their ability to be financially prepared for any emergencies that may arise or to save towards their education or retirement. What the Ontario government is saying to people with disabilities is that they may qualify for income assistance, however they must accept the limitations that are placed upon their life. I have therefore argued that our idea of social citizenship needs to be redefined to include social opportunities and experiences that are often not addressed at the theoretical level. Going to a park, reading a local newspaper, going to a movie or pursuing a personal relationship are all examples of us interacting as social beings, however for reasons tied specifically to ODSP and to attitudinal barriers within our society, these opportunities are greatly limited to people with disabilities.

What then is the next step for further research within this topic? First, continuing and supporting the work started by the ODA committee is vitally important to ensuring that Ontarians with disabilities are accorded the rights and freedoms that would allow them the space to participate in our society. Jenson has argued that states possess the power to recognize citizens and that the “state uses this power of acknowledgement to make sense of the claims addressed to it, with those of citizens being treated differently than those of non-citizens or second-class citizens.”<sup>155</sup> By gaining recognition from the provincial government as a rights-claiming group, people with disabilities would be ensured that their ability to participate would be protected. Secondly, completing a more in-depth survey of persons with disabilities on ODSP of all ages and backgrounds could be used to bolster the argument of this paper that ODSP does not support their ability to be active social citizens. This paper would have benefited from conducting interviews with the NDP and the Ministry of Citizenship and these interviews should be included in future studies. Thirdly, conducting Gravelle’s proposed social audit would draw the government’s and our society’s attention to these issues and would force the government to be accountable for the sweeping changes that have transformed our community and social programs.

In conclusion, although the passing of the ODSP Act signified that the needs of people with disabilities could not adequately be addressed through traditional social assistance programs, the impact of this legislation has been limited by two underlying factors, the boundaries of the legislation and our society’s restricted understanding of the contributions that people with disabilities can make to our society. This paper has illustrated that theory and action research are compatible and it is hoped that the findings

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<sup>155</sup> Jenson, 632.

of this paper will be used as part of an open dialogue between Ontario citizens and their government. However, recognizing barriers to social participation is only a small step forward, as the actual work of removing the barriers and creating a more inclusive vision of social citizenship has yet to begin.

**APPENDIX A: Approval Notice from Carleton University's Ethics Review Committee**

Dear Ms. Hyland,

Thank you for your response to the Ethics Committee. Your application has been approved, with a request for an editorial change to your Informed Consent Form and copy of it provided to the Committee for our file.

Would you please change paragraph 3, as follows:

"The possible risks associated with participating in this interview include: the unease of discussing personal aspects of your life, including family and personal relationships and/or disclosing any acts that may violate ODSP legislation which must be reported by the researcher, by law, to the relevant authorities."

and paragraph 4, as follows:

"...The findings of each interview will be used only for the purposes of this research paper and will remain securely in the possession of the researcher, Tanya Hyland. The findings will be kept [locked? in a filing cabinet? where?] and will be [destroyed at the end of the project?]. They will not be disseminated to any other sources or people."

Thank you.

Darlene Gilson

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## **APPENDIX B: Consent to Disclosure Form**

A graduate research project on social citizenship rights and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act (ODSPA) is being conducted by Tanya Hyland, BA, Hons., a student at the Institute of Political Economy at Carleton University, Ottawa Ontario in accordance with the requirements of the graduate program. The purpose of this study is to determine the extent to which the Ontario Disability Support Program Act (ODSPA) affects the social citizenship rights of persons with disabilities aged 18 to 34.

The format of the informal interview is divided into five sections of questions: personal data, housing arrangements, ODSP, income and social citizenship. The interview will last approximately 1 hour and will occur at a mutually convenient location (school, home, library). If a follow-up interview is needed, it will take approximately a ½ hour. Prior to the conclusion of the interview, you will have the opportunity to review your responses with the researcher. At any time, you may refuse to answer any of the questions and may at anytime choose to discontinue your participation in the interview without penalty.

The possible risks associated with participating in this interview include: the uneasiness of discussing personal aspects of your life, including family and personal relationships and/or disclosing any acts that may violate ODSP legislation which must be reported by the researcher, by law, to the relevant authorities.

Every attempt will be made to protect your confidentiality by adhering to the following procedure: your name will not be disclosed, no distinguishing or identifiable characteristics (eg. SIN or date of birth) will be recorded and no information regarding your location will be recorded. However, for the purposes of this research project, it is necessary to record your age and disability. The findings of each interview will be used only for the purposes of this research paper and will remain securely in the possession of the researcher, Tanya Hyland. The findings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home and will be destroyed at the end of the project. They will not be disseminated to any other sources or people.

For further information you may contact the researcher, Tanya Hyland at the following address or phone number: 3394 Concession Road 4, Orono Ontario L0B 1M0 (905) 983-5658. In the event that you wish to file a complaint, you may contact the chair of the Carleton University Ethics Committee, Professor Klaus Pohle at 613-520-2600 ext 7434.

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Initials of Interview Participant

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Date

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Signature of Researcher

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Date

## **APPENDIX C: Letter to Interview Participants**

Dear Participant:

The purpose of this research is to collect first-hand accounts of how the Ontario Disability Support Program Act (ODSPA) affects the social citizenship rights of persons with disabilities aged 18-34 who receive income support through ODSPA. This research will be gathered by conducting semi-structured interviews with individuals who have received income support from ODSPA.

The objective of this research is to identify the ways in which ODSPA affects the ability of persons with disabilities aged 18-34 in the active practice of the rights of social citizenship. You will be asked to outline your understanding of ODSPA legislation, to discuss how receiving income support impacts upon your life, to discuss your understanding and belief about what your social citizenship rights are and whether you feel that you are able to actively practice these rights while receiving income support from ODSPA.

The outcome of this research will be to strategize meaningful ways in which the legislation of ODSPA can be challenged, will propose a new definition of social citizenship and will seek to empower individuals who receive income support from ODSPA to challenge the effects of the program upon their rights as social citizens. Your participation in this research is vital to the outcome of the project. On the back of this letter is an informed consent form that states the purpose of this research, your rights, a confidentiality agreement and the manner in which your participation will occur. Once the research project is completed, the final document will be available at the following locations: Carleton University Library, Ottawa; the Centre for Independent Living in Toronto; and Able-York, located at York University in Toronto.

Thank you for your participation.

Tanya Hyland, B.A. Hons.  
Researcher

## **Appendix D. Guidelines for Interview Questions**

### Personal Data

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Disability
4. Marital Status: single, common-law, married, divorced, separated
5. Are you currently employed? Full/Part Time
6. Are you currently in school? Secondary/Post-Secondary, Full-Time/Part-Time
7. Do you receive support from family members, friends, community, organizations?
8. If yes, describe what kind of support, how often you receive it, and how the support helps you.
9. What is your primary means of transportation?
10. Describe an average day, from the moment you wake up in the morning until the moment you fall asleep at night.

### Housing Arrangements

11. Living Status: own, rent, live with parents, board
12. Does your current housing situation meet your housing needs? If appropriate, is your home accessible?
13. If your home is not accessible, are you currently on a waiting list for accessible housing?
14. Do you require Attendant Services? Are you currently receiving or are you on a waiting list for Outreach Attendant Care or a Support Service Living Unit?
15. Have you moved in the last five years? How many times?
16. If you have moved, what were your reasons for moving? Who helped you find a new place? Who helped you move and settle in?

### Ontario Disability Support Program

17. How long have you received ODSP income support and prior to ODSP did you receive FBA?
18. Have you read the complete “Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997” legislation?

19. To what extent do you feel that you completely understand the ODSP legislation?  
How did you come to this understanding?
20. If you had questions regarding the information contained in either the ODSP legislation or the application package, to whom did you ask for clarification and were your questions answered correctly?
21. If appropriate, were you able to receive ODSP information packages and applications in alternative formats, depending upon your disability? Do you feel that your local ODSP office is responsive to your particular disability and can accommodate any needs that you may have?
22. Do you feel that your ODSP worker(s) understands your disability and how it affects your daily life?
23. Is your local ODSP office wheelchair accessible? Does it have Braille lettering in the elevators, doorways and offices? Does the office have a TTY number?
24. Do you speak with the same ODSP worker each time you call?
25. Are you able to communicate with your ODSP worker in a manner that is appropriate and acceptable to you?
26. When you call your local ODSP office, is there an automated voice system in place or an operator? If there is an automated voice system, are you able to use this system appropriately?
27. When you leave a message with your worker, is your message responded to promptly? (same day/next day)
28. Are you comfortable with the amount of information that you must disclose to ODSP prior to receiving any income support? (eg. asset levels, living arrangements, disclosure of personal health and daily activities)
29. Describe how you feel about having to reveal this information.
30. Have you ever intentionally withheld information from ODSP that under the legislation must be disclosed? If yes, what was your reason for withholding the information? Describe how you felt about withholding this information.
31. Since receiving income support has your case ever been reviewed?
32. If your case has been reviewed, did you appear before the Disability Adjudication Unit? What was the outcome and describe the events that took place.

33. Has ODSP threatened to terminate your benefits? If so, what was the reason given?
34. Does the medical coverage offered by ODSP cover and/or meet your existing medical needs? Are you able to obtain the proper medications, assistive devices and proper medical care when required?

#### Income Level

35. What is the amount of income support that you receive from ODSP each month?
36. What are your monthly expenses?
37. What does your level of income enable you to do each month? Does your level of income prevent you from doing anything each month?
38. Discuss the impact that receiving income support has had upon your life, both in the present and any foreseeable future impacts you may have considered. For example: marriage, employment, housing, savings, education
39. Could you support yourself without ODSP? Explain why/why not?

#### Citizenship

40. What are your rights as described in the ODSP legislation?
41. Describe what it means to you to be a Canadian citizen.
42. How would you describe your social rights as a Canadian citizen?
43. How would you describe your social rights as they are protected by the Ontario Human Rights Code?
44. Give examples of how you actively practice the social rights that you described.
45. Give examples of how you actively participate in Canadian society.
46. Are there barriers that prevent you from fully participating in Canadian society? If yes, give examples.
47. Have you ever felt socially and/or economically isolated from the rest of society? If yes, describe why you have felt isolated.
48. Does the amount of income support that you receive affect your ability to participate in Canadian society? If yes, give examples of how it affects your ability to participate.
49. Are there any comments or observations that you wish to add that have not been addressed in my questions?

### Appendix E. Personal Data of Interview Participants

Participant	Age	Sex	Disability	Marital Status	Employed	Education	Transportation
1	27	M	Cystic Fibrosis & Diabetes	Single	No	No, College Diploma	None-rely upon friends/family
	25	M	Cerebral Palsy	Single	Yes, Full-time	No, University Degree	Scooter, Taxi,
3	31	F	Cerebral Palsy & Learning Disability	Single	No, volunteer	No	WheelTrans,
4	34	M	Muscular Dystrophy	Single	Yes, Full-time	Yes, part-time, MA	WheelTrans, secondary from is family vehicle
5	25	M	Muscular Dystrophy	Single	No	No, university Degree	TTC, WheelTrans
6	29	F	Legally Blind	Single	Yes, Full-time summer position, freelance	Yes, enrolled in College	TTC
7	24	F	Visually Impaired/Legally Blind	Single	Volunteer on Part time basis	Yes, enrolled in University full time	TTC
8	32	F	Low Vision	Single	Two part time positions, volunteer full time	Yes, enrolled in university full time	TTC
9	29	F	Legally Blind	Single	No, volunteered up until one month ago	Starting university full time in September	Public Transit (Bus)
10	27	F	Legally Blind	Single	Freelance, volunteer on regular basis	No	TTC
11	28	F	Arthrogryposis	Single	No. Volunteer	No. College Diploma	Car
12	28	M	Legally Blind, Hearing Impaired, Diabetes, Depression	Single	No	No. Grade 10	WheelTrans
13	34	F	Legally Blind	Single	No	No. High School Graduate	TTC
14	23	M	Legally Blind, Mild Hearing Loss, Diabetes	Married, but wife is unable to come to Canada	No, looking for work	No	Public Transit, also rely upon family and friends

## Appendix F. Housing Arrangements of Interview Participants

Participant	Living Status	Accessibility of Home	Attendant Services	Moved in last 5 Years	Assistance with Move
1	Rent	N/A	N/A	Three times, didn't like where I was living	None
2	Rent	Could always be better, needed place to live so I could work. Installed grab bars, made improvements to kitchen	Yes, currently receive Homecare.	Once, to Toronto from home for work	Received help finding apartment from work colleagues. Waiting lists for wheelchair accessible apartments is too high. Family helped with move.
3	Rent	Yes, needs are met. Apartment is wheelchair accessible.	Yes, live in SSLU. <sup>156</sup> On waitlist for other SSLU's.	Twice, relationship ended and another apartment was available in the building.	Family helped with move.
4	Rent	Yes, housing is adequate. Shower is small for accessibility, kitchen was modified, removed cabinet.	Yes, live in SSLU. On waitlist for other SSLU's.	Yes, once. Moved to be close to work, no longer have to use WheelTrans, close to social amenities. Moved to give aging parents respite, Outreach was not providing enough hours.	Completed own research, with help from PIC <sup>157</sup> , chose downtown locations for SSLU's. Family and friends helped with move.
5	Board with Parents	Yes	Yes, currently receive Attendant Services. On waitlist for Outreach and SSLUs.	Yes, to and from university	Family
6	Rent	Yes, accessible for my disability	N/A	Once, had horrible roommates.	Found apartment myself, had help moving from parents and uncle.
7	Lives with Parents	Yes, accessible for my disability	N/A	No	N/A
8	Rent	Yes, close to amenities	N/A	No	N/A

<sup>156</sup> SSLU refers to Support Service Living Units that offer Attendant Services.

<sup>157</sup> PIC refers to the Project Information Centre.

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Living Status</b>	<b>Accessibility of Home</b>	<b>Attendant Services</b>	<b>Moved in the last 5 years</b>	<b>Assistance with the move</b>
9	Rent	Yes, accessible for disability	N/A	Yes, 4 times. Most recent move was to attend school.	Received help from family and friends with moving.
10	Rent	Meets my needs.	N/A	Yes, moved to live on my own.	Received help from a disability organization with move.
11	Rent	It meets my needs but I don't consider it my home,	N/A	No	Family helped with initial move out on own
12	Live with Parents	We wish we could be in a house, but the rent is too expensive.	N/A	Once	Found on own.
13	Rent	Yes, it meets my needs	N/A	No	N/A
14	Live with Parents	For now, but it's not the best solution. I would like to have my own place but I can't do that on the income that I have.	N/A	Once, whole family moved and I didn't have a choice.	Family

### Appendix G: Income of Interview Participants

Participant	Monthly Income	Monthly Expenses	Ability to support self without ODSP
1	\$900, but varies about every 3 months	Rent: \$325, Food: \$200, Entertainment: \$50, Toiletries: \$10, Clothing, Miscellaneous Items, Gifts: \$100, Transportation: \$40, Medication: \$3.00	No. I would be dead if I had to work.
2	\$708 & \$900 when I was in school	When I was at home I had to assist with bills, assistive devices, clothes and entertainment. When I was in school I had to make interest payments, pay for books, tuition, supplies.	At the time I received it, no.
3	\$697	Rent: \$133, Bills: \$35-40 minimum each, Metropass: \$81, Groceries: \$150	No.
4	\$708	\$708 in expenses, if not more.	It would have meant that I would have had to had a job and would limit my educational possibilities. Most likely would have had a minimum wage job with no benefits.
5	\$708 & \$930 when I was in school	When I was in school my rent was \$700 and I only received \$930. I had to pay for books, registration fees.	I feel that I could have, but I would have had to work. I couldn't have found a job that paid a living wage to support myself.
6	\$930	Rent: \$500, Bank charges, bills, food, credit cards (Don't have any money to buy stuff). Usually have about \$30 left at the end of the month.	No, only if I found a job. I can only find contract work or freelance and then I don't have any benefits.
7	\$708	Have to pay bills, social expenses and tuition.	No.
8	\$930	Rent: \$700, Bills: \$140. Now I have a phone for security reasons due to my disability so my expenses are about \$840 a month.	No because I am in school.

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Monthly Income</b>	<b>Monthly Expenses</b>	<b>Ability to support self without ODSP</b>
9	\$930	At least \$1200. Rent: \$485, Loan Payment: \$140 and \$40, phone, cable, hydro, groceries.	No, I can't work while I am in school. When I am not in school there is so much discrimination that I can't get anywhere.
10	\$930	Rent: \$570, Hydro: \$35, Cable: \$21, Phone: \$30-50, Long Distance Calls: \$25-60, Internet: \$22, Groceries: \$40	No, not unless I had a job.
11	\$698	Rent: \$142, Hydro: \$20, Pager: \$12, Phone: \$25-28, Internet: \$10, Car: \$100, Insurance: \$50, Groceries: \$150	No.
12	\$708	Board: \$300, Groceries: \$200, Hearing Aid Batteries: \$50, Phone and Internet: \$50, Diabetic Supplies: \$80	I do the best I can with what I have.
13	\$669	Rent: \$135, Phone: \$40, Internet: \$23 (this is not a luxury) Groceries: I make sure that I have a certain amount left at the end of the month. I haven't bought clothes in a long time and I know that I need them.	No, I don't think that I could look for a job. I couldn't work more than a part-time job. I have seizures and I tried to volunteer full-time but I couldn't take the physical strain. Also, I don't have enough education.
14	\$708	Help my parents with household expenses, toiletries, Internet: \$30, Life Insurance.	Not at this present time because I don't have meaningful work.

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