



Randy Pettapiece, MPP
Perth-Wellington

Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario

November 2, 2016

Hon. Dr. Helena Jaczek, MPP
Minister of Community and Social Services
6th Floor, Hepburn Block
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9

Dear Minister:

Open Letter to the Minister of Community and Social Services

For the second time in recent months, the Ombudsman of Ontario has indicted your government's mismanagement of programs under the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Today he reported that over the past fiscal year, his office received 2,105 complaints about your ministry, including 1,025 about FRO and 843 about ODSP. Most disturbingly, he reports that the most consistently complained about provincial bodies are the Family Responsibility Office (FRO) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).

FRO is responsible for ensuring that parents and children receive support legally owed to them. In too many cases, that is not happening. Errors and poor customer service are leaving countless families without their court-ordered support. This is, frankly, inexcusable.

The ombudsman also highlights a worrisome trend of FRO taking inconsistent enforcement action. This is hardly surprising; during a briefing I requested with your ministry staff, I was informed that the software FRO uses does not automatically alert caseworkers to cases that are in arrears or require attention. The onus should never be on the recipient to report overdue support. Enforcement action on all cases should be standard, and must be initiated by FRO. Why is your government seemingly incapable of implementing such a simple, common-sense procedure?

ODSP recipients also report an excessively high number of complaints about customer service and funding levels. Issues with your government's flawed Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) continue to affect payments to some of our communities' most vulnerable individuals, despite your promise to fix the problems. Why have you made so little progress?

The ombudsman's concerns should not come as news to you. Year after year, complaints about FRO and ODSP top the list of cases handled by the ombudsman. Year after year, your government has allowed the problems to fester.

The people who rely on these programs deserve better. They need to know when you will fix these problems, and who will be held accountable for such monumental failure under your watch.

Sincerely,

Randy Pettapiece, MPP
Perth-Wellington

