

Ontario Ends Social Assistance For People Living in Canada Illegally

TORONTO — The Ontario government is strengthening the rules for Ontario's social assistance programs to ensure that only people who are living in Canada legally can receive financial assistance from Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program. The new regulations, which take effect immediately, and will protect taxpayer dollars and ensure Ontario's social assistance programs are focused on supporting only families and individuals facing financial hardship who are legally authorized to live in Canada.

"Our government will always be there for those that need it most, but taxpayer-funded social assistance should not go to people living in Canada illegally," said Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. "These changes will protect taxpayer dollars and ensure these programs are there for the people who they were intended to support."

The province has amended regulations under the Ontario Works Act, 1997 and the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997, to provide clarity on who is eligible for social assistance. Under the updated rules, the following individuals are not eligible for social assistance: Individuals who are in Canada illegally; and Individuals authorized to remain in Canada on a temporary basis, for example, those here with student visas, work permits or as visitors and tourists.

These changes take effect immediately to stop people who are not authorized to remain in Canada from receiving these financial supports, ensuring Ontario's government-funded social assistance programs are reserved for people who meet the province's eligibility requirements.

Ontario is continuing to strengthen social assistance and ensure supports are available to its most vulnerable residents. Since September 2022, the province has increased ODSP rates by nearly 23 percent and has tied annual increases to the rate of inflation.

Social assistance is available under the Ontario Works (OW) program and ODSP. Applicants must demonstrate their citizenship or immigration status. ODSP clients with a disability may earn up to \$1,000 per month through employment without affecting their eligibility for income support and benefits.

Ontario Works recipients are supported by caseworkers focused on helping them prepare to participate in employment services, find meaningful employment, and achieve financial independence. The public may also report cases of suspected fraud by contacting the fraud hotline found on the ministry's website or call 1-800-394-7867.

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West Nile Threat Real As Durham Region Has Tested Positive

Whitby, Ontario - Durham Region Health Department has received notification that batches of adult mosquitoes collected in Pickering and Whitby have tested positive for West Nile virus (WNV). This brings the total to 21 batches of mosquitoes that have tested positive for WNV in Durham Region so far this season; previous positive mosquito batches were found in Ajax, Clarington and Oshawa.

The current positive batches of mosquitoes were collected from the Health Department's mosquito trap sites located in Pickering and Whitby. Every week between June and September, the Health Department sets mosquito traps across the region and submits mosquitoes for laboratory testing.

WNV is a mosquito-borne disease that is spread to humans via the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected by feeding on the blood of a bird that carries the virus. The disease is not passed from person to person, nor from bird to person. Most people who contract the virus will experience mild illness including fever, headache, body ache, nausea, vomiting, and rash on the chest, stomach or back. More serious symptoms can include muscle weakness, stiff neck, confusion, tremors, numbness, and sudden sensitivity to light. Symptoms usually develop between two and 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

The Health Department recommends that residents take the following precautions to minimize the risk of mosquito bites and the possibility of being infected with WNV:

Wear shoes, socks and light-coloured clothing—including long sleeve tops and full-length pants when outside—especially at dusk or dawn when mosquitoes are most active.

Use insect repellent containing DEET or icaridin (picardin) on exposed skin, following Health Canada's safety tips on using personal insect repellents.

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