

Reloadable Payment Card Introduced for ODSP Recipients

It is now safer and easier for people in Ontario to receive and use their social assistance benefits. According to a recent public communication of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) clients with no bank account will be able to receive their benefits on a reloadable payment card rather than receiving a paper cheque.

The card which is provided by the Royal Bank of Canada, works in the same way as a debit card. Each month funds are loaded onto the card and the ODSP eligible clients can use their card to make ATM cash withdrawals, as well as in-store or online purchases or payments. The cards are not monitored and do not identify the cardholder as a person on social assistance or a recipient of government services.

The province will phase the new cards into use. During the first phase, currently underway, clients can volunteer to test the reloadable payment card and provide feedback on the kinds of supports, information and processes needed to best benefit from the card. In a second phase, later this summer, the card will be issued to all ODSP clients who are unable to open or maintain a bank account (some exceptions apply, e.g. those who have limited access to a bank machine.) The new card is part of the government's plan to enhance social assistance, improve customer service, and make programs work better for clients.

Key numbers:

- 900,000 People on social assistance in Ontario
- 465,000 People on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP)
- 446,000 Individuals on Ontario Works (OW)
- 14% or 46,000 People on ODSP, still receive paper cheques
- 86%: Percentage of people on ODSP who receive money through direct bank deposit
- \$3.1 million: Cost to implement ODSP debit card
- \$1.7 million: Annual saving to replace paper cheques with debit cards

Sources:

https://news.ontario.ca/mcss/en/2016/05/ontario-introduces-reloadable-payment-card-for-social-assistance.html?_ga=1.32351742.1586484995.1463510036
<https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2016/05/16/ontario-trades-cheques-for-debit-cards-for-disabled-people-on-welfare.html>

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