Ontarians with Disabilities Act Sub-Committee
League for Human Rights Committee of B'nai Brith Canada

LIGUE DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE DE B'NAI BRITH CANADA
LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF B'NAI BRITH CANADA

email: eddieoda@hotmail.com Web Site: www.bnaibrith.ca

August 3, 2004

Hon. Dalton McGuinty, Premier
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1A4

Re**: Reconsider New Taxations on People with Disabilities**

Dear Mr. Premier,

We are writing to you today, to express our disappointment with three items that your government has brought in with the new budget that we feel directly and unfairly targets Ontarians with disabilities. These items are: the new **OHIP premium tax,** the revoking of the **PST Tax Rebate** on new vehicles for people with disabilities, and the **Workplace Accessibility Tax Incentive**.

In regards to the **OHIP premium tax**, this premium is an additional financial burden placed upon a specific segment of our society and their families that can least afford it. Even with current income tax deductions or exemptions, the disabled and their families incur additional expenses for which a full deduction is never allowed. Consider the many items a disabled Ontarian needs on a daily basis: medications, crutches, a second wheelchair, portable ramps, automobile lifts for a scooter and maintenance on these items. Non-disabled persons do not have to figure into their budgets additional costs to hire a handyman to do odd jobs around the home, or extra delivery fees. Even those who can afford a car have to pay additional for gasoline as they are not able to pump their own gas and are forced to use the full-service stations (which are getting harder to find) which charge on the average 10¢ a liter (40¢ a gallon) more. Programs such as the Assisted Devices Program (ADP) only cover some of the heavy additional expenses. The disabled and their families are being asked to stretch limited incomes even further.

Clearly, the new OHIP premium tax rate is a progressive tax on those whose incomes are stretched to the limit to meet specific needs. Consultation with the various ministries involved is needed to ensure the delivery of a more balanced and fair taxation exemption for those who have an extreme dependency on their income and a clear assessment of the impact of the new changes

In the recent budget it states that as of May 19, 2004, Ontario will no longer provide a **rebate of PST** paid on new vehicles used for transporting persons with permanent disabilities. While this is said to result in some savings, the impact on Ontarians with disabilities must be considered.

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The **PST rebate** on new vehicles has many benefits and its removal will cause financial strain for those trying to become more independent. Even though there is a limit of $2,400, it helps to make the vehicle more affordable at an earlier date and these monies would then be going to meet expenses for running and maintaining the vehicle. The rebate was clearly key for the three distinct functions of transporting a disabled person for medical treatment, educational purposes or being able to go to work and being a productive member of society. We urge you to consider reinstating the rebate and in fact enhancing it.

The removal of the **Workplace Accessibility Tax Incentive** was also a troubling deletion. Without a substitute measure, its removal is clearly counterproductive to the clear need to assist qualified people with disabilities to overcome barriers to gainful employment.

We trust that you will give serious consideration to the areas we have discussed and will institute the proper corrections to result in a fair and justified treatment for all those who are affected.

We are in contact with the Ministry of Citizenship where a reworking of the Ontario Disabilities Act (**ODA**) is currently underway. Hopefully a reworking of the **ODA** will address some of the issues raised here. However, until alternatives are put in place, the budgetary items have placed additional burdens on a segment of the population that can least afford them. We are offering our expertise in barrier design, public education and media exposure to promote an **ODA** that will benefit all of Ontarians. We also offer to you, Mr. Premier, our expertise, experience and total co-operation to bring about a better society.

Sincerely

Edward “Eddie” Rice
Chair: ODA-LHR-BBC

cc: Hon. G. Sorbara, Minister of Finance
Hon. Dr. M. Bountrogianni, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
Ernie Parsons,MPP
David Zimmer, MPP