



MAY 1, 2020

NDP National News Release

Ontario NDP: Ford government must stop ignoring people with disabilities during COVID-19.

“I feel like a sitting duck” says Chris Stigas, who has a disability

OTTAWA — The Official Opposition is reiterating its call for Doug Ford to take urgent actions to support people with disabilities through this pandemic — including a plan to conduct in-home COVID-19 testing for people with disabilities.

Two weeks ago, NDP Leader Andrea Horwath and Joel Harden, NDP critic for Accessibility and People with Disabilities, wrote to Ford asking for a plan to be developed to support and protect Ontarians with disabilities during COVID-19 in consultation with grassroots disability leaders and experts. No response has yet been provided.

“It is unacceptable that the Ford government has taken no concrete steps to support people with disabilities,” said Horwath, “many of who face added barriers to accessing testing and treatment for COVID-19, and added risks due to exposure to care workers, often in their homes.”

The NDP is calling for the plan to include, but not be limited to:

- Adopting a clinical triage protocol that respects the human rights of people with disabilities
- Ensuring that attendant care workers who help people with disabilities in their own homes have access to personal protective equipment
- Resources and clear guidelines to support 330,000 special education students with e-learning
- Provide remote and distance supports to assist the families of people with developmental or intellectual disabilities living with them, to provide respite for family members during mandatory periods of isolation at home
- Declaring the Assistive Devices Program an essential service so that no one is deprived of critical mobility or medical aides



These are people like Chris Stigas, who lives in assisted living in downtown Toronto and uses a wheelchair. Stigas is afraid for his safety, given that multiple PSWs come into his home throughout the day, who he knows are also working in other assisted living homes.

“I feel like a sitting duck, without access to proper COVID-19 testing, and in seeing a lack of proper N95 masks for PPE among the PSWs I am seeing,” Stigas said. “All I’m asking is that people with disabilities living in assisted living and supportive housing settings be included in the protocols the government comes up with for long-term care and retirement homes.”

“People with disabilities need help now,” said Harden. “Whether it’s folks who are stuck because they can’t get the wheelchair they’ve been waiting for, or people with mobility disabilities that need in-home COVID-19 testing.”

Contact for Chris Stigas, Toronto:

Chris Stigas
cstigas@gmail.com
647-286-7175

Media contact: Jodie Shupac, 416-806-9147