

Summary of Issues in the Employment Support and Income Assistance Program Raised by Income Assistance Recipients and Advocates

(Based on Town Hall Meetings in Halifax convened by the Benefits Reform Action Group (BRAG) between February and May 2015 and the CSEP-NS Annual Meeting, June 2015)

End clawbacks:

- Contribute to the end of child poverty by allowing single parents to keep child support payments
- Encourage workforce participation by raising allowable earnings to \$500 from \$150
- Stop the clawback of CPP-Disability allowances from Income Assistance

Raise the welfare rates:

- Raise the shelter allowance to reflect average rents in Nova Scotia
- Raise personal allowances to reflect the actual cost of living
- Provide all recipients with funds for telephone and transportation

Respect disability rights:

- End requirement for people with permanent disabilities to submit evidence of disability annually
- Change the name of “special needs” to “essential health needs” and fund appropriately
- Stop onerous requirements for people with disabilities to submit multiple evidence of a disability and respect the medical opinion of physicians.

Remove barriers to education:

- Repeal regulation 67 which prevents people on assistance from attending post-secondary education programs of more than two years in length without special approval
- Support people to get an education and ease requirements for the approving an education plan

Respect and Equity in Services:

- Re-open rural offices to ensure equal services for rural people living on income assistance
- Acknowledge and address racism, ableism, ageism and other forms of discrimination and stigma in the ESIA program
- Address gaps in services in rural areas for people on income assistance, particularly in transportation and support for homeowners

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