

The Ins and Outs of Ontario Works

First things first, I can imagine that you are experiencing a difficult time right now and that you might have mixed feelings about applying for Ontario Works (OW). Please let me reassure you that you have every right to apply for Ontario Works and that there is hope. Below is a quick guide to applying to Ontario Works and a few details surrounding it.

The first section is split into under 18's (for example, you are 17 years old) and 18+. The reason for this is that it is a bit of a different process for applying.

If you are under 18 (things to know before you book the appointment)

Youth Trustee

The first thing that you need to know is that you will need a Youth Trustee to come to your appointment with you and to receive the money on your behalf (they have to give it all to you by law and cannot charge you anything for being their youth trustee). This has to be a reliable adult that you can trust. The Youth Trustee can be:

A relative like a grandparent, aunt/uncle, cousin, older sibling etc. ****please note that sometimes the caseworker who answers the phone will say that an older sibling (say 23 years old) is to young to be a Youth Trustee but this is FALSE. You can quote policies and directives 3.6 to them****

<https://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/documents/en/mcsc/social/directives/ow/0306.pdf>

Working whilst on OW

If you are under 18, you are able to make unlimited money whilst on OW, (from a part time job for example). ****Sometimes the caseworkers who are booking the appointment aren't aware of this and might tell you that you make too much money to qualify. You can quote policies and directives 5.3 to them****

https://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/directives/ow/5_3_OW_Directives.aspx

Once you have your Youth Trustee sorted, skip to the "Before you make the call" section.

If you are over 18 (things to know before you book an appointment)

Working whilst on OW

When you call to make the appointment you must be earning less than \$720 per month to qualify. I know that this amount is low, however, these are the rules that they have declared.

Before you make the call (information for any applicant)

There is some information that you will need to gather before you make the call, no matter what your age is.

- Health Card number
- SIN (Social Insurance number)
- The mailing address of where you are staying (this can be difficult if you are couch surfing). If you are able to stay at the place where you are couch surfing for a few days, then you are able to give this address (with the owner's permission). Make sure that it is noted to the caseworker who answers the phone that this is a temporary arrangement
- How much you earn in a month. If you work different # of hours each week, give an average amount (the lower the better).
- How much you pay in rent
- How much you have in your account or savings (don't be embarrassed if you have only pennies, the less you have, the better).
- **If you are under 18**, you will need to give a brief description as to why you are unable to live at home (unsafe, no room for you etc.) Do not say that it is because you just want to move out.

Making the call

Make sure that you have a pen and paper handy so that you can jot down any important details such as the date and time of the appointment. Have your health card and/or SIN number ready. If you are **under 18**, make sure that you book the appointment for when your Youth Trustee can attend.

Dufferin (OV)	519-941-6991
Grey (OS)	519-376-7324
Muskoka/Bracebridge (MU)	705-645-2412
Simcoe (BA, OR, MI, SG)	705-722-3132

Before the appointment

You will have a bit of work to do once you have the appointment booked. You will need to gather as many of the documents that you can. Don't worry if you do not have them all for the appointment, as they give you a certain amount of time to provide them with it. Here is a list of the documents required:

- Birth certificate
- Social Insurance number (either the card or the official piece of paper)
- Health card
- Cost of rent etc. (bring past and current bills and your lease document if you have one). If you are couch surfing, bring a letter that is signed and dated by the person that you are staying with. If you are living in a shelter, have them provide you with proof that you are staying there.
- Employment history (pay stubs, T4 if you have left the job)
- Bank statements from all bank accounts for the last 30 days. **Make sure that you get this just before your appointment.**

**** If you have not got your SIN number,** then you will need to get an official reprint by going in to a Service Canada office close to you. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/sin/after-applying.html#lost>

****If you have not got your birth certificate,** then you will need to get a new one by going in to a Service Ontario office close to you. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-or-replace-ontario-birth-certificate#section-12>

During the appointment

Make sure that you arrive on time for the appointment and bring your documents, health card and SIN card/paper. **If you are under 18,** make sure that your Youth Trustee attends as well. Go to the front desk and tell them your name and time of appointment. They will likely send you in to another room to watch a video that is half an hour long. *I am not going to lie to you, this is a terribly boring video!*

After the video, they will call you in to meet with your caseworker. The caseworker will ask you all kinds of questions about your current situation. Try to answer their questions as honestly as possible and try not to feel frustrated. This part can last up to two hours **but don't let it put you off!** It is totally worth it if it means that you will be able to have a roof over your head and income for food.

You will have to sign some paperwork (and if you have a Youth Trustee, they will too). If you are approved, then the process is quite quick and you should have money in your account within a few days.

Make sure to take a photo of the Ontario Works Caseworker's contact info., just in case you need to contact them.