

25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction



Five Tests For Success of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy

The Ontario government has committed to announcing a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) by December 2008.

Ontarians welcome the Premier's leadership on poverty reduction - consultations across the province and a new national poll show overwhelming support in Ontario for action on poverty reduction, especially in tough economic times.

Now is the time to act. An economic crisis is no excuse to abandon the fight against poverty. In fact, the exact opposite is true. Action to reduce poverty is the stimulus we need to weather the economic storm: we can boost consumer spending in local economies, invest in infrastructure to stimulate jobs, and ensure that all hands are on deck to pull us through.

We owe it to each other. As Ontarians face job losses, reductions in hours of work, and other financial stresses, now is the time to step up for families.

At the end of the day, we can invest now or pay much more later. We can invest in Ontarians and ensure everyone is at their best today or we can look forward to increased health care and social service costs.

Poverty reduction starts with a plan. That plan is within our reach. And we must act on it now.

Turn the page to see how 25 in 5 tests the success of
the government's poverty reduction strategy



Five Tests for Success

A 25 In 5 Target

TEST 1

A commitment to an overall target of reducing poverty by 25% in 5 years

25 in 5. We can do it. Step by step.

- Other countries and provinces are setting targets and timelines to reduce poverty through a phased-in approach - and they're seeing results.
- In the U.K., government set a plan in motion and reduced child poverty by almost 25% within 5 years.
- Setting a 25 in 5 target would make Ontario the first jurisdiction in Canada to set a specific target for reducing poverty.
- A 25% reduction would mean reducing child poverty from 12% to 9%, lifting 80,000 kids out of poverty. It would mean reducing the number of all poor Ontarians from 10% to 7.5%, lifting 323,000 Ontarians out of poverty.

A Solid Measuring Stick

TEST 2

A clear way to measure progress: A lead income-measure combined with a set of additional indicators

Statistics Canada produces a number of reliable measuring sticks annually: the Low Income Measure (the major international standard for poverty measurement), the Low Income Cut-off (the measure most frequently used in Canada), and the Market Basket Measure (a relatively new measure of poverty).

Ontario also needs to track progress in key policy

areas that ultimately drive success in reducing poverty:

- whether work is sustaining families;
- how income security programs are preventing people from falling into poverty;
- whether affordable housing, early learning and child care, and public education are meeting the needs of Ontarians;
- how population-specific groups are doing: newcomers and racialized communities, lone mothers, Aboriginal peoples, people with disabilities.

Policy Specifics

TEST 3

Specific, clear policy commitments outlined in three priority areas

Sustaining employment

Full-time work should lift Ontarians out of poverty. Rights must be protected in the workplace. All Ontarians should have coverage for dental, drug and vision care. Specifics include:

- Poverty-proof the minimum wage for full time earners.
- Update and enforce employment standards for all workers.
- Create strong employment and pay equity programs.
- Call on Ottawa to enrich the Working Income Tax Benefit.

Livable incomes

All Ontarians deserve good living standards. Parents deserve the resources they need to raise their children in safety and love - free of the fear and stigma

of poverty. Specifics include:

- Close the gap between life on social assistance and moving out of poverty.
- Make it easier for people with disabilities to get access to the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).
- Enrich the Ontario Child Benefit.
- Call on Ottawa to expand coverage of E.I. and enrich the Canada Child Tax Benefit.

Strong and supportive communities

Ontario should be a province of inclusion and opportunity – for all.

- Make housing easier to afford. Build it to suit to people's needs. Keep it in good repair.
- Make early learning and child care both universal and affordable.
- Build a public education system that focuses on equitable outcomes.
- Fund vibrant community-based programs that connect and enrich us.

Partnerships with the federal government are critical. The federal government finances a majority of social programs, such as Employment Insurance, child care, and affordable housing. Ontario can still make significant headway towards 25 in 5, but we need the federal government if we want to go further. Cutting poverty in half in 10 years will require joint federal and provincial action.

Legislation and Accountability

TEST 4

A legislated strategy for implementation that keeps the plan on track

The key to delivering a multi-year plan, one step at a time, is to build in assurances of follow-up and accountability from one year to the next. These should include:

- Tabling legislation that brings the plan into law and invites all parties to support Ontario's poverty reduction strategy.
- Carrying on the work of the Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction and creating a Poverty Reduction Secretariat that is responsible for bringing together various Senior Ministers, driving implementation, and tracking progress.
- Annual public reporting on progress.
- Creating a Citizen's Advisory Committee that includes grassroots leaders, experts, and people living in low income.
- Committing to ongoing public consultation as the plan unfolds.

A Downpayment

TEST 5

A commitment to a downpayment on poverty reduction in the 2009 budget

Ontario must commit to introducing specific leading measures and investments to build momentum for the strategy in the 2009 spring budget.

- We cannot afford to wait. There are several well founded economic reasons why we must act now, especially in economic tough times.
- Action to reduce poverty is the stimulus our economy needs, Counter-cyclical measures to boost local consumer spending and invest in infrastructure can make a difference.
- We owe it to each other. As Ontarians face job losses, reductions in hours of work, and other financial stresses, now is the time to step up for families.
- At the end of the day, we can invest now or pay much more later. Retrenching in the face of stubbornly high rates of poverty merely defers even larger costs to the taxpayer down the road.

The sooner we act, the sooner everyone benefits.

Help us close the deal on a successful Poverty Reduction Strategy for all Ontarians by:

WHAT'S NEXT?

1. Endorsing the 25 in 5 Declaration online at 25in5.ca
2. Talking about 25 in 5 and Poverty Reduction with your friends, family and local community and asking them to endorse the campaign
3. Sharing your support for the 25 in 5 Declaration with your MPP and other local leaders
4. Visiting PovertyWatchOntario.ca to find out about poverty reduction events near you
5. Sharing your stories and news of local initiatives with the network, building the grassroots provincial movement

Poverty reduction starts with a plan. That plan is within our reach. And we must act on it now.

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Be part of the plan. www.25in5.ca

