



END CHILD & FAMILY POVERTY IN CANADA

## Ontario Election 2011

# Planning for All Ontarians

## Party Commitments on issues affecting vulnerable children and families living in Ontario

In the current economic climate the economy, jobs and unemployment are on most people's minds. Many are worried about economic and employment instability and are looking to Governments to pursue policies that help them stay out of poverty. For some, however, poverty is a reality linked to low income, unstable and temporary work, inadequate services and assistance, & unaffordable housing costs (among other social policy issues).

This Political Commitment Grid briefly explores each major political party's commitment, as set out in this provincial election, to helping people living on low income and in poverty. Party commitments have been compared to key policy recommendations made in Ontario Campaign 2000's 2010 Report Card and the assessment reflects the extent to which these recommendations have been pursued.

The grid reflects responses we received to an anti-poverty work questionnaire sent to each of the major political parties and the platform announcements that have made in the past few weeks. It follows on a Call to Action letter released by the 25 in 5 network and endorsed by over 100 individuals and organizations.

### The Call to Action calls on leadership in the following areas:

- A. Income security programs that ensure basic needs are met and give people real opportunities to get ahead, with a firm commitment to ensuring the Social Assistance Review process proceeds;
- B. Paid work at a fair wage that accommodates disability, is equitably accessible, and provides a real pathway out of poverty;
- C. Social infrastructure that establishes a foundation for inclusive communities, including decent, affordable housing options, high quality affordable early learning and child care, a strong and equitable public education system, as well as vibrant community programs and affordable public transit;
- D. Targeted strategies that recognize the heightened risk in specific regions and neighbourhoods, and among such groups as people who have disabilities, racialized groups - both Aboriginal people and people of colour, women, lone-parent families, and newcomers.

Please note: Ontario Campaign 2000 is a non partisan coalition and does not endorse any political party.



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Ontario Campaign 2000 assessed the Election 2011 platforms produced by the Ontario Liberal Party, the Ontario NDP, the Ontario PC party and the Green Party of Ontario and asked the respective party leaders questions on issues relating to poverty. Below is a short grid on each party's commitment to some of Ontario Campaign 2000's key policy recommendations as they appear in our 2010 Report Card.

A check ( ✓ ) has been given when a party has fully committed to Ontario Campaign 2000's policy recommendation, a slash ( / ) is for partial commitments, and a cross ( X ) has been given when no commitments have been made.

ISSUE	Ontario Liberal Party	Ontario NDP	Ontario PC Party	Green Party of Ontario
Income security programs that ensure basic needs are met and give people real opportunities to get ahead, with a firm commitment to ensuring the Social Assistance Review process proceeds;				
<b>Complete the current review of social assistance and commit to fully indexing social assistance rates to inflation. <sup>i</sup></b>	/	✓	X	/
<b>Increase the Ontario Child Benefit to \$125/ month <sup>ii</sup></b>	/	/	X	X
Paid work at a fair wage that accommodates disability, is equitably accessible, and provides a real pathway out of poverty;				
<b>Increase minimum wage to \$11 an hour in 2011 &amp; fully index it to inflation <sup>iii</sup></b>	/	✓	X	/
<b>Pursue a Good Jobs strategy, Employment Standards, Employment Equity and Pay Equity</b>	/	/	X	/
Social infrastructure that establishes a foundation for inclusive communities, including decent, affordable housing options, high quality affordable early learning and child care, a strong and equitable public education system, as well as vibrant community programs and affordable public transit;				
<b>Invest in current child care spaces, create new affordable spaces and develop a comprehensive child care development and funding policy <sup>iv</sup></b>	/	/	X	/
<b>Improve access to affordable housing in Ontario <sup>v</sup></b>	/	/	X	/
Targeted strategies that recognize the heightened risk in specific regions and neighbourhoods, and among such groups as people who have disabilities, racialized groups - both Aboriginal people and people of colour, women, lone-parent families, and newcomers.				
<b>Commitment to setting targets, timelines and actions on poverty reduction <sup>vi</sup></b>	✓	✓	X	✓

<sup>i</sup> All parties have said they will look into making **some changes** to the current system of social assistance. The Ontario PC party is the only party that has not made a commitment to continuing with the Social Assistance Review. The Ontario NDP have committed to indexing Social Assistance rates to inflation.

<sup>ii</sup> Both the Ontario Liberal Party and the Ontario NDP commit to increasing the Ontario Child Benefit to 1,310 by 2013. Even though it is 13% less than Ontario Campaign 2000's recommended \$125/month, the suggested increase is still a considerable improvement from the current \$1,100/year.

<sup>iii</sup> The Ontario NDP commit to increasing the minimum wage to \$11/hour and indexing it to the cost of living. The Ontario Liberal Party will appoint a minimum wage advisory committee to determine a mechanism for future increases in minimum wage. The Green Party of Ontario will look into opportunities for providing "livable take home wages".

<sup>iv</sup> The Ontario NDP has announced a two year \$250 million investment to keep child care centres open and to freeze fees. The Green Party of Ontario states that it will support and maintain existing child care programs. The Ontario Liberal party states that it "will work with partners to modernize Ontario's childcare system and support centres as they transition to offering affordable care to families with young children." **All parties will implement Full Day Kindergarten for 4 & 5 year olds.**

<sup>v</sup> The Ontario NDP has introduced the most comprehensive affordable housing platform and has met all but one of Ontario Campaign 2000's recommendations. The Ontario Liberal Party, Ontario NDP and Green Party of Ontario all commit to introducing and pursuing policies/opportunities for more affordable housing.

<sup>vi</sup> The Ontario Liberal Party, the Ontario NDP and the Green Party of Ontario responded to Ontario Campaign 2000's question on tackling poverty by saying that they will uphold the Poverty Reduction Act and will set targets, timelines and actions on poverty reduction.