



A Call to Action on Poverty in Ontario

As the October provincial election approaches, we call on all Ontario political parties to make the reduction and eradication of poverty a key election issue and to clearly outline their commitments and concrete plans to tackle poverty in our province.

This Call to Action is based on our belief in an equitable and inclusive Ontario, free from poverty, where everyone can develop their talents, contribute to thriving communities, and share in the prosperity of a strong and sustainable economy.

COMMITMENT

On May 6, 2009, all three parties in the Ontario Legislature voted for the Poverty Reduction Act, building on the significant achievement of a commitment to reduce child and family poverty by 25% in five years.

With that vote, all parties – the Liberal, Progressive Conservative and New Democratic parties alike – made a commitment to work towards the eradication of poverty in Ontario.

This commitment requires concerted action and a bold strategy that leaves no Ontarian behind. A strategy that brings hope for all Ontarians – for those in city neighbourhoods and in rural communities; for people who have lost their jobs but are determinedly looking for work; for people who have disabilities; for racialized groups – both Aboriginal people and people of colour; for women; for lone-parent families; and for newcomers.

PROGRESS

Poverty costs Ontario an estimated \$38 billion a year in increased expenditures in health care, social assistance and foregone tax revenues.

But we have seen how smart government investments, driven by a 25 in 5 target, can make a tangible difference in the lives of Ontarians.

During the last election, groups and individuals across Ontario came together in the united call to tackle poverty with a comprehensive strategy that included targets, timelines, and a plan.

Thanks to government policy and investments, child poverty in Ontario went from 15.2 per cent to 14.6 per cent between 2008 and 2009. This means 19,000 Ontario children and their families were moved out of poverty – despite the recession's very tough economic times.

Progress has been made. But much more is possible when we aim even higher.

It's time to take the next step.

ACTION

With 1.2 million Ontarians still struggling to make ends meet in our province, we need all parties to outline their concrete plans to build on the 25 in 5 commitment, and to aim even higher by setting bolder targets and timelines to eradicate poverty.

Ontarians are looking for leadership on:

- 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;
- Paid work at a fair wage that accommodates disability, is equitably accessible, and provides a real pathway out of poverty;
- 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;
- 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.

People from different backgrounds and from diverse communities across the province are working toward the goal of eradicating poverty in Ontario. We know that this is achievable.

Working together with all sectors in society, all levels of government, and especially people living on low incomes, we can remove barriers, provide supports, and create opportunities so that all Ontarians can live with dignity.

We call on all Ontario's political parties to outline their plan of action to fight poverty in our province and ensure progress for all.