

poverty reduction plan

Poverty reduction in Ontario is possible.

Despite a long period of strong economic growth, Ontario is falling behind in the fight against poverty. In the past 25 years, the provincial economy has quadrupled. Yet, report after report shows that Ontario still has a shameful number of people living in poverty and the income gap between poor and rich families is at an all time high. In fact, families in the lowest 40% of the income distribution are worse off today than they were 30 years ago.¹

Other provinces are showing leadership in reducing poverty. Quebec passed anti-poverty legislation in 2002 and introduced an action plan in 2004 that pledges to reduce poverty to among the lowest in industrialized countries by 2012. Newfoundland and Labrador launched its anti-poverty strategy in 2006, the goal: having the lowest poverty level of any Canadian province within 10 years.

In Ontario, the benefits of a strong provincial economy have clearly not reached the almost 1.3 million people currently living in poverty and others who are a mere pay cheque away from it.²

Poverty affects us all, but some carry more of the burden. For people with work-limiting disabilities, Aboriginal people, lone parent families, new immigrants and racialized groups, **poverty is systemic and devastating.**

In 2007, in Ontario, can we afford to have children and families go hungry and homeless? Can we afford to watch while some of our neighbours lose ground and lose hope?

We don't think so. Most people in Ontario don't think so. *What Ontario needs now is a poverty reduction plan.*

The **25 in 5 Network** is a multi-sector network with a common goal: to encourage all provincial political candidates and parties to come up with a plan to **reduce poverty rates in Ontario by 25% in five years. 25 in 5.**

At the provincial level, we've seen the introduction of the new Ontario Child Benefit as well as modest increases to social assistance rates and the minimum wage. The federal government has also allocated new funds for labour market training, immigration and settlement and introduced the Working Income Tax Benefit.

These efforts are important first steps. However, what is missing from the current political discourse is a comprehensive, long-term framework—with a goal and a plan to achieve it.

The time for piecemeal solutions has passed. What Ontario needs now is an integrated plan of action that brings together all of our good intentions, policies and programs in a coordinated way.

A poverty reduction strategy for Ontario must address the central components of community supports, housing, childcare and income support/living wages.

This strategy requires consultation with a wide range of stakeholders to identify timelines, ensure accountability and measure our progress.

Poverty reduction in Ontario is possible. Eliminating poverty in Ontario is possible. It just takes leadership and commitment— and a plan.

¹ Yalnizyan, Armine, Ontario's Growing Gap – Time for Leadership, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (May 2007) : p4

² Statistics Canada, Income in Canada 2005