

**Submission to the  
Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs  
Monday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 3:00pm**

The 25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction is a multi-sectoral network comprised of over sixty provincial and Toronto-based organizations and individuals working on eliminating poverty.

There is an emerging consensus that the time for piecemeal solutions to persistent poverty has passed. During the election campaign, we joined numerous groups and individuals calling on the political parties to commit to a poverty reduction strategy for Ontario that would reduce Ontario's Poverty rate by at least 25% over 5 years and 50% over 10 years. While the precise target to be adopted will be the subject of consultations in the next few months, a target at a comparable level would lift more than 400,000 people in this province out of poverty in the first 5 years. We believe this is a necessary and realistic objective for the first phase of a longer term strategy.

An Ontario poverty reduction plan is not simply about those who are poor. It is about bolstering the opportunities for all Ontarians and ensuring that all hands are on deck to meet our common economic challenges. It is about ensuring that middle income families can be prevented from falling into poverty to begin with. It is about preserving and rebuilding the middle income so people living in poverty have a place to move in to. Ultimately, it is about how we ensure the social and economic well-being for all our communities and for the whole province.

Poverty is expensive. Just as it is much more costly to treat a disease than prevent one, it costs more to provide emergency hostels than affordable housing, more to take a child into the care of child welfare agencies than to make sure families have adequate incomes, more to cope with school dropouts than to train our youth for the jobs Canada needs to fill in the coming years and more to treat the long term health effects of poverty and social exclusion than to make sure every child is given the best opportunity to be healthy and connected to his or her community.

Reducing poverty is good for economies, as is preventing poverty by maintaining a strong social safety net. Denmark, Sweden and Finland are three of the five most economically competitive nations in the world. They have the lowest child poverty rates and strong social supports.

The need for action is nothing short of urgent. Report after report has documented that, despite our record levels of economic growth, poverty has persisted at the same high rates for an entire generation. Among aboriginal populations, racialized communities, newcomers, single mothers and people with disabilities the situation is even more dire, with adult and child poverty rates that can be many times the Ontario average.

Among advocacy groups and in communities across Ontario the response to the government's commitment to develop a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy has been very positive - as has been the reaction to the appointment of Deb Matthews as lead minister and the formation of a cabinet committee on poverty reduction. But concrete and substantial action must follow.

The 2008 Budget provides the first test of the Government's resolve to deliver an effective and meaningful Poverty Reduction Strategy. While the planned consultations with community stakeholders are a critical and ongoing part of the development of a comprehensive strategy, we are not starting from zero. There are crucial priorities that need immediate attention and a significant down payment on those priorities in the 2008 budget will set the tone for a meaningful consultation process in the months ahead.

This first budget should:

1. Dedicate sufficient funds for an effective consultation on targets and priorities for the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

A broad, inclusive and solutions-oriented consultation process will be critical to building wide support for a comprehensive strategy. The 2008 budget should ensure that sufficient resources are allocated for a comprehensive consultation with Ontarians.

Community and civic leaders – including those from diverse communities and the most seriously disadvantaged groups, policy thinkers, low income people and business representatives – all need to be involved in discussions about what targets to set, what measures to use, and the kinds of policies that will make a difference in the long-term.

2. Deliver the funding required to implement in 2008 the programs promised during the past election campaign, namely:

- A dental plan for low-income Ontarians
- A full-day Junior and Senior Kindergarten program
- The development and funding of a new affordable housing strategy

3. The core components of a poverty reduction strategy have already been identified and enjoy broad support. Start the process of funding initiatives that will signal the necessary direction for Ontario's strategy by:

- Acting on the principle that working full time, full year should bring a worker out of poverty by increasing the minimum wage to \$10.25 in 2008, updating and increasing of employment standards to protect people in precarious work, and initiating proactive measures to remove employment barriers based on discrimination.
- Making serious progress towards the development of an effective labour market strategy to address restructuring in the manufacturing sector and the need for greater access to the kinds of jobs that can bring and keep Ontarians out of poverty;
- Giving adults and children real income security by speeding up the implementation of the new Ontario Child Benefit, giving families on social assistance a greater share of the OCB and putting more money into the pockets of individuals and families who depend on social assistance because they cannot work full time;
- Identifying and implementing programs that can effectively address the poverty experienced by racialized communities, aboriginal people, women, persons with disabilities and newcomers;
- Making affordable housing and quality child care top provincial priorities.

4. Press the Federal government to do its share in a poverty reduction strategy by:

- Restoring and extending the coverage of the Employment Insurance program so that Ontario workers get better access to both EI payments and skills retraining;
- Restoring its contributions to affordable housing and early learning and child care

As the Network has said before, the success of poverty reduction ultimately depends on a firm commitment to invest what is needed in what works. The 2008 budget will be an important signal of whether the Ontario is serious about this commitment.

# 25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction

## Steering Committee - January 2008

<b>Campaign Against Child Poverty CSPC-Toronto</b>	Rabbi Arthur Bielfeld John Campey, Winston Tinglin
<b>Colour of Poverty Campaign Daily Bread Food Bank</b>	Michael Kerr Michael Oliphant, Gabrielle Chakal
<b>KAIROS Income Security Advocacy Centre</b>	Michael Polanyi Cindy Wilkey, Jennefer Laidley
<b>ISARC/MCC John Stapleton</b>	Greg deGroot-Maggetti
<b>Metcalfe Foundation</b>	Colette Murphy
<b>Ontario Association of Food Banks</b>	Adam Spence
<b>Ontario Coalition for Social Justice</b>	John Argue
<b>Ontario Campaign 2000</b>	Jacquie Maund
<b>Registered Nurses Association of Ontario</b>	Lynn Anne Mulroney Sheila Block
<b>St. Christopher House</b>	Rick Eagan
<b>The Stop</b>	Jonah Schein
<b>Toronto City Council City of Toronto</b>	Joe Mihevc Joe Manion, Jennifer Posthumus
<b>United Way of Greater Toronto</b>	Diane Dyson, Ming-Young Tam
<b>Wellesley Institute</b>	Michael Shapcott
<b>Workers Action Centre</b>	Deena Ladd, Karen Dick

# 25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction

## Open Letter Support

**African Canadian Social Development Council**

**African Canadian Legal Clinic**

**Anglican Diocese of Toronto**

**Atkinson Economic Justice Fellow**

**June Callwood Campaign Against Child Poverty**

**Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives**

**Toronto Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic**

**Chinese Canadian National Council, Toronto Council**

**Citizens for Public Justice**

**City of Toronto**

**Community Social Planning Council of Toronto**

**Daily Bread Food Bank**

**Branch Out Care Ministries**

**Direct Energy, Yonge Street Mission**

**Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario**

**Family Service Association of Toronto**

**First Nations Child & Family Caring Society**

**Health Providers Against Poverty**

**Income Security Advocacy Centre**

**Inner City Health Associates**

**Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition**

**KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives**

**Labour Community Services**

**Landon Pearson Resource Centre**

**Make Poverty History**

Raymond G. Micah

Margaret Parsons

Right Rev. Colin R.  
Johnson

Uzma Shakir

Rabbi Arthur Bielfeld,  
Caroline Morgan Di Giovanni

Hugh MacKenzie

Avvy Go

Karen Sun

Gerald Vandezande.

Joe Mihevc, *Councilor*

John Campey

Gail Nyberg

John Deacon

M. P. Baetz

David Clegg

Anita Sloane Lapidus  
Margaret Hancock

Cindy Blackstock

Catherine Oliver

Mary E. Marrone

Gary Bloch

Brice Balmer  
Susan Eagle

Mary Corkery

Faduma Awow Mohamed

Hon. Landon Pearson

Dennis Howlett

# 25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction

## Open Letter Support (con't)

<b>The Maytree Foundation, Avana Capital Corporation</b>	Alan Broadbent
<b>Medical Reform Group</b>	Ahmed Bayoumi Dr. Rachelle Sender
<b>Mennonite Central Committee Ontario</b>	Greg deGroot-Maggetti Arli Klassen
<b>Metcalf Foundation</b>	Sandy Houston
<b>Metro Toronto Chinese &amp; Southeast Asian Legal Clinic</b>	Avvy Go
<b>Northumberland Coalition Against Poverty, Coburg</b>	Deborah O'Connor
<b>The Olive Branch Community Church</b>	Colleen Clarke
<b>ODSP Action Coalition</b>	Nancy Vander Plaats
<b>Ontario Association of Social Workers</b>	Dan Andreae
<b>Ontario Campaign 2000</b>	Jacquie Maund
<b>Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops</b>	Most Rev. John Pazak
<b>Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants</b>	Sri-Guggan Sri-Skanda-Rajah Debbie Douglas
<b>Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association</b>	Elaine MacNeil
<b>Outreach Pickering Islamic Centre</b>	Javed Akbar
<b>Ontario Public Health Association</b>	Dr. Garry Aslanyan
<b>Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation</b>	Ken Coran
<b>The Reconstructionist Synagogue of Toronto</b>	Valerie Elliot Hyman
<b>Redemptorist Fathers and Brothers</b>	Father Paul E. Hansen
<b>Registered Nurses Association of Ontario</b>	Doris Grinspun
<b>Ryerson University, former Provincial Child Advocate</b>	Judy Finlay
<b>St. Christopher House</b>	Rick Eagan, Maureen Fair, John Stapleton
<b>SANE Research Project, University of Toronto</b>	Ernie Lightman
<b>Social Capital Partners</b>	Bill Young
<b>South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario</b>	Uzma Shakir
<b>Stephen Lewis Foundation</b>	Stephen Lewis

# 25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction

## Open Letter Support (con't)

**The Stop Community Food Centre**

**Toronto and York Region Labour Council**

**TDSB Student SuperCouncil**

**Toronto Board of Rabbis**

**Toronto Christian Resource Centre**

**Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care**

**Toronto Public Health**

**Toronto Rock**

**Toronto Youth Cabinet**

**United Church of Canada**

**United Way of Greater Toronto**

**The Wellesley Institute**

**Worker's Action Centre**

**Raj Anand**

**The Hon. David Crombie**

**Annie Kidder**

**Eric Peterson**

Jonah Schein

John Cartwright

Tyler Johnson

Rev. Michael Blair

Jane Mercer

Dr. David McKeown, MOH

Jim Veltman

Bibi Tiffance Chattergoon,

Rev. Maggie McLeod

Rick McKinley

Rev. R. Matthew Stevens

Frances Lankin

Rick Blickstead, Bob

Gardner, Michael Shapcott

Karen Dick