

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Countdown to a poverty reduction plan

TORONTO, Mar. 25 - With today's down payment on poverty initiatives, the countdown to a comprehensive Ontario poverty reduction strategy has officially begun, said members of the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction.

“It’s reassuring to see the government has responded to the calls for poverty reduction with some concrete initiatives, but we will be expecting a lot more in the 2009 budget,” said John Campey, executive director of the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, a member organization of 25 in 5.

The previously announced funds for dental coverage for low-income Ontarians, social housing repairs, and nutritious food for children in schools are good harbingers of the province’s commitment to reducing poverty. 25 in 5 will continue to monitor Ontario’s progress over the next year.

Today’s announcement of a two per cent increase in Ontario Works and ODSP rates helps ensure that some of the most economically vulnerable Ontarians don’t fall further into poverty while the province develops its poverty reduction strategy.

“The focus on more employment training for Ontarians who are coping with a changing economy, and more ESL funding and training for newcomers, is recognition that a good job is one of the pathways out of poverty,” said Campey. “Other key supports, like an affordable housing strategy, will need to be more aggressively addressed in subsequent budgets.”

The upcoming community-based consultations promised by the province will go even further to identify a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy that works for all Ontarians.

“Ontarians need to see dedicated funds toward an achievable poverty reduction strategy that has hard targets and timelines, and we look forward to seeing the whole plan in 2009,” said Campey.

“And an effective plan will also require the federal government to stop moving backwards on issues like Employment Insurance, a national child care plan, and affordable housing strategies.”

25 in 5 is a multi-sector network in Ontario comprised of over 100 provincial and community organizations. It is calling for a 25 per cent reduction in poverty over the next five years in the province, and a 50 per cent reduction in 10 years. For more information, visit www.25in5.ca.

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