

Poverty consultations must lead to real change

TORONTO, May 2 – Advocates are calling on the Ontario government to move beyond closed sessions and ensure an open, inclusive and solutions-oriented process as the province begins consultations for its Poverty Reduction Strategy.

“Too many Ontarians who have been shut out need this opportunity to be heard, and we expect the Province to make low-income voices a priority in their consultations. But we will know that government really means business when we see the voices of those living in poverty front and center in these discussions,” said Pat Capponi of the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction and a low-income advocate with Voices from the Street.

The 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction is calling on the Ontario government to commit to reducing poverty by 25 per cent in the next five years. It issued an open letter to all MPPs earlier this week calling for a bold public consultation process that leads to real, tangible change in tackling poverty. 25 in 5 expects that the process will include:

- A focus on solutions that address **all** Ontarians living in poverty, not only children
- Meetings that are open and accessible to the public, and include those groups, communities and individuals who are most marginalized
- Consultation that is properly funded and resourced
- Consultations are recorded and those reports are made public in a timely manner

“We need this government to articulate a plan that sees every Minister and every MPP working harder than ever to bring Ontarians together for a real plan for poverty reduction,” said Peter Clutterbuck of the Social Planning Network of Ontario and a partner of the 25 in 5 Network.

“This government has been given the benefit of the doubt so far. Now communities across this province are mobilized, ready, and eager to have their say. Now it’s government’s turn to make an open process a reality” said Andalee Adamali of 25 in 5 and the Council of Agencies Serving South Agencies. “We will be watching and tracking the consultation process closely.”

The 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction will bring to the consultations a three-pronged action plan to combat poverty that requires significant new action. The plan focuses on ensuring that jobs pay living wages, achieving liveable incomes for every Ontarian, and strategies to expand access to affordable housing, early learning and child care, public education and other community programs that help people connect.

The 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction is a province-wide Ontario coalition of over 100 organizations and individuals calling for a 25 per cent reduction in poverty in five years. For more information, and to view 25 in 5’s Principles for Consultation:

www.25in5.ca

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