

Summary Report:
**Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy
Consultations**
(March-August 2008)



www.povertywatchontario.ca

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Poverty Watch report consolidates feedback from thousands of Ontarians who participated in over 75 community meetings and consultations on poverty reduction from March to August 2008. The meetings included government-led consultations, convened by Minister Deb Matthews and / or MPPs from around the province. Meetings also included community-led sessions, with MPPs invited as participants, and public forums and town hall meetings on poverty reduction. Altogether 44 MPPs participated in these consultations, some of them in several community meetings.

The main messages that emerged from these consultations included:

- **It's time for serious action:** A successful strategy should be anchored by a bold, multi-year plan with targets and timetables that invests significant resources to cut poverty - quick fixes will not cut it.
- **Let's help everyone become their best:** Ontario's strategy should focus on preventing and ending poverty for all people, not just children.
- **Listen to those who live it:** Those who live in poverty should continue to be consulted as the strategy is implemented and progress tracked.

The consultations also identified a number of policy areas that should be priorities for action:

- **Make work pay:** A Good Jobs Strategy should be an integral component of an anti-poverty plan - hike minimum wages, improve access to unionization, expand health benefits, update and enforce labour laws so that temporary and contract workers are protected.
- **Ensure dignity for all:** The Ontario Child Benefit should be increased and social assistance reformed to ensure a livable income for all.
- **Help build strong and supportive communities** with affordable housing, early learning and child care, public education, and community programs that help people connect.
- **Count everyone in:** The plan should include targeted measures to address the higher than average levels of poverty faced by Aboriginal people, racialized communities, newcomers, single mothers, and people with disabilities. Anti-racism policies should be developed including employment equity.
- **Keep the dialogue alive:** The success of a multi-year Poverty Reduction Strategy will require ongoing monitoring, coordination, and accountability across various Ministries to keep the strategy on track - a role for public advisory bodies is key, as is continued engagement and consultation with all sectors of society.

Poverty Watch Ontario is sponsored by the Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO), Ontario Campaign 2000 (C2000) and the Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC), three provincial partners in the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction. The Poverty Watch Ontario website, found at www.povertywatchontario.ca, was set up in March 2008 to track community input to the Ontario government on the development of a poverty reduction strategy and plan for the province.

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A. INTRODUCTION TO POVERTY WATCH ONTARIO

The Poverty Watch Ontario website, found at www.povertywatchontario.ca, was set up in March 2008 to track community input to the Ontario Government on the development of a poverty reduction strategy and plan for the province.

This report consolidates feedback from over 75 community meetings and consultations related to poverty reduction that have taken place across the province from March to August 2008¹ [see Appendix for list of communities].

Entries on the Poverty Watch website include:

- Summaries of Minister Deb Matthews' official Consultations;
- Community briefings by Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs);
- Community Consultations and Poverty Reduction Workshops attended by members of various not-for-profit organizations, anti-poverty advocacy groups, municipal representatives, MP's and MPP's, health, social services and education sector employees, faith leaders, and concerned citizens, among others;
- Open Letters to the Minister;
- Media reports; and,
- A collection of motions and resolutions that have been passed in Ontario communities that support poverty reduction targets in line with the 25 in 5 Declaration.

Thanks to Nicole Francoeur, SPNO Associate, for reviewing the PWO entries and preparing the first draft of this report. Also, thanks to Ted Hildebrandt of Community Development Halton for management and maintenance of the Poverty Watch Ontario web site.

¹ There were actually 77 community meetings and consultations held during this period, of which reports for about 50 were received and posted on the Poverty Watch Ontario web site.

B. THREE OVERARCHING THEMES

Three overarching themes emerged from the community meetings and consultations.

IT'S TIME FOR SERIOUS ACTION ON POVERTY REDUCTION

- Serious action on poverty reduction requires government investment in our children and youth, in social programs, green jobs, and people. It will not suffice to focus on allocating dollars to existing community programs and services. In short, there is no 'quick fix' – tackling poverty will require a sustained effort beginning now and continuing over the long-term.
- We cannot reduce or eliminate poverty in this province by relying only on existing financial resources. To make real progress on ending poverty we need significant investment of new resources as part of a long-term plan with monitoring and accountability.
- We have many government-initiated reports; most have been shelved. It's time for some real action on the issue.
- Cooperative action is required by all levels of government in order to reduce and eradicate poverty.
- A poverty reduction strategy needs to be about providing assurances, and access to opportunity, not charity.

POVERTY REDUCTION MUST FOCUS ON ALL WHO EXPERIENCE POVERTY – NOT JUST CHILDREN

- The Poverty Reduction Strategy should not only focus on children. Children are part of a family unit which needs to be assured a stable income, whether parents are in the workforce or not.
- Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy must prevent and end poverty for all people experiencing poverty. Populations with disproportionately high poverty rates include Aboriginal people, newcomers and refugees, racialized minority groups, seniors, single mothers, young people, persons with physical or intellectual disabilities and mental health issues, single adults on low incomes or unable to participate in the labour market, transgendered people, and women fleeing abuse.

WE MUST CONTINUE LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF THOSE WHO KNOW THE EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY IN THEIR EVERYDAY LIVES

- An anti-poverty plan must listen to the grass roots and those who have lived in poverty, not just those that have worked with the poor.
- Listening and active, ongoing consultation should be a priority from all levels of government as poverty reduction plans are conceived, implemented and evaluated.
- Multiple avenues for input should be available for ongoing dialogue including community workshops, focus groups with low income people, web vehicles, phone, fax, and mail-in options.
- It is positive that the dialogue on poverty reduction has begun. But this should be just a beginning. The success of a multi-year Poverty Reduction Plan will require ongoing monitoring, coordination and accountability across various Ministries to keep the strategy on track – a role for public advisory bodies is key as is continued engagement and consultation with all sectors of society.

C. MAIN AREAS FOR POLICY ACTION

Participants in meetings and consultations generated a wide range of ideas about ways to best tackle poverty. The top 12 areas for policy action and the specific recommendations that were most frequently raised are summarized in this section.

1. Sustaining Employment

"We are losing good jobs by the thousands, including good unionized jobs. Politicians don't have solutions, so we need to work together with all levels of government, business, labour and the community to develop them."
--Roundtable participant

(i) Good Jobs and Decent Wages

Issues:

- If you work at minimum wage you live in poverty. The impacts of an inadequate minimum wage are magnified when workers are single parents, differentially-able, new to Canada, ex-convicts and recovering addicts. The working poor deserve a dignified life.
- Making ends meet is difficult for many due to the prevalence of low-paying jobs, shift work, and jobs without healthcare benefits.
- In many parts of Ontario we have a boom / bust economy where there are few new, well-paying jobs.
- Many low-income people (especially new Canadians) are working for "temp" agencies, where they are often exploited by not getting paid and working in substandard conditions.
- There is a stark inequality between temp workers and permanent workers.
- Poverty stems from the lack of good job opportunities, the loss of good-paying jobs, and discrimination in the workplace. To address the challenge of the working poor we need job security, decent wages with benefits, improved access to unionization, and labour protection for all workers.

Recommendations:

- A Good Jobs Strategy should be a central part of any poverty reduction initiative.
- Government needs to bring back card certification across all job sectors so that unionization is not so difficult. Collective representation of workers' voices is a primary way to turn bad jobs into good jobs with decent pay and benefits.
- Raise the provincial minimum wage to reach \$11 / hour by 2011 so that full time minimum wage work lifts a worker out of poverty.
- Updating the Labour Standards and enforcement are critical to protect precarious workers.
 - E.g. Regulate temporary employment agencies.
 - Stop fees and barriers to employment and ensure temp workers get public holiday pay.
- Explore option of encouraging cities to set living-wage bylaws.
- Ensure that all jobs, including part-time jobs, have universal, extended health care benefits.
- Better regulate payday lending agencies.
- Increase the Ontario Child Benefit for families with children.
- Introduce a work tax credit for the working poor.
- Explore a Guaranteed Annual Income that would ensure that the entire community has an acceptable standard of living.

2. Livable Incomes for People on Social Assistance

"Relying on social assistance guarantees that you live in poverty. The rules and conditions for many social service programs are limiting and oppressive." --Roundtable participant

(i) Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP):

Issues:

- Existing benefits are inadequate to meet everyday living needs.
- There are no rational criteria by which government sets ODSP rates.
- ODSP rules are inflexible and do not accommodate people's changing life circumstances
- It is impossible to get ahead when receiving ODSP. People with disabilities want to work, but when they do, 50% of all income is clawed back. ODSP benefits are cut off at age 65.
- It can take years to qualify for ODSP, even though you are disabled. Physicians can be reluctant to sign medical forms for people to qualify for ODSP.
- People are frequently cut-off ODSP benefits, even when the status of their disability has not changed - which leaves them desperate and creates tremendous instability.
- Parents of disabled adults must constantly apply for renewal of ODSP - what will happen when the parents are gone?

(ii) Ontario Works (OW):

Issues:

- Rates are too low to meet costs of living in Ontario. 2% annual rate increases are seriously inadequate given the 21% cuts more than ten years ago and the rise in the cost of living since.
- People need to give up all assets to qualify for assistance.
- People have to represent themselves when they are denied or cut off benefits.
- Concern over clawbacks; child support is deducted from single moms' social assistance cheques.
- Cuts to the winter clothing and back-to-school allowances has created hardships for families and humiliation for children as the new school year starts.
- There is a stigma attached to OW and ODSP, and punitive policies are in place.
- The desperation of a growing number of seniors have inadequate incomes (e.g. living under \$8,000 a year) and lack of access to essential health benefits.

Recommendations:

- Social assistance supports should 'enable' people - not 'disable' them.
- A committee should be set up to review and increase social assistance rates to close the gap and ensure livable incomes. Index rates to inflation.
- Provide more flexibility for recipients that support individual needs.
 - Each individual in a family should be able to receive the full ODSP benefit, instead of total family benefits being capped when more than one person receives disability benefits.
 - Ensure those receiving social assistance are able to attend university / college without losing their benefits.
 - Eliminate benefit clawback for those able to participate in the workforce.
 - Provide more support for people in transition out of poverty so they don't lose key supports such as social housing, subsidized childcare, medical / dental benefits, etc.
- The special diet program to meet individual needs should be restored.
- OW workers need to be supportive, and sensitive to the issues faced by their clients.

3. Affordable Housing

Issues:

- Market housing is expensive in many communities across Ontario and there is a shortage of affordable units. There are very long waiting lists for affordable housing where rent is geared to income - up to 21 years wait in some areas.
- Costs of maintaining housing (the increasing costs of utilities - especially hydro) are hitting low-income people the hardest.
- There is a prevalence of slum landlords who do not make necessary repairs to housing.
- Tenants are faced with unfair charges in tribunal costs when eviction notices are challenged.

Recommendations:

- A key component of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy must be a comprehensive, well-funded affordable housing strategy with: construction of new affordable units, rent supplements, and investment to upgrade existing social housing.
- A national housing strategy is needed in which both federal and provincial governments assume joint leadership to invest in new social housing.
- Continue programs to encourage low income home ownership (Home Ownership Action Program).
- Bring back rent control.

4. Vulnerable Populations

"Make inclusion a priority so that those groups most likely to experience poverty are at the centre of any poverty reduction strategy."
- Roundtable participant

Issues:

- Many communities experience disproportionately high rates of poverty: Aboriginal people, newcomers and refugees, racialized minority groups, seniors, single mothers, young people, persons with physical or intellectual disabilities and mental health issues, single adults on low incomes or unable to participate in the labour market, transgendered people, and women fleeing abuse.
- Members of racialized communities are far more likely to live in poverty than non-racialized people.
- Poverty data should be disaggregated to better understand the demographics of who is living in poverty, and develop targeted measures to address systemic barriers faced by these groups.
- Newcomers are frustrated that employers want Canadian experience and won't recognize their International qualifications. There are many barriers that they encounter when establishing themselves in Canada.

Recommendations:

(i) Aboriginal Community

- The long-term impacts of residential schools need to be addressed.
- More coordinated Aboriginal-specific services are needed to support the growing number of people moving into urban areas from First Nations communities.
 - Strategies to support and welcome Aboriginal in-migration to urban centres in the north must be part of a Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- Reflect geographic diversity with meetings held in regions across the province, including rural, urban and First Nations venues.

(ii) Newcomers

- Facilitate employment opportunities for immigrants. Provide more language services.
- Decentralize services. Services and supports should be available through the Welcome Centres to newcomers.
- Establish a 1-year adjustment period for new immigrants to deal with settlement issues: free childcare in their neighbourhood while mothers get re-trained so their credentials are recognized, language upgraded, volunteer work available to attain Canadian experience.

(iii) People with Special Needs

- Addictions and mental health are critical issues which cause poverty. Increased funding is needed for these services.
- More harm reduction programs for drug and alcohol users need to be developed.
- More funding and services for people with special needs are required, both children and adults.

(iv) Seniors

- Apprenticeship and mentorship programs need to be developed in order to provide funding to caregivers of seniors in our communities.

(v) Youth

- There needs to be a distinct process for assisting youth living in poverty who may not have the support of a parent or legal guardian.

5. Anti-Racism Policies and Programs

"We all deserve to live in dignity and be treated with respect."

- Roundtable participant

Issues:

- Aboriginal people and members of racialized communities are far more likely to live in poverty. This is unacceptable and must be directly addressed within the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Recommendations:

- Strong anti-racism strategies and policies need to be developed in order to combat racism.
- A mandatory employment equity program would require employers to meet equity standards.
- Public health and education services should be universal.

6. Early Learning and Childcare

Issues:

- The evidence supporting public investment in quality early learning and child care is clear and compelling. The case has been made, again and again: high-quality early learning and child care is smart social policy, smart economic policy, smart health policy. Most importantly, good ELCC is good for children.

- Early learning and child care promotes the healthy development of children, provides parenting supports and resources, enables parents to work, study, care for other family members, and / or to participate in their community.
- All families, and especially low income families, have too many difficulties securing affordable, quality childcare.

Recommendations:

- The Ontario government must invest in accessible, affordable and quality child care, including subsidized child care. E.g. by implementing the seven dollar a day model developed by Quebec.
- Ensure that child care workers receive a living wage.
- Implement full day JK / SK.

7. Transportation

Issues:

- Cost and access to transportation continues to be a very significant issue for people with low incomes.
- Public transit is costly and not available in many rural and northern communities. Transportation and fuel costs are a barrier in the north to people finding work and living above the poverty line.

Recommendations:

- There needs to be provincial financial support provided for local public transit.
- The needs of low-income earners have to be prioritized when developing / expanding public transit.
- Public transit assistance needs to be offered for people living in poverty. E.g. free or reduced fare transit passes.
- There needs to be financial aid for low-income families experiencing medical emergencies.

8. Education / Training

Issues:

- The high price of post secondary education and student loans makes it difficult for many low-income people to obtain higher education and training.

Recommendations:

- The Poverty Reduction Strategy needs to include better education and training programs so people can access good jobs with benefits.
- There need to be more education, training and apprenticeship programs for youth and people making transition into new jobs.
- Government needs to provide training and upgrading opportunities for laid off workers so they can find good jobs with benefits, not low paid temp jobs.
- For families on social assistance, grants and loans should not be deducted from income. Families should not be penalized if their child earns income to pay for their education.

9. Funding for Community-based Agencies

“Community-based organizations are the most effective way in which to provide responsive, coordinated services. They are well situated to help low-income individuals and families navigate the ‘maze’ of programs and policies that can either help or hinder them.” - Roundtable participant

Issue:

- Many non-profit organizations charged with helping people cope feel their capacity to support people living in poverty is being eroded, with many not having had an increase in their operating dollars since 1995 – an inflation induced ‘cut’ of more than 20% over the past decade.

Recommendations:

- Increase stable funding (not just one-shot project funding) to agencies and community organizations working with those in poverty.
- A funding structure is needed that provides stable, core funding to allow these community-based organizations the stability and flexibility to respond appropriately to community needs.

10. More Effective Coordination of Service Delivery

Recommendations:

- Programs and services offered by all three levels of government to support low income people need to be better coordinated to improve effectiveness.
- Need to improve communication and coordination between provincial and federal government ministries and community service organizations.
- A strategy for Ontario needs to promote innovation to help address gaps in existing programs, policies, and services.
- Need to strongly link social justice initiatives for poverty reduction with creating a sustainable environment.

11. Community Engagement in Poverty Reduction

Recommendations:

- These consultations should be only the beginning of the public dialogue.
- The success of a multi-year Poverty Reduction Plan will require ongoing monitoring, coordination and accountability across various Ministries to keep the strategy on track – the poverty plan should establish an inter-ministerial table that builds on the work of the Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction.
- The government needs to have ongoing public consultation on implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- The provincial strategy should recognize local differences. E.g. must address the different experience of poverty in northern, rural and urban communities.
- There should be an arms-length advisory group to monitor and report on progress on the strategy.
- Ongoing community engagement is a key component in developing effective policy and solutions on the ground to poverty reduction – community animation activities should be encouraged and supported as a way to “think globally and act locally” on poverty reduction.

12. Measuring Success in Poverty Reduction

- The number of people living below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) or Low Income Measure (LIM) are both useful measures to track progress in reducing poverty levels, with a target of 25% reduction in 5 years.
- Devising new methods of poverty measurement could be helpful as a complement—not as a replacement—to existing income-based measures.
- Other indicators of progress could include:
 - Reduction in food bank use.
 - Reduction in high school drop outs.
 - Gap between rich and poor.
 - Availability of child care spaces.
 - Number of homeless.
 - People working more than one full-time job.
 - Tracking poverty numbers by group (Aboriginal, women, people with disabilities, new immigrants, etc.).

D. CONCLUSION

One year ago, Ontario's leadership on poverty reduction gave hope to many thousands of Ontarians living on low incomes. Significant gains have been made in the last year to help Ontarians recognize that all of us have a stake in reducing poverty levels and creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

In the summer of 2008 Minister Deb Matthews led a caucus-wide initiative to engage Ontarians about ideas for a Poverty Reduction Strategy. Combined with roundtables being spearheaded by groups at the local levels, more than 50 community meetings took place across Ontario, from Thunder Bay to Windsor, Kincardine to Scarborough.

As several thousand Ontarians came out to voice their opinion on how to reduce poverty in our province, it became clear that there is broad support in our province for a bold, multi-year plan with targets and timetables that invests significant resources to cut poverty.

Following a period of deliberation and consultation, it is now time to move towards implementing a strategy that can achieve significant gains against poverty. Poverty Watch Ontario sincerely hopes that the many good ideas that emerged during community meetings and consultations are reflected in the Ontario government's poverty reduction strategy scheduled to be released in December 2008.

APPENDIX: Consultations on a Poverty Reduction Strategy for Ontario

- February 26 North Bay -- Two community consultations on the SPNO Policy Framework²
- March 4 Cornwall – community consultation on Policy Framework
- March 5 Kingston – community consultation on Policy Framework
- March 19 Pickering – community consultation on Policy Framework
- March 27 Sudbury – community consultation on Policy Framework
- April 3 Cambridge – Town Hall discussion of results of a series of community consultations
- April 8 Hamilton – community consultation with Fair Income Working Group on the SPNO Policy Framework
- April 9 Cambridge – Policy Framework discussion with Fair Income Group
- April 14 Toronto – major 25 in 5 Network event – Countdown to a Poverty Reduction Plan with Minister Deb Matthews attending and presenting
- April 24 Toronto – presentation and discussion of poverty reduction and intellectual disability (Canadian Association for Community Living)
- April 25 Cornwall – Cornwall Poverty Reduction Working group meeting with Minister Deb Matthews and MPP Rick Brownell
- April 28 Cornwall – community consultation on Policy Framework
- May 5 Peterborough – Minister Deb Matthews’ community consultation
- May 6 Cobourg – Minister’s community consultation
- May 8 Ottawa – Minister’s consultation with provincial organizations supporting poverty reduction (sponsored by SPNO)
- May 9 Ottawa – Minister’s community consultation
- May 10 Ottawa – Ending Poverty Workshop to support the voices of people on low income (sponsored by Ontario CAMPAIGN 2000 and the Income Security Advocacy Centre)
- May 12 Hamilton – Minister’s community consultation
- May 15 Owen Sound – Ending Poverty Workshop with low income people (C2000 and ISAC)
- May 21 Windsor – Minister’s community consultation
- May 22 Hamilton – community consultations with local MPPs – NDP MPPs Andrea Horvath and Paul Miller attending.
- May 23 London – Minister’s community consultation
- May 26 Sudbury – Minister’s community consultation
- May 27 Belleville – MPP consultation with Leona Dombrowski
- May 28 Thunder Bay – community presentation and consultation on poverty reduction
- May 30 Thunder Bay – Ending Poverty Workshop with low income people (C2000 and ISAC)
- May 30 North Bay – community presentation and consultation with MPP Monique Smith
- June 3 Markham – Minister’s community consultation with MPP Michael Chan (Cabinet Committee member) attending
- June 6 Mississauga – Minister’s community consultation
- June 6 Windsor -- Ending Poverty Workshop with low income people (C2000 and ISAC)
- June 9 Kingston – MPP John Gerretsen community consultation
- June 9 Toronto Centre – MPP consultation with George Smitherman (Cabinet Committee member)
- June 9 Toronto Don Valley – MPP consultation with David Zimmer, David Caplan and Kathleen Wynne (Cabinet Committee member)
- June 9 Toronto Scarborough – MPP consultation with Brad Duguid, Gerry Phillips, Bas Balkisoon (Cabinet Committee member) and Minister Matthews also attended
- June 10 Toronto Scarborough – Minister’s community consultation with MPPs Michael Prue and Margaret Best (Cabinet Committee member) attending
- June 12 Cambridge – Poverty Symposium with representatives of Newfoundland and Labrador Government’s poverty reduction initiative

² Presentation and discussion of a Policy Framework for Poverty Reduction in Ontario: Structural Priorities and Lead Policy Initiatives, Social Planning Network of Ontario found at www.povertywatchontario.ca.

June 16 Thunder Bay – Minister’s community consultation with MPPs Bill Mauro and Michael Gravelle attending
 June 16 Toronto – NDP MPP community consultation with Cheri DiNovo, Michael Prue and Rosario Marchese
 June 16 Toronto (Weston) – MPP consultation with MPPs Laura Albanese, David Oraziotti (Cabinet Committee member) and Lou Rinaldi (Cabinet Committee member)
 June 17 Toronto Rexdale -- Ending Poverty Workshop with low income people (C2000 and ISAC)
 June 17 Peterborough – MPP consultation with Jeff Leal attending
 June 18 Toronto West – Minister’s community consultation with MPP Laura Albanese attending
 June 18 St. Catharines – presentation and consultation on the Policy Framework
 June 19 Kitchener-Waterloo – Minister’s community consultation with MPPs Leeanna Pendergast, John Milloy (Cabinet Committee member) and Elizabeth Witmer attending
 June 23 Sault Ste Marie – MPP consultation with David Oraziotti (Cabinet Committee member)
 June 24 Ajax – MPP consultation with Joe Dickson
 June 24 Guelph – MPP consultation with Liz Sandals
 June 25 Sault Ste Marie -- Ending Poverty Workshop with low income people (C2000 and ISAC)
 June 25 Sudbury – NDP MPP consultation with France Gélinas
 June 25 Toronto Scarborough – MPP consultation with Lorenzo Berardinetti
 June 25 Toronto Davenport – MPP consultation with Tony Ruprecht and Minister Matthews attending
 June 25 Ottawa – community consultation organized by Ottawa Poverty Reduction Network
 June 26 Ottawa – MPP consultation with Yasi Naqvi
 June 27 Oakville – MPP consultation with Kevin Flynn and Margaret Best (Cabinet Committee member) attending
 June 27 Pembroke – community consultation on poverty reduction organized by Renfrew County Child Poverty Action Network
 June 27 Ottawa – MPP consultation with Madeleine Meilleur and Phil McNeely
 June 27 Chatham – MPP consultation with Maria Van Brommel and Pat Hoy
 June 27 Toronto Etobicoke-Lakeshore – MPP consultation with Laurel Broten
 July 2 Toronto Scarborough – MPP consultation with Margaret Best (Cabinet Committee member)
 July 3 Kitchener – MPP consultation with Leeanna Pendergast and John Milloy (Cabinet Committee member) attending
 July 7 Quinte West – MPP consultation with Lou Rinaldi (Cabinet Committee member)
 July 8 Kitchener -- community consultation on SPNO Policy Framework
 July 9 Northumberland – MPP consultation with Lou Rinaldi (Cabinet Committee member)
 July 9 Toronto – City of Toronto community conversations on poverty reduction
 July 10 Toronto – City of Toronto community conversations on poverty reduction
 July 10 Windsor – NDP MPP Town Hall on poverty reduction
 July 14 Hamilton – MPP consultation with Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted McMeekin and Andrea Horvath
 July 14 Toronto – community action meeting on poverty reduction – South Asian perspectives
 July 17 Vaughan – community consultation on poverty reduction
 July 17 Thunder Bay – Town Hall on poverty reduction with NDP MPP Gilles Bisson
 July 21 Brampton – community consultation on poverty reduction organized by Brampton-Mississauga District Labour Council and Peel Poverty Action Group
 July 21 Ottawa – NDP Town Hall to end poverty with MPP Michael Prue
 July 31 Toronto North Etobicoke – MPP consultation with Safiq Quadri and Bas Balkisoon (Cabinet Committee member) attending
 July 31 Mississauga South – MPP consultation with Charles Soussa
 July 31 London -- NDP Town Hall to end poverty
 July 31 Bracebridge -- NDP Town Hall to end poverty
 Aug 21 Sudbury – MPP consultation with Rick Bartilucci