

# WHY WAIT? RAISE THE RATES!

Let's break the cycle of endless poverty reduction studies and consultations



Premier Kathleen Wynne's government has started yet another cycle of consultation on poverty reduction. Since 2008, social justice advocates have participated in a series of policy consultations regarding social assistance reform, only to be disappointed every time by government inaction. Almost a decade of empty discussions about "poverty reduction" has shown that consultation is a diversionary tactic to avoid tackling poverty.

After decades of intensifying austerity and eroding income supports, social assistance in Ontario is now so wretchedly inadequate that people are unable to feed themselves properly, retain their housing or maintain their health. Total benefit income for those who depend on Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) locks nearly 895,000 Ontarians into deep poverty.

## Social assistance rates are grossly inadequate

Grocery shoppers know that the cost of food, especially fruit and vegetables, has increased much faster than core inflation over the past few years. Research on the cost of a healthy diet, conducted by Public Health Units in communities across Ontario, shows that social assistance rates are grossly inadequate to pay the rent, eat a basic healthy diet and buy other necessities.<sup>1</sup>

If the Ontario Liberals had just formed a government, their Income Security Reform Working Group and study of redesigned income support along the lines of basic income might merit consideration. However, the Liberal government in Ontario has allowed the real income of those on social assistance to fall, and weakened or eliminated

*continued*

**See Emergency Resolution on back →**

<sup>1</sup>Ontario's Social Assistance Poverty Cap. Kaylie Tiessen, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, May 2016.

# WHY WAIT? RAISE THE RATES!

Let's break the cycle of endless poverty reduction studies and consultations



Premier Kathleen Wynne's government has started yet another cycle of consultation on poverty reduction. Since 2008, social justice advocates have participated in a series of policy consultations regarding social assistance reform, only to be disappointed every time by government inaction. Almost a decade of empty discussions about "poverty reduction" has shown that consultation is a diversionary tactic to avoid tackling poverty.

After decades of intensifying austerity and eroding income supports, social assistance in Ontario is now so wretchedly inadequate that people are unable to feed themselves properly, retain their housing or maintain their health. Total benefit income for those who depend on Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) locks nearly 895,000 Ontarians into deep poverty.

## Social assistance rates are grossly inadequate

Grocery shoppers know that the cost of food, especially fruit and vegetables, has increased much faster than core inflation over the past few years. Research on the cost of a healthy diet, conducted by Public Health Units in communities across Ontario, shows that social assistance rates are grossly inadequate to pay the rent, eat a basic healthy diet and buy other necessities.<sup>1</sup>

If the Ontario Liberals had just formed a government, their Income Security Reform Working Group and study of redesigned income support along the lines of basic income might merit consideration. However, the Liberal government in Ontario has allowed the real income of those on social assistance to fall, and weakened or eliminated

*continued*

**See Emergency Resolution on back →**

<sup>1</sup>Ontario's Social Assistance Poverty Cap. Kaylie Tiessen, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, May 2016.

secondary benefit programs such as the Community Start UP and Maintenance benefit which was terminated in 2013. This government's track record of studying poverty, reviewing poverty, consulting on poverty and making empty promises to reduce it suggests nothing will be different this time. More study and consultations simply delay the clear action needed to seriously reduce poverty in Ontario.

## Raise social assistance rates now!

Based on our bitter experience, we conclude that this new round of deliberations is not undertaken in good faith. We do not wish to legitimize it. It is time to end years of stalling, and break the cycle of consultation on poverty reduction.

Premier Kathleen Wynne must live up to her promise to become the "social justice premier." She needs to do what the Ontario Liberal government should have done on the day it took office: raise social assistance rates to levels that let people pay their rent and still live in health and dignity. **There is no reason to delay.**

## EMERGENCY RESOLUTION

**Read this emergency resolution out loud at the beginning of the Minister of Community and Social Services consultation on Basic Income and ask the participants to show their support with a show of hands:**

***Whereas Senator Hugh Segal said: "It is hard to conclude that the income support that is now available for those living in poverty is adequate in any meaningful way";***

***Be it resolved that the Government of Ontario immediately raise the Ontario Works rate for a single individual to \$1,320 per month and raise ODSP rates by at least \$500 per month.***

***All in favour raise your hands!***

secondary benefit programs such as the Community Start UP and Maintenance benefit which was terminated in 2013. This government's track record of studying poverty, reviewing poverty, consulting on poverty and making empty promises to reduce it suggests nothing will be different this time. More study and consultations simply delay the clear action needed to seriously reduce poverty in Ontario.

## Raise social assistance rates now!

Based on our bitter experience, we conclude that this new round of deliberations is not undertaken in good faith. We do not wish to legitimize it. It is time to end years of stalling, and break the cycle of consultation on poverty reduction.

Premier Kathleen Wynne must live up to her promise to become the "social justice premier." She needs to do what the Ontario Liberal government should have done on the day it took office: raise social assistance rates to levels that let people pay their rent and still live in health and dignity. **There is no reason to delay.**

## EMERGENCY RESOLUTION

**Read this emergency resolution out loud at the beginning of the Minister of Community and Social Services consultation on Basic Income and ask the participants to show their support with a show of hands:**

***Whereas Senator Hugh Segal said: "It is hard to conclude that the income support that is now available for those living in poverty is adequate in any meaningful way";***

***Be it resolved that the Government of Ontario immediately raise the Ontario Works rate for a single individual to \$1,320 per month and raise ODSP rates by at least \$500 per month.***

***All in favour raise your hands!***

## Endorsements

ACORN • CUPE Ontario • Freedom 90 • Health Providers Against Poverty  
Injured Workers Action for Justice • Jane Finch Action Against Poverty  
Ontario Coalition Against Poverty • OPSEU Local 586 • Put Food in the Budget campaign  
Social Justice Project, Toronto South East Presbytery (United Church of Canada) • YWCA Toronto

## Endorsements

ACORN • CUPE Ontario • Freedom 90 • Health Providers Against Poverty  
Injured Workers Action for Justice • Jane Finch Action Against Poverty  
Ontario Coalition Against Poverty • OPSEU Local 586 • Put Food in the Budget campaign  
Social Justice Project, Toronto South East Presbytery (United Church of Canada) • YWCA Toronto