



Newsletter on Poverty in Rural Communities

Rural Poverty Summit

PROMPT (Poverty Reduction of Muskoka Planning Table) is holding a Rural Poverty Summit in Muskoka on May 1st and 2nd, 2018. The Summit will be held at Camp Crossroads in Torrance, Ontario on Lake Muskoka. Participants are people with lived experience of poverty and their allies. We hope people will come from districts around us and other rural communities. PROMPT is covering the cost of accommodation and food for the Summit. We hope that local areas can cover the cost to get to and from the conference. But if that's not possible, please get in touch anyway. If you want to be there, we'll find a way.

This is part of a groundswell of activity across the province to make the voices of people who experience rural poverty heard and listened to at provincial and municipal levels of government.

Hidden poverty

Like much of rural Ontario, our poverty is hidden amongst awesome landscapes and the misleading signs that tourism and vacation lifestyles can hide. Too much of our economy is seasonal. Where once a seasonal worker would qualify for employment insurance, we now rely on Ontario Works assistance in the off season. People with disabilities face great difficulty competing in our seasonal economy.

The rural experience of poverty is different in many ways from urban poverty. It is hidden which makes it easier to ignore or to not even believe it exists. Canada Mortgage and Housing statistics do not adequately reflect the true cost of rural rental rates. Accommodation that is available in winter is lost in summer to tourists and students working in the summer service industry. Transportation costs are huge. Access to services and health care is limited and complicated by transportation costs. Delivery charges of electricity in rural Ontario are still high despite changes. Social isolation is very difficult to overcome.

Planning for the Summit

In late 2017, groups in eastern Ontario developed a [Rural Poverty Statement](#), Put Food in the Budget's AGM included action on rural poverty in its agenda and PROMPT began planning to hold a Rural Poverty Summit.

Our agenda includes gathering stories of rural poverty experiences, naming solutions to the problems we face,

building our capacity to make change and deciding actions we can take collectively and in our local communities.

To register for the Summit please contact Susan Campbell at 1(800) 263-4819 or (705) 645-6607 or email her at campbels@lao.on.ca. Registration closes April 14, 2018.

Statement on Rural Poverty

Here are some of the key points from the [Rural Poverty Statement](#).

- Raise social assistance rates to at least the Basic Income pilot level, and index them to the real cost of living as experienced by poor people.
- Stop the claw backs as people pursue selfemployment opportunities Subsidize housing and housing repair.
- Increase subsidies for utilities (electricity, heat and water).
- Fund rural transportation.
- Fund community agencies to improve services to rural people—including food security, mental health and addiction treatment services.
- Ensure people living on low incomes who reside in rural Ontario, in community or in institutions, have equitable access to justice through effective, meaningful and quality legal information, advice, and advocacy services.
- Engage rural communities in developing vibrant, healthy and sustainable communities that meet the needs of local residents—as well as seasonal residents and visitors.
- Rural communities need better access to broadband to better participate in economic and civic life in Ontario. Immediate action is required to improve and extend connectivity across the province in rural areas.
- Create community hubs to better connect people and the services they require.

Put Food in the Budget is a grassroots activist group working to hold the Ontario government to its promises made - but not kept - to reduce poverty. Our broad goal is achieving social and economic justice for the growing numbers of poor people in this province.

A printable PDF version of this newsletter is available [here](#).

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