

Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy

Local Considerations

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Background

2008: “Breaking the Cycle” (Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy)

- Achieve a 25% reduction in the number of Ontario children living in poverty within five years

2009: *Poverty Reduction Act* passed

2014 – 2019: “Realizing our Potential” (Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy)

- Continued commitment to breaking the cycle for children and youth (reduce children living in poverty by 25%)
- Increase employment and income security
- Long-term goal of ending homelessness
- Use evidence-based policy and measure success

New Provincial Priorities

- Encouraging job creation and providing employment opportunities
- Providing people with the right supports and services
- Lowering the cost of living and making life more affordable

Tracking Niagara's Progress to Reduce Poverty

Strong local economy (e.g. low unemployment rate at 5.8%)

Lower household income compared to the provincial average

- Niagara: \$42,511 vs. Ontario: \$48,473

Growing number of local residents who are '**working poor**'

- Niagara 2006: 6.5% vs. Niagara 2016: 8.13%

Slightly higher rate of newborns who are below/above normal **birth weight**

- Niagara: 19.4% vs. Ontario: 19.1%

Higher rate of increase in **core housing need**

- Niagara: +1.5% vs. Ontario +0.8%

Higher rate of increase in vulnerability for **children's developmental health and well-being**

- Niagara: +5.2% vs. Ontario: +1.1%

Higher number of ODSP beneficiaries needing **increased supportive housing, mental health / other supports**

- Niagara 2016: 5.1% vs. Ontario 2016: 3.9%

Local Considerations

Housing & Homelessness Prevention

To build on existing progress, local recommendations include:

- Enhance Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative funding
- Invest in capital and operating funding for supportive housing

Housing & Homelessness Prevention

To further improve poverty reduction efforts, local recommendations include:

- Increase funding to build and maintain community housing
- Invest in initiatives to increase the supply of affordable rental and community housing
- Ensure government policy does not inadvertently increase consumer debt burdens and inflate housing prices further
 - E.g. align annual allowable rent increases with increases to minimum wage and social assistance rates

Seniors Supports & Long-Term Care

To build on existing progress, local recommendations include:

- Invest in and expand eligibility for the Ontario Seniors Dental Program
- Invest in the Assistive Devices Program and expand coverage for low-income individuals

Seniors Supports & Long-Term Care

To further improve poverty reduction efforts, local recommendations include:

- Enhance funding to the community support sector
- Coordinate programs between the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Long-Term Care and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- Consider expansion of tax deductible health care services for caregivers
- Consider more measures to address financial abuse

Child Care and Support for Families

To build on existing progress, local recommendations include:

- Increase investments in licensed child care spaces and proportionate operational funding
- Continue the CARE tax credit
- Invest in the Wage Enhancement Grant
- Invest in the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program
- Maintain funding and expand eligibility for Healthy Smiles Ontario
- Maintain full-day kindergarten

Child Care and Support for Families

To further improve poverty reduction efforts, local recommendations include:

- Maintain or increase investments in child care fee subsidies, special needs resourcing, EarlyON centres, and before and after-school programs
- Expand eligibility for child care fee subsidy proportionate to further investment in fee subsidy

Social Assistance & Employment

To build on existing progress, local recommendations include:

- Target further investment in mental health and addictions services to those receiving social assistance with barriers to life stabilization and employment
- Invest in incentives that encourage people receiving social assistance to find meaningful employment, without losing vital benefits such as dental and drug coverage

Social Assistance & Employment

To further improve poverty reduction efforts, local recommendations include:

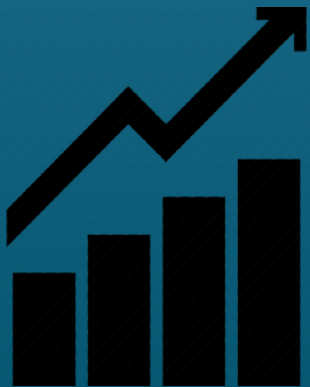
- Review social assistance rates, and rent and utility scales
- Consider possible unintended consequences of changes to definition of disability or ODSP requirements
- Review health benefits for OW clients
- Index minimum wage to inflation
- Invest in literacy, training and skills development

Investments in Social Services



Demonstrates a cost-effective means to improve health and social outcomes.

- E.g. Every \$10 spent on housing and supports for those experiencing chronic homelessness, saves \$21.72 in the areas of health, justice and social service systems.



Produces positive economic effects.

- E.g. Every dollar invested in child care results in an economic output of \$2.27.
- E.g. The development of one affordable housing unit generates 2 to 2.5 new **local** jobs

Questions?