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

<table>
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<th>New Provincial Priorities</th>
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<td>• Encouraging job creation and providing employment opportunities</td>
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<td>• Providing people with the right supports and services</td>
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<td>• Lowering the cost of living and making life more affordable</td>
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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?