

# POVERTY REDUCTION PRIORITIES

## Poverty Free Waterloo Region

### Partner Organizations:



House of Friendship



Housing and  
Homelessness  
Umbrella Group



Mennonite Central  
Committee Ontario



Social Planning Council  
of Kitchener-Waterloo



Social Planning Council  
of Cambridge and  
North Dumfries

## MAKING EVERY JOB A GOOD JOB

Full-time work does not pay enough to lift minimum wage earners out of poverty. We know that 40% of children living in poverty in Ontario have at least one parent who works full time. We are calling for the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) to include increases to the minimum wage through a schedule of accelerated increases to bring it 10% above the Low Income Measure, followed by annual increases based on the rate of inflation. We are also calling for enough resources to be committed to adequately enforce the Employment Standards Act.

## REDUCING CHILD POVERTY THROUGH THE ONTARIO CHILD BENEFIT

Families living in poverty in Ontario rely on the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) to help with the costs of essentials like healthy food, housing, and transportation. As the cost of living increases, the OCB should keep pace; otherwise its value will erode. We are calling for the OCB to be indexed to inflation and increased by \$100 a year until 2018 to help bring low income children and families out of deep poverty.

## ENSURING DIGNITY FOR RECIPIENTS OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Current social assistance rates are too low for single people and families to make ends meet. Substantial increases to social assistance rates are long overdue. We are calling for the next PRS to set as its target income assistance rates at 80% of the Low Income Measure and introduce an immediate increase of a \$100/month.

## INVESTING IN AN ONTARIO PRESCRIPTION DRUG, DENTAL AND VISION PLAN

The rise of contract, part-time and precarious employment means that many workers have no access to extended health benefits. Many make difficult choices between putting food on the table and picking up a prescription. Untreated medical, dental and vision conditions can worsen, become chronic and make it impossible for an individual to maintain employment. For those on social assistance making attempts to re-enter the labour market, the lack of reliable benefits for their families pose a significant disincentive. We are calling for the next PRS to include an Ontario prescription drug, dental and vision plan.

## SUPPORTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

By increasing the supply of affordable housing in Ontario, protecting our investments in social housing and helping Ontario's most vulnerable citizens remain housed, the provincial government could make real progress on affordable housing. We are calling for the PRS to match the Federal Government's commitment to the Investment in Affordable Housing program, introduce provisions for inclusionary zoning, enhance protections under the Residential Tenancies Act, and invest in supportive housing.