



Media Release

Economic road bumps no excuse to slow down on poverty reduction

TORONTO, 16 September 2008 – A coalition of over 100 organizations across Ontario are urging Premier Dalton McGuinty to follow through on his promise to actively and comprehensively address poverty in this province.

“The threat of an economic downturn makes leadership on poverty reduction more important than ever,” said 25 in 5 spokesperson Jacquie Maund, of Ontario Campaign 2000. “And it’s a signal that we can’t afford to delay implementation of a plan.”

Responding to Premier McGuinty’s comments today in which he suggested economic conditions may delay the implementation of a provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy, the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction said investing in poverty reduction now is smart economic policy, and decisive action is especially necessary in an ailing economy.

“We know public investments can provide a critical booster shot to stimulate economic activity in hard times,” said Maund. “That’s why we’re calling for a significant down-payment on poverty reduction in the 2009 budget, with larger investments phased-in over the five year life of the plan.”

25 in 5 says Ontario families are looking for political leadership on poverty, as a report released by Poverty Watch Ontario last week clearly demonstrated.

“As the Premier himself has said, we need all hands on deck. If we are going to ride out this slowdown and remain competitive we need everyone at their best – we must support Ontario families through job losses, reductions in hours of work, and other financial stresses,” said Janet Gasparini, Chair of the Social Planning Network of Ontario. “We can pay now or we can pay later with increased health care, criminal justice, and social services costs.”

The 25 in 5 Network advocates a bold, multi-year plan focused on three areas of action: ensuring sustaining employment, so that people who work don’t live in poverty; reforming social assistance, so that people who can’t work get the support they need; and providing for strong community supports, to give opportunity and inclusion to all.

“The time to act is now, and we expect the Premier to introduce the government’s plan, including clear targets and timelines to deliver measurable results, by December of this year,” said Gasparini. “That’s political leadership, and we hope Premier McGuinty lives up to his promise.”

For more information see www.25in5.ca.