

April 28, 2008
OPEN LETTER TO PREMIER AND ALL MPPS
Re: Poverty Reduction

Dear Premier McGuinty,

You have committed to make poverty reduction in Ontario a priority in your government's mandate. We understand that public consultations will start soon to get public input into the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy that your government is committed to developing.

As anti-poverty organizations working across the province, we know that expectations are high for these public consultations. Cities and towns across Ontario are preparing to participate. It has been a generation since there has been any broad public discussion about the causes of and solutions to poverty in our province.

We know that an effective and comprehensive poverty reduction strategy must begin with a robust and inclusive engagement process. We urge you and your colleagues to ensure that the consultation process includes public meetings in many communities across Ontario, that it includes low income people, and provides a variety of options for people to be heard.

More specifically, Premier McGuinty, we expect that the consultation process will reflect the following principles developed by the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction in cooperation with community groups, organizations, and low income people from across the province:

- Be solutions oriented and focus on what the province can do to reduce poverty;
- Provide multiple avenues for input including community workshops, focus groups with low income people, web vehicles, phone, fax and mail in options;
- Make inclusion a priority so that women, racialized community members, Aboriginal Peoples, people with disabilities, newcomers and other groups most likely to experience poverty are at the centre;
- Reflect geographic diversity with meetings held in regions across the province, including rural, urban and First Nations venues;
- Partner with local communities because local organizations working with low income people can facilitate inclusive meetings;
- Make listening a priority with representative MPPs from the Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction, local MPPs, and ministerial staff present at the community meetings;
- Treat consultations as the beginning (not the end) with a public report on what the government has heard, and ongoing consultation on the strategy as it is implemented.

Your government has a historic opportunity to develop a comprehensive, long term strategy to address poverty. An inclusive and thorough public consultation process will not only provide the strong foundation for the effective Poverty Reduction Strategy that Ontario so desperately needs – it will also send a strong signal that this government is committed to making good on its promise to reduce poverty now.

Yours sincerely,



Pat Capponi, **25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction**
Rev. Susan Eagle, **InterFaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition**
Jacquie Maund, **Ontario Campaign 2000**
Peter Clutterbuck, **Social Planning Network of Ontario**

c/o Family Service Association of Toronto
355 Church St.
Toronto, ON M5B 1Z8