

Breaking the Cycle

Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy



Together, we can break the cycle of poverty.

That conviction is at the heart of Ontario's poverty reduction strategy.

This strategy is about creating more opportunity and building a stronger economy.

It's about believing in the potential of people living in poverty.

Children should have the opportunity to succeed in life.

Families facing challenges deserve the chance to get ahead.

It's going to take a lot of hard work – including all levels of government and all corners of business and the non-profit community – but Ontario has a strategy to get there.

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Targets And Measures

We are setting a target and will publicly report on our progress as we deliver this strategy.

- We'll reduce the number of children living in poverty by 25 per cent over the next 5 years. Ontario can't do this alone – meeting our goal depends on having a willing partner in the federal government and a growing economy.
- All low-income families will see the benefits of this strategy, which would help lift 90,000 children out of poverty.
- We will also publicly report on progress in key areas such as school readiness, school success, health care and housing.

The Ontario Child Benefit

The Ontario Child Benefit gives low-income families the financial support that they need to provide essentials like food and shelter for their children. It also helps build a stronger economy by making it easier for parents to leave social assistance for work.

- We'll increase this benefit so that 1.3 million children in low-income families get up to \$1,310 a year.
- When the Ontario Child Benefit reaches maturity, the total income of a single parent with two children under age 13 working full time at minimum wage would be 54 per cent higher than it was in 2003.
- When fully implemented, the benefit will represent a total investment of about \$1.3 billion per year.



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Education And Early Learning

The best poverty reduction strategy is a strong, publicly-funded education system. We've made signature investments over the past five years that are paying off. Since 2003, Grade 3 and 6 student results have improved by at least 11 percentage points in most provincial assessment areas, and the graduation rate in Ontario has increased from 68 to 75 per cent. We're going to build on this success by:

- Enhancing programs for at-risk kids in school.
- Supporting more recreation programs for high-needs neighbourhoods.
- Providing more supports for parents to get involved in their kids' education.
- Offering full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds, with part of the initial focus on low-income neighbourhoods.

Building Stronger Communities

Building stronger and safer communities is one of the best ways to help low-income families enjoy a better quality of life. This strategy includes a series of initiatives that strengthen communities – highlights include:

- Investing in a fund to give local leaders support to establish community revitalization projects.
- Increasing summer jobs programs so that kids in priority neighbourhoods get valuable work experience.

- Stabilizing funding for the Provincial Rent Bank Program to provide temporary financial assistance to people facing possible eviction.
- We will introduce legislation that, if passed, would regulate temporary help agencies – and we will hire new employment standards officers to make sure that workplaces are safe and employees get the money they earn.

Smarter Government

We want to make sure that we get the most for every dollar we spend to support low-income families.

- We will undertake a review of social assistance with the goal of removing barriers and increasing opportunity – with a particular focus on people trying to move into employment from social assistance.
- We will undertake to look at our programs with a person-centred approach in order to better align our programs so they do more to address the issues of those they are designed to help.
- We will also establish a Social Policy Institute that will focus on evidence-based social policy development and evaluation.

A Long-Term Commitment

Tackling poverty is about making the economy stronger over the long term.

- We plan to introduce legislation in spring 2009 that, if passed, would demonstrate Ontario's long-term commitment to poverty reduction.

- The proposed legislation would include requirements to measure and publicly report on the progress being made in implementing this strategy.

All Hands On Deck

Breaking the cycle of poverty is going to require the collective effort of all of us.

- Different levels of government, the private and non-profit sectors and citizens across this province have a role to play.
- It is going to be particularly important for the federal government to come to the table as a willing partner.
- It is going to take a lot of hard work, but Ontario now has a strategy to get there. Working together, we can break the cycle of poverty.

Read the Strategy

www.ontario.ca/breakingthecycle