

January 13th, 2014

Pre-Budget Consultation Submission To the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs

***Poverty Free Kitchener Waterloo Action Group** is built through participation of social service agencies, groups, and individuals. The Group has been mobilizing local voices in consultations on the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy and the Social Assistance Review since 2011.*

*It is a diverse group, but we share the same **principles and values**:*

- ✿ Austerity is not the way to set budgets in Ontario. **Investment is needed in public services and the income security system**, which are most needed in times of growing economic and social inequality;
- ✿ There should be **no further partial changes to the social assistance system**, while the Province is working toward a high level vision and an implementation plan for its new Poverty Reduction Strategy.
- ✿ The way to set Province's budget should be to **raise everyone from deep poverty or working poverty** by setting decent social assistance rates and the minimum wage;
- ✿ Different Ministries and levels of government have to work together if we want **to help people find and keep decent work, or access disability support programs with dignity and respect**
- ✿ We **do not believe that everyone is able to work in the current labour market**; Insisting on employment as the solution for poverty is not recognizing that as much as labour standards and income security are being eroded, the health conditions and life expectancy of the population are being negatively impacted.
- ✿ We believe the government has to keep honest and ongoing conversation with people from all social groups and do it in a **more meaningful and accessible ways**

Local Framework for Successful Poverty Reduction

Poverty Free Kitchener-Waterloo has organized many public forums and conversations about poverty reduction. The **Local Framework** helps us understand many things that we face in our day to day lives.

People need to know how their daily lives will be changed with government actions and policies.

We need to know if there will be food on our tables tomorrow,
if we will be able to pay for prescriptions or keep our families healthy,
if we will have a warm bed to sleep in tonight,
or have orthotics to go volunteer and work as we used to or need to.

We use the **Local Framework** so people can see what makes the difference

And that before the social assistance rates or wages are high enough for decent living

the Province has to increase the cap for discretionary benefits per person to at least 15\$
so that we can have enough food hampers, have medication or dental care, receive bus tickets and
be able to lead our lives with dignity;

the Province has to invest more in housing and homelessness prevention
so that people do not need to end up in a shelter to be able to receive money for their last month's rent;

the Province has to invest in labor standards to make sure that there are stable and safe working
conditions, or that those who get sick or injured can recover without being forced back to work and
becoming long term or permanently disabled.

The Politicians are changing the language and moving away from blaming people for being poor,

In the same time their economic growth language is becoming that we hear.

There is no economy without people. There is no real investment into economy if there is no investment
in people first.

Eliminate Poverty

Local Framework for Successful Poverty Reduction Outcomes

Criteria 1:
Adequate assistance levels to support well-being and health

Criteria 2:
Support to all low-income people and for a range of needs

Criteria 3:
People are treated with dignity and respect in service delivery

Criteria 4:
Greater accessibility to and navigation of the system

Criteria 5:
Adequate Employment supports

Criteria 6:
Fair labour market, practices and policies

Criteria 7:
Integrated systems and appropriate investment by all orders of government

Criteria 8:
Underlying assumptions and philosophy of system plans and reforms are not blaming or punitive

Criteria 9:
There are accessible and meaningful ways to participate in the planning, decision making and assessment process

Assess policies and plans addressing poverty

Apply

Measure the impact of plans and policies addressing poverty

Act

Share knowledge in the community to eliminate poverty

Reflect

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