



Minimum Wage Advisory Panel
400 University Ave., 12th Floor
Toronto, ON
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Kitchener, October 18th 2013

Submission to the Minimum Wage Advisory Panel Consultation

Since the Ontario Government made its commitment to create a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy in 2008, Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo and its partners in the Poverty Free Kitchener Waterloo Action Group hosted many consultation meetings, community conversations and public forums. We joined the Social Planning Network of Ontario and the Poverty Free Ontario Campaign to make sure all voices were heard during the consultations on social assistance review. We have submitted responses to discussion papers, plans and strategies at both local and provincial level, contributed to pre-budget consultations, and currently, we are developing a local framework and criteria to measure the impact of the poverty reduction plans and strategies in people's daily lives.¹

We assert the following points regarding Minimum Wage as important for the overall Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy and lifting all working people out of poverty:

REDUCE POVERTY FOR EVERYONE

- Minimum wage should be increased to 10% above Low Income Measure so that all full-time, full-year workers earn income bringing them above the poverty line
- Integrated policies should be guiding the investment to help people find and keep decent work: increase Social Assistance, increase of Child Benefit, accessible Employment Insurance, affordable childcare, and improvement and enforcement of employment standards.

¹ Local Framework for Successful Social Assistance Reform Outcomes, Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo, 2013, www.waterlooregion.org/poverty-reduction





Message from a Community Consultation held September 27th and October 4th 2013

Message from the community in Kitchener-Waterloo is clear – raising the minimum wage is an integral part of poverty reduction strategy in Ontario and much has already been shared regarding the working poor – from academic to community based research².

We support the province wide campaign for the increase of the minimum wage and we firmly believe that there is a greater positive impact of the increase for the working people and even small businesses and larger corporations if we consider returns in local economy spending, improvement of labour standards, diminished turn out of workers keeping the skill and knowledge in companies and reduction of income inequalities. On the other hand, we witness the negative impact at both economic level and individual level, where working poverty leads to poor health, isolation, and diminished capacity to contribute to the society and the economy³.

Living wages need to be adopted and labour standards enforced to ensure that full time as well as part time workers are living healthy and productive lives. We cannot forget the precarious employment that can be found at every income level and has increased 50% in the last 20 years, while the wages, labour standards and social programs haven't kept pace⁴. All workers should have decent wages, including farm and migrant workers in Ontario.

Integrated Systems and Ongoing Collaboration to Determine Minimum Wage Rates

Regarding the multiple but connected consultations on poverty reduction, we again raise the importance of integrated systems and different Ministries working together. We think that there are as well, more meaningful and more accessible ways of working together on poverty reduction with local partners across the province. The community effort in creating a local framework for measuring successful poverty reduction outcomes includes a diversity of local stakeholders to ensure there is ongoing meaningful input. Cost of living is different in communities across Ontario,

² Poverty Free Ontario (2013) End Working Poverty: Assuring Basic Minimum Wages. Toronto, ON <http://www.povertyfreeontario.ca/policy-agenda-overview/ending-working-poverty/>

³ John Schmitt (2013) Why Does the Minimum Wage Have No Discernible Effect on Employment? Centre for Economic and Policy Research, Washington, D.C. <http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/min-wage-2013-02.pdf>

⁴ Wayne Lewchuk et al. (2013) It's More than Poverty: Employment Precarity and Household Well-Being. Poverty and Employment Precarity in Southern Ontario (PEPSO) Research Group, Ontario <http://pepsocan.ca/2012/12/10/more-than-poverty/>





and only those communities can weigh in on the levels of income to be considered. Applying the Ontario Low Income Measure is already established and it is reasonable to set the minimum wage at 10% above the Low Income Measure.

This is what the community members reiterated at the September 27th community consultation in Kitchener, after reviewing the formal Minimum Wage Advisory Panel consultation process and material, as important in creating a more inclusive process that goes beyond occasional consultations and a small number of stakeholders represented in Advisory Panels:

- Ensuring diverse input in how collaboration/consultations are designed to include stakeholder's perspective and values
- Ensuring clear language and appropriate content for a diversity of stakeholders
- Ensuring tailored opportunities for input for people with different abilities
- Creating a welcoming environment of trust and respect
- Providing adequate timelines for input
- Discussion and feedback materials being accessible beyond Internet
- Providing a list of action items and timelines that result from what has been heard
- Providing support to local partners for popular education and organization of community meetings to sustain meaningful communication and collaboration

Thank you for considering the input of our community. Setting adequate wage standards will ensure that employment is truly a pathway to income security and to the social supports the working Ontarians deserve. We are looking forward to the periodic, predictable and transparent reviews of the minimum wage in Ontario that will ensure prosperity for everyone.





Poverty Free
Kitchener-Waterloo

Resolution for 2013 A Poverty Free Ontario!

¹ Local Framework for Successful Social Assistance Reform Outcomes, Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo, 2013, www.waterlooregion.org/poverty-reduction

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

Apply

Assess policies and plans addressing poverty

Act

Measure the impact of plans and policies addressing poverty

Share knowledge in the community to eliminate poverty

Reflect

Poverty Free Kitchener-Waterloo

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