

# DISCUSSION PAPER

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## TOWARDS A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON HUNGER & POVERTY IN ONTARIO



ONTARIO  
ASSOCIATION OF  
FOOD BANKS

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## PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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## ABOUT US

The Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB) is a **network of food banks** including over 100 communities across Ontario from Thunder Bay to Niagara Falls, and Windsor to Ottawa.

### OUR VISION

Our vision is to help food banks relieve hunger in Ontario

### OUR MISSION

It is the mission of the Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB) to:

**Distribute food.** We acquire and distribute food to member food banks across Ontario

**Maintain standards.** We maintain standards of operation to ensure the quality, safety and ethics of food banks and those they serve across Ontario while ensuring member autonomy

**Provide support.** We provide membership support on development, operations and management

**Educate.** We form a united voice to communicate the needs and interests of our members and those that we serve to the public and the provincial government

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## INTRODUCTION

Food banks are at the front line of the troubling trend of hunger and poverty in Ontario. We provide service to hundreds of thousands of our neighbours, but we believe we must do much more. We have raised our voice in the past year along with many others, and it appears that Ontarians have been listening. There has been much more media focus, and we have seen steps forward from the provincial government on child poverty. We believe these are only first steps towards a comprehensive poverty reduction plan.

The development of this plan will require an open and detailed discussion. We need to answer the question: how can we reduce hunger and poverty in Ontario? This paper is our first attempt to answer this question, and to form the basis for a poverty reduction plan. We are proud to join many of our partners in calling for this necessary next step. But we are not just outlining a few practical policy initiatives, or necessary investments. We believe we need to re-think how we approach hunger and poverty in our province from the viewpoint of government, the third sector, and the broader social movement. We need a new perspective on hunger and poverty to inform our poverty reduction efforts.

Our discussion paper will outline this new perspective, informed by the perspectives of leading thinkers, nations, and movements. We also outline a process to engage Ontarians in our discussion and to ensure the implementation of a poverty reduction plan.

## WHY A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON HUNGER & POVERTY?

There are a number of factors motivating the development of a new perspective on poverty including:

1. **Change.** It is hoped that this paper will change the way we view, discuss, develop, and implement solutions for poverty in Ontario.
2. **Guide.** This discussion paper will guide the OAFB's policy discussions. It is further hoped that this will help guide discussions surrounding the development of a comprehensive poverty reduction plan.
3. **Influence.** It is hoped that this discussion paper will influence the direction of decision-makers and opinion-shapers who are currently discussing issues of hunger and poverty.
4. **Need.** There is a moral need, a need to build a constituency, a need to move beyond current conditions and shortsighted visions, and a collective need that motivate the development of a new perspective on poverty.
5. **Timing.** It seems to be the right time to offer a new perspective on hunger and poverty. The focus on poverty seems to be rising in the media, in government, and within the general public.

## HUNGER & POVERTY IN ONTARIO

Despite our continued prosperity, there is a great deal of hunger and poverty in Ontario:

- **Alarming Rate of Food Bank Usage.** Over 330,000 Ontarians are served by food banks every month; a figure that has risen by almost 20 per cent in the past five years.
- **Rising Child Poverty Rates.** The rate of poverty for our children has risen by over five per cent since 1989. In 2004, 17.4 per cent of Ontario's children lived below the poverty line, compared to 11.6 per cent in 1989.
- **Growing gap between rich and poor.** In 1976, the average earnings of the richest ten per cent of Canada's families raising children were 31 times that earned by the poorest ten per cent. By 2004, the richest Canadians earned 82 times as much as the poorest ten per cent.
- **Our National Shame: First Nations Poverty.** First Nations poverty rates are disproportionately high. In 2001, 34.2 per cent of First Nations households lived below the poverty line. This is over double the non-First Nations poverty rate of 15.8 per cent. One in four First Nations children lives in poverty.
- **Growing Numbers of Working Ontarians Living in Poverty.** Ontario had as many as half a million low-income workers in 2006. A number of trends show this figure has risen over time. In 2006, 60 per cent of food banks in Ontario reported an increase in the number of working poor served.
- **Rising Poverty for New Canadians.** Between 1980 and 2000, the poverty rate for new Canadians increased from 24.6 per cent to 35.8 per cent.

## VALUABLE PERSPECTIVES

There are a number of valuable perspectives from leading thinkers, peer nations, and other movements that can assist with the development of our new perspective on poverty including Jeffrey Sachs, Muhammad Yunus, Ireland, and the global environmental movement. They have effectively advanced ideas and holistic approaches focusing on local action, enterprise and innovation, third sector involvement, engagement, adequacy, sufficiency, measures and targets, planning, and coordination.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## TOWARDS A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON HUNGER & POVERTY: PRINCIPLES & ACTIONS

The principles outlined in this discussion paper represent the complete framework or worldview for a new perspective on hunger and poverty, informed by the experiences and thoughts of others, as well as the collective thoughts of the contributors to this document. These six principles are as follows:

**Principle One: Understand Hunger and Poverty.** Understanding hunger and poverty provides a strong base to allow us to develop solutions for its reduction. Outcomes that will ensure we understand hunger and poverty include:

- common definitions of hunger and poverty; and
- low-income library and databank.

**Principle Two: Focus on the Basics.** The second principle to guide a new perspective on hunger and poverty is to focus on the basics, which are those elements deemed necessary to one's success or survival, including food, shelter, income, employment, and education. Actions and outcomes that will ensure Ontarians have the basics include:

- income support reform to improve adequacy and access;
- affordable housing strategy;
- child care re-investment;
- early intervention programs;
- adult literacy, training, and re-training programs;
- low-wage strategy;
- new quality jobs and training strategy;
- improved supplementary benefits; and
- enhanced worker protections.

**Principle Three: Cooperate and Collaborate.** There are numerous entities, organizations and individuals with an interest in poverty and hunger. Their efforts are best spent working together. Actions and outcomes that will foster cooperation and collaboration include:

- permanent inter-governmental and inter-ministerial working groups or clusters on poverty reduction and development;
- the orange-green coalition: collaborative development projects between social and environmental organizations; and
- targeted funding of academic programs, curriculum, and research centres at higher education institutions.

**Principle Four: Advance Social Enterprise.** We know that social enterprise has been successful at a local level in Canada, and has had a tremendous impact internationally. This process of applying entrepreneurship and creativity to poverty reduction should be embraced in Ontario. Actions and outcomes that will advance social enterprise include:

- social innovation incubators;
- a social investment exchange; and
- social budgeting.

**Principle Five: Act Global.** There are many successful international approaches that could be effectively applied in Ontario to reduce poverty. Actions and outcomes that will allow us to act global include:

- geographic development zones;
- development clusters;
- a domestic development agency;
- asset-building programs for low-income populations; and
- poverty reduction measures and targets.

**Principle Six: Get Ontarians Engaged.** Engagement is extremely important as it can build ownership in an issue and a continued belief in the importance of reaching towards a province and nation without hunger and poverty. Actions and outcomes to get Ontarians engaged include:

- voter engagement initiatives for low-income citizens;
- forums on hunger and poverty issues;
- a youth domestic development program; and
- the creation of a common social and ecological footprint pledge.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## NEXT STEPS

We will look to carry out the following activities and initiatives in the coming months, including: feedback and consultation; public education; a Fall Lecture Series; and advocacy and collaboration. It is hoped that these activities will result in the development and implementation of a comprehensive poverty reduction plan.

## YOUR TURN

It is important that Ontarians get engaged in our discussion. There are many ways you can participate:

1. **Join the discussion.** You can join the discussion online or start your own discussion.
2. **Answer the question.** You can answer the question: How can we reduce hunger and poverty in Ontario?
3. **Read and research.** You can read and research more about the issues discussed in this paper through our website.

# INTRODUCTION

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Food banks have borne quiet witness to the effects of hunger and poverty in our province for the past generation. We have served millions of Ontarians through school breakfast programs, shelters, soup kitchens, grocery programs, and other emergency relief programs since the early eighties. We will continue to meet the immediate needs of our neighbours, but we believe that we must do much more.

Our voices and the shared voice of our other partners in hunger relief and poverty reduction have risen in the past year. It appears that Ontarians have been listening. The profile of hunger and poverty in Ontario has risen substantially in the past year within the government, media, and public sphere. There are a number of local governments, media outlets, organizations, and individuals advocating for poverty reduction. Poverty has even become a focus of our provincial government with a number of steps forward on child poverty. We need to create the roadmap for a full mandate: a comprehensive poverty reduction plan.

We believe the development of this plan requires a detailed and open discussion. This paper is a part of the beginning of that discussion. We need to answer the question: how can we reduce hunger and poverty in Ontario? This paper is our first attempt to answer this question, and to form the basis for a poverty reduction plan.

This document is one amongst a few recent public calls for a comprehensive poverty reduction plan. We are proud to join our partners in advocating for this necessary next step. But we are not just outlining a few practical policy initiatives, or necessary investments. We need to re-think how we approach hunger and poverty in our province from the viewpoint of government, the third sector, and the broader social movement. We need a new perspective on hunger and poverty to inform our poverty reduction efforts.

This perspective should not only be informed by our experiences, but the experiences of experts, other nations, and other movements to provide a strong basis for our new system of thinking. In this way, it is not a completely “new” perspective, but a fusion of proven perspectives that can help us to address the great challenge that we face.

The paper is divided into three sections. The first section provides background, including the purpose for a new perspective on poverty and a brief description of valuable perspectives and approaches to poverty. The second section presents a new perspective on hunger and poverty, which is offered in a series of six principles and associated actions. The third section outlines a process for moving forward, including our next steps and opportunities for all Ontarians to get involved in the discussion.

## PURPOSE:

## WHY A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON HUNGER & POVERTY?

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Before moving forward with an examination of other approaches to poverty, as well as the outline our new perspective, it is imperative that we understand the reasons for developing a new perspective on hunger and poverty. The reasons follow below.

**Change.** It is hoped that this paper and associated activities will change the way we view, discuss, develop, and implement solutions for poverty in Ontario and across the country. In particular, it is hoped that this new perspective, once properly and effectively articulated, will help to change the minds of the public and politicians. This document may not change every reader’s view of poverty. However, it may at the very least, offer the opportunity to think about and critically analyze how we understand and respond to hunger and poverty.

**Guide.** This document will help guide our policy discussions when considering recommendations to the provincial government. In this way, it will act as the guiding document and lens, or worldview, which the OAFB can use as a guiding policy document to help articulate policy recommendations, and respond to decisions of government in the future.

We hope that this paper could also act as a guide for discussion for individuals and organizations interested in issues of hunger and poverty involved in the development of a comprehensive framework for understanding and responding to poverty in Ontario. In practical and immediate terms, this document could be one of the OAFB’s contributions to the process of developing a comprehensive poverty reduction plan.

**Influence.** It is hoped that this discussion paper will influence the direction of decision-makers and opinion-shapers who are currently discussing issues of hunger and poverty. For example, it is hoped that this discussion paper could be used by the Senate committees that are discussing urban and rural poverty. It is also hoped that this paper will influence the development of poverty reduction strategy at a provincial level by sector stakeholders. Furthermore, it is hoped that this paper could influence the direction of federal and provincial political parties as they consider future policy directions.

**Need.** There is a very apparent and immediate need for a new perspective on hunger and poverty. First, there is the moral need. We must respond to a need to focus

a great deal of latent anger amongst those living in poverty and hunger. We must also respond to a need to focus those passionate individuals who are committed seeing the end of poverty. We need to do what is right, what is just, and what fits with our stated values as a nation, which is to ensure that all citizens have equal opportunity to a high quality of life.

Second, there is a need to build and maintain a constituency. We must maintain the current, and what may be momentary, interest in poverty and build public support for our cause with a compelling vision for reducing hunger and poverty. There is also a need to establish and rally leaders of a new and unified social movement with common beliefs and aims. This paper and activities related to its release and follow-up are intended to build and maintain a new and larger constituency.

Third, there is a need to move beyond current conditions and shortsighted visions. We must broaden the discussion beyond standard issues and solutions, and attempt to approach the reduction of poverty in a bold and different way. This vision must be comprehensive. It cannot be a single element or a series of discrete issues to pursue, as many recent poverty reduction strategies have been presented. One can be pragmatic in terms of timing and investments, but we must refuse to be trapped in the politics of practicality when defining our ideals. This requires the construction of a robust framework for establishing and judging future actions of government.

Fourth, there is our collective need. We must respond to pressing issues that affect our common interest. The depth of poverty in our province is great and growing for many Ontarians. The associated impacts of poverty such as poor health and development result in greater expenses for the provincial government in terms of health care and broader social services. We also risk our collective prosperity if a significant number of our citizens are underemployed, do not have the qualifications or means of advancing into higher skill occupations, and have greater and growing debt or financial pressures.

**Timing.** It seems to be the right time to offer a new perspective on hunger and poverty. The focus on poverty seems to be rising in the media, in government, and within the general public.

National, provincial, and local media have increased their focus on poverty in the past year. Major newspapers in Ontario have led the way, devoting a great deal of newsprint and ink to covering issues of hunger and poverty, including the Hamilton Spectator, the London Free Press, the Kingston Whig-Standard, and the Toronto Star. The editorial boards of many smaller local papers have also sharpened their focus on poverty. Radio and television

have not devoted as much coverage to the issue, but CBC, CityTV and TVO have committed a significant amount of airtime to poverty and hunger. The internet has also seen an emerging focus, with sites such as the No Excuse blog by Bill Dunphy of the Hamilton Spectator, and a multitude of poverty news blogs focusing on Canadian issues.

Governments across Canada are also focusing a lot of their attention on hunger and poverty at present. There are at least two Senate Committees reviewing poverty in rural and urban Canada led by former cabinet Minister and former Toronto mayor Art Eggleton and high ranking Conservative Senator Hugh Segal. Three provincial governments have developed and begun to execute anti-poverty strategies, including Quebec (2004), Newfoundland and Labrador (2005), and Nova Scotia (2006). Ontario's provincial government has also followed this direction, with a focus on poverty in its 2007 budget, including the creation of a new Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) for all low-income families, commitments to minimum wage increases, affordable housing, and incremental improvements to social assistance.<sup>1</sup> There are also many regional and municipal governments focusing on poverty in Ontario, including Kingston, Peterborough and Hamilton.<sup>2</sup>

The development of a new perspective on poverty is also particularly timely given that we face the prospect of both a federal and provincial election over the next year. These elections could significantly change the political landscape over the next four years and beyond. And even if there is not a federal election, we are entering a period where all political parties are looking to define themselves and their issues in preparation for the next election, or for the good governance of a minority parliament. As a result, it is an excellent time to influence the policy directions of political parties at both a federal and provincial level.

In addition, there are growing public calls for a comprehensive strategy for reducing poverty. Organizations such as Campaign2000, the National Council on Welfare, the Ontario Coalition for Social Justice, the Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC), and a number of faith-based organizations have championed this call.

It is also timely given that we are living within a period of great prosperity that is unparalleled in our country's recent history. Canada is experiencing record low unemployment, burgeoning market and profit gains, unprecedented domestic economic growth, and record setting government surpluses. And yet, hundreds of thousands of Ontarians live without adequate food or housing, have insufficient medical care and protective benefits, are functionally illiterate and have limited education, and are employed in temporary and low-wage jobs with little opportunity for advancement.

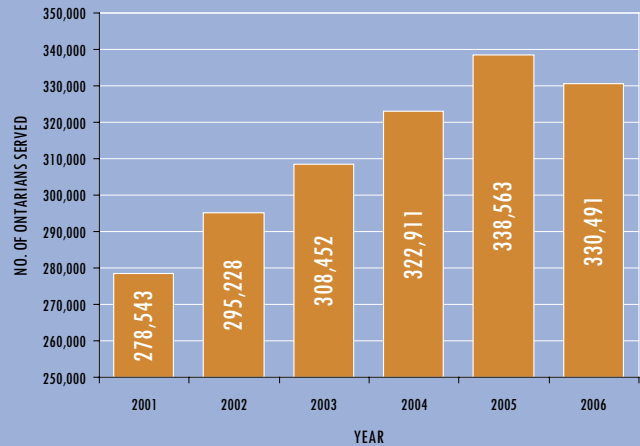
# HUNGER & POVERTY IN ONTARIO: TRENDS

Hunger and poverty is a daily tragedy for hundreds of thousands of Ontarians. Many of our fellow citizens have not shared in the continued prosperity and economic success of our province. There are a number of key trends that demonstrate this fact.

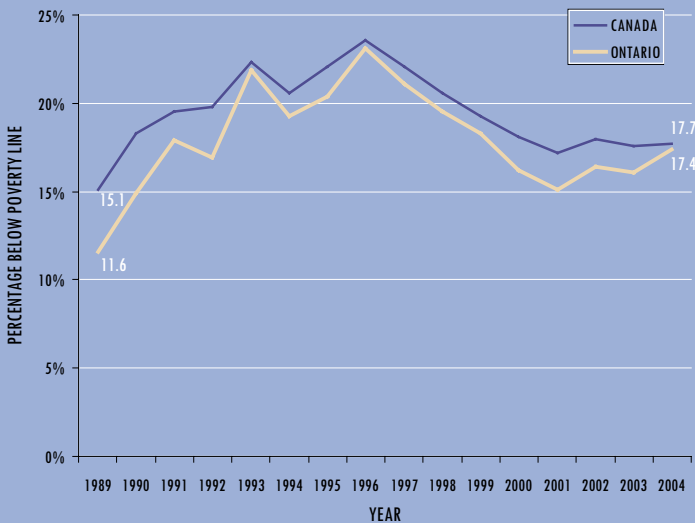
## Trend One: Alarming Rate of Food Bank Usage

Over 330,000 Ontarians are served by food banks every month; a figure that has risen by almost 20 per cent in the past five years. It is a striking characteristic of all communities, from our smallest towns to our largest centres. Ontario's children, Ontarians with disabilities, and working Ontarians are hardest hit by hunger. These three groups represent the vast majority of those served by food banks in Ontario: Ontario's children (40 per cent); Ontarians with disabilities (18.2 per cent); and working Ontarians (16.9 per cent). This is particularly striking as these figures are in opposition to the public image of hunger and poverty. They also represent a segment of our society that we believe is protected and supported by our social safety net or by their own hard work.

Graph One: Number of Ontarians Served by Food Banks, 2001 to 2006<sup>3</sup>



Graph Two: Child Poverty in Ontario & Canada, 1989 to 2004<sup>4</sup>



## Trend Two: Rising Child Poverty Rates

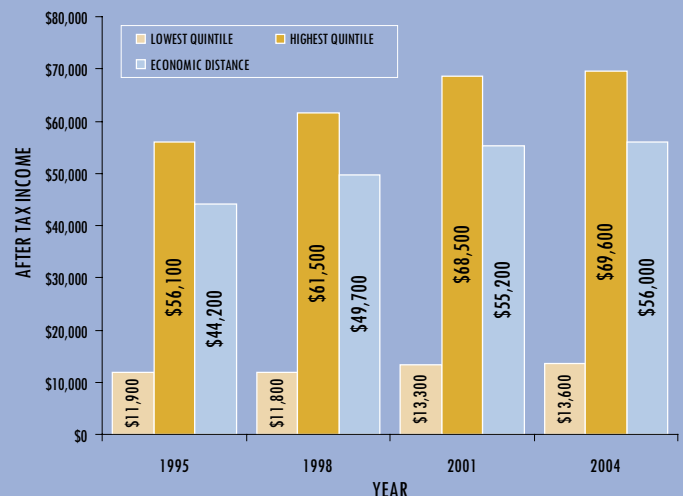
Child poverty rates in Ontario are very high and continue to rise. The rate of poverty for our children has risen by over five per cent since 1989.<sup>4</sup> In 2004, 17.4 per cent of Ontario's children lived below the poverty line, compared to 11.6 per cent in 1989.<sup>5</sup> According to Campaign2000, almost half a million of Ontario's children live in poverty.

## Trend Three:

### Growing gap between rich and poor

Our nation and province are seen by many as meeting an egalitarian ideal. But income inequality continues to grow at a quickly accelerating rate. Total earnings of the highest income Canadians are now much greater than their low-income counterparts. In 1976, the average earnings of the richest ten per cent of Canada's families raising children were 31 times that earned by the poorest ten per cent.<sup>7</sup> By 2004, the richest Canadians earned 82 times as much as the poorest ten per cent.<sup>8</sup> The same trend can also be seen over a shorter time frame. Between 1995 and 2005, the income gap between the lowest and highest income quintiles increased from \$44,200 to \$56,000 when adjusted for inflation.<sup>9</sup>

Graph Three: Economic Distance and Median Wages for Highest and Lowest Income Quintiles in Canada, 1995 to 2004<sup>10</sup>

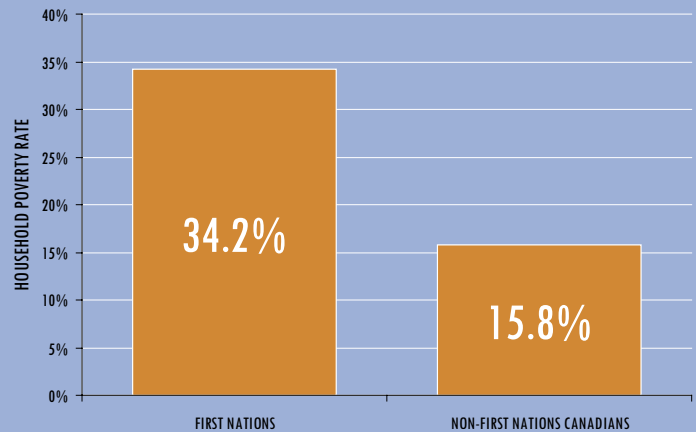


## Trend Four:

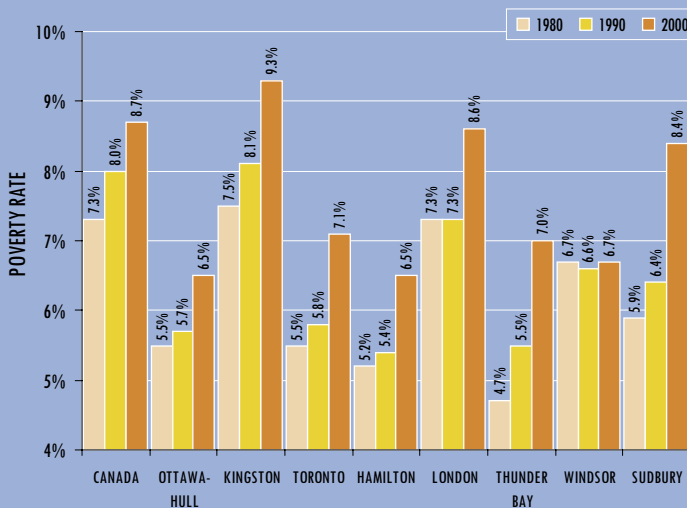
### Our National Shame: First Nations Poverty

It is our national shame that Canada's First Nations live in poverty. First Nations poverty rates are disproportionately high. In 2001, 34.2 per cent of First Nations households lived below the poverty line.<sup>11</sup> This is over double the non-First Nations poverty rate, which is 15.8 per cent. One in four First Nations children lives in poverty.<sup>12</sup> The vast majority of First Nations individuals have below-average incomes and some do not have access to the basics of life. In 2001, over 70 per cent of Aboriginal Canadians had an income of less than \$20,000 annually, and nearly four per cent of First Nations homes do not have hot running water, cold running water, or flush toilets.<sup>13,14</sup>

Graph Four: Low-income Status for First Nations and Non-First Nations Canadians, 2001<sup>15</sup>



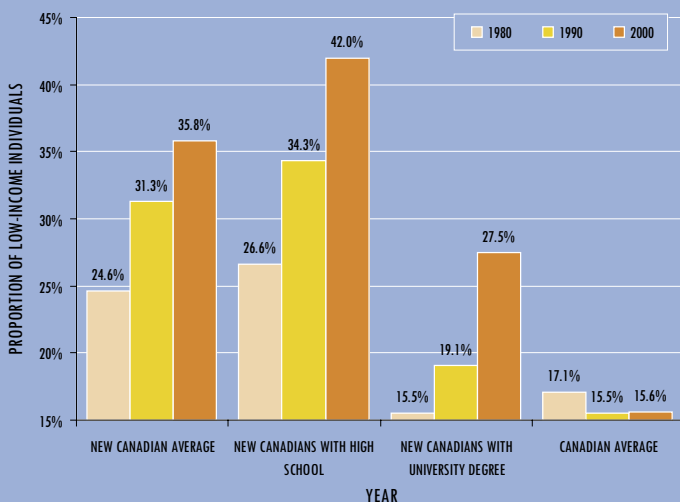
Graph Five: Working Poor as a Proportion of Population in Canada and Selected Ontario Cities, 1980 and 2000<sup>20</sup>



## Trend Five: Growing Numbers of Working Ontarians Living in Poverty

There are hundreds of thousands of working Ontarians who live in poverty. According to Statistics Canada, the proportion of all wage earners in Canada who are low-paid and live in low-income is between five and nine per cent.<sup>16</sup> In Ontario, this would mean that there were as many as half a million low-income workers in 2006. A number of trends show this figure has risen over time. The rate of poverty for working families with a single income has increased significantly over the past two decades. Between 1980 and 2003, the poverty rate for single-earner two parent families with children increased by 8.3 per cent, while the overall poverty rate remained relatively unchanged.<sup>17</sup> In 2003, one in four single-earner two parent families with children lived in poverty.<sup>18</sup> This same trend is evident when looking at the proportion of working poor in Canada and many Ontario cities over the past twenty years. According to a recent Statistics Canada study, some Ontario cities have witnessed an increase of over two per cent in their poverty rates for those who work. Food banks have been at the front line of this trend. In 2006, 60 per cent of food banks in Ontario reported an increase in the number of working poor served.<sup>19</sup>

Graph Six: Low-income Rates Among New Canadians, 1980 to 2000<sup>23</sup>



## Trend Six: Rising Poverty for New Canadians

The success story for new Canadians that defined the postwar generation has changed substantially over the past twenty years. New Canadians are working longer hours for less money, and are finding themselves trapped in increasingly greater rates of poverty. Between 1980 and 2000, the poverty rate for new Canadians increased from 24.6 per cent to 35.8 per cent.<sup>21</sup> The percentage increase for new Canadians with a university degree was even greater. This trend has continued. Studies have shown that these low-income rates were consistent between 2000 and 2004.<sup>22</sup>

# VALUABLE PERSPECTIVES

Beyond the impetus for a new perspective on poverty, it is important to understand the perspectives and approaches of individuals, nations and other movements to develop the most effective response to hunger and poverty. Their perspectives and experiences can help inform our own vision for the reduction of hunger and poverty.

Currently, there are few influential thinkers and organizations in Canada with a clearly defined approach to poverty reduction and development. This is not to say that there are none, as organizations such as the National

Council of Welfare (NCW) and Campaign2000 have articulated a vision for poverty reduction. There are also many who are joining this call.

However, the world stage presents a number of key players with a focus on poverty and international development that could offer a great deal of insight into approaches that are useful for Ontario. Two of the most influential and internationally recognized academic leaders in development studies are Jeffrey Sachs and Muhammad Yunus.

## Perspective One: Jeffrey Sachs

Jeffrey Sachs is the Director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University and Special Advisor to the United Nations on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Sachs has also been a government advisor to many national governments, including Poland, Bolivia, and India.<sup>24</sup>

Professor Sachs has introduced important concepts, such as clinical economics, and has outlined key investments required for developing nations. The understanding of these ideas could be vital to the development of strategy to reduce hunger and poverty in Ontario.

**Clinical economics.** Sachs has attempted to redefine development economics as a method of clinical practice. In other words, one would see nations or regions as patients with different characteristics and symptoms, which requires a process of diagnosis to determine the most appropriate remedies. The argument for this approach is quite sound.

Sachs argues that national economies are complex systems, not unlike the various systems of the body, such as the nervous or skeletal system. These systems include monetary policy, hard infrastructure, governance mechanisms, laws, and other key national or provincial cornerstones. This complexity requires a differential diagnosis, or an examination of all potential causes of a particular symptom.

He also argues that policy changes need to be taken in the context of the “family”, just as a doctor would consider the circumstances of the entire family when diagnosing the illness of a child. This means that the characteristics of national, regional, and local neighbours are considered as members of a very large family. For example, the economic conditions of the United States would be considered when making a differential diagnosis of Canada.

Sachs also believes that development economics requires regular monitoring and evaluation. Instead of measuring heart rate, Body Mass Index (BMI), and body temperature, development economics requires regular monitoring of employment rates, economic growth, literacy rates, and other relevant measures.

The fourth principle of clinical economics as outlined by Sachs is that professional standards must be developed to recognize the great degree of responsibility that is undertaken in the cause of development. Sachs argues that

these standards are necessary given that decisions made are often matters of life and death, not unlike the decisions made by physicians.

Sachs has even developed a sort of doctor’s checklist for a differential diagnosis, including an evaluation of the extent of poverty, economic policy framework, public fiscal framework, physical and human geography, governance patterns and failures, cultural barriers, and geopolitics of any nation or region.

**Pillars of development.** Sachs believes that there are two basic pillars of development: human development and economic growth.<sup>25</sup> Human development is the responsibility of both the individual and state. The government must commit to equal access to health care, education, and political participation for all citizens. The individual must have the ability, “...to reach their full potential as healthy and educated citizens.”<sup>26</sup> Economic growth is marked by sustainable increases in per capita Gross National Product (GNP), which is dependent on private sector investment, market integration, and technological infrastructure.<sup>27</sup> Sachs has applied this principle in his recommendations to India for its Decade of Development, recommending the establishment of a number of targets including:

- A decline of infant mortality rates from 80 per 1,000 live births to below 30 per 1,000 live births;
- A reduction of adult illiteracy from around 45 per cent to less than 20 per cent;
- Universal primary education for boys and girls, with a school for all children within 5 kilometres of their home; and
- All villages should possess electricity, a trunk road, telephone, and internet connectivity, a school, clean water and sanitation, a village health worker, and local self government.<sup>28</sup>

**Required investments to end poverty.** In addition to clinical economics and pillars of development, Sachs has also identified key investments required to end poverty. These investment types include:

- Human capital: health, nutrition, and skills needed for each person to be economically productive;
- Business capital: machinery, facilities, motorized transport used in agriculture, industry, and services;

- Infrastructure: roads, power, water and sanitation, airports and seaports, and telecommunications systems, that are critical inputs into business productivity;
- Natural capital: arable land, healthy soils, biodiversity, and well-functioning ecosystems that provide the environmental services needed by human society;
- Public Institutional capital: commercial law, judicial systems, government services and policing that underpin the peaceful and prosperous division of labour; and
- Knowledge capital: scientific and technological know-how that raises productivity in business output and the promotion of physical and natural capital.<sup>29</sup>

## Perspective Two: Muhammad Yunus

Muhammad Yunus is a Bangladeshi economist and Nobel laureate, well-known as a trailblazer in microcredit and the founder of the Grameen Bank. He is also a leading advocate of social enterprise and “social consciousness driven capitalism.”<sup>30</sup>

**Microcredit: the Grameen Bank.** The Grameen Bank was created in 1976 in the village of Jobra, Bangladesh.<sup>31</sup> The bank offers small loans to the poor so that they can create or support micro-enterprises that generate enough income to repay the loans and improve their individual economic conditions.<sup>32</sup> For example, the Grameen Bank may loan a borrower a few dollars to purchase a cell phone in a village that has no telephone access. The borrower would then operate the phone and sell time to recover the loan value and generate household income which would bring them out of poverty. The institution is owned by the poor borrowers of the bank who are mostly women. These borrowers own 94 per cent of the total equity of the bank – the remaining 6 per cent is owned by the government. It began as a small loan of \$27 to forty two, “...hard working, skilled human beings.”<sup>33</sup> Today, there are currently 7.21 million borrowers in 78,659 villages in Bangladesh accessing the services of the Grameen Bank.<sup>34</sup>

Since the 1980’s, Grameen-style institutions have expanded to over 70 countries in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. In the United States, there are an estimated 200 programs modeled on the Grameen Bank.<sup>35</sup> There have been no mass scale microcredit activities in Ontario or across the country.

However, there have been a number of asset-building pioneers in Canada who have initiated programs targeting homeownership, self-sufficiency, and education. Social Enterprise Development Innovations (SEDI), based in Toronto, is one of those pioneers, developing programs such as individual development accounts (IDAs) and individual living accounts (ILAs) in communities across the country. There has been both federal and provincial policy support for such programs.

**Social enterprise and social stock market.** Beyond the value of asset-building as a means of reducing poverty, Yunus has also recognized the role of Social Business Entrepreneurs (SBEs) and social enterprises in fighting poverty.

**Conclusions.** Sachs’ approach has been developed to fight extreme poverty internationally, but his principles can be applied to fight hunger and poverty in Ontario. The following concepts should be considered when developing a new perspective on poverty and hunger in Ontario:

- Clinical economics: poverty reduction and development must be examined and acted upon as a system.
- Human development is a necessary component of poverty reduction.
- The establishment of measurements and targets are vital to any poverty reduction strategy.
- There are numerous areas of investment required to fight poverty including human capital (health, nutrition and skills).

Yunus believes SBEs have many similarities and differences to their traditional counterparts. Unlike traditional business entrepreneurs and enterprises, who are interested in profit maximization, SBEs are social objective driven and focused on improving the lives of others. The Grameen Bank would be an excellent example of a social business enterprise. They may or may not generate “profits”, but like any other business, they should not incur losses. Unfortunately, despite the tremendous service and social capital that SBEs generate, the value of these SBEs is not recognized by the current capital market. Yunus believes that this lack of recognition was motivated by a limited view of capitalism and a miscalculation of their actual value.<sup>36</sup>

Yunus postulated that a new Social Stock Market could be created in order to recognize the value of these enterprises, as well as to facilitate the creation and enhancement of social business enterprises. A new set of norms, standards, measurements, evaluation criteria, and terminology could be created for this new market. Investors, including Social Venture Capitalists (SVCs), would purchase shares in enterprises that they believed in, and value would be determined according to a number of characteristics such as:

- Achievement of social goal;
- Achievement of SBEs mission; and
- Profitability of SBE.

In addition to the Social Stock Market, Yunus also believed that it would be necessary to create rating agencies, appropriate impact assessment tools, comparative indices, and market news media.

There would already be a group of SBEs to establish the new Social Stock Market. However, in order to expand the market, it would be necessary to start new social business enterprises. In order to start new social business enterprises, a design competition could be held at a local, regional and global level with the support and inclusion of business schools and students.

The social stock market is not merely an interesting academic concept or abstract idea. There are two real world examples of social investment exchanges currently in operation in Brazil and South Africa.

Brazil’s Environmental and Social Investment Ex-

change was created in 2003, as the world's first recognized Social Stock Market by UNESCO. It was an initiative introduced by Bovespa, the Stock Exchange of Sao Paulo, "...designed to boost projects fostered by Brazilian NGO's especially targeted at promoting investments in the country's social and environmental outlook."

Its main goal was to establish market value for worthwhile projects in a transparent and reliable format and to encourage investment. Instead of generating monetary dividends, the NGOs turn their investments into a fairer society and/or a more protected environment. There are over 30 NGOs currently listed on the exchange, and over 36 projects have been completed because of the investments made through BVS&A.

South Africa's Social Investment Exchange (SASIX) launched in June 2006, as the second social stock market in the world. It is an initiative of the Greater Good South Africa Trust with support from Noah Financial Innovation's Broking for Good Foundation. It has been self-described as, "...an initiative that builds on current trends and the growing global practice of performance-based philanthropy and social investment." It creates a similar regulatory environment as a stock exchange in order to connect non-profit organizations needing funds for specific time-bound development and poverty eradication projects with investors. Similar to the Brazilian model, SASIX has a listing of social investment projects, allowing investors to select a single project, or to build an investment portfolio. Shares can be purchased online, through Greater Good SA, or through associated brokers. Between

June 2006 and February 2007, 2.4 million Rand was attracted by the exchange for its listed organizations and projects. There are currently 17 projects listed on SASIX. A social stock exchange is also under consideration by the British government. In May 2007, Cabinet representatives met with the U.K.'s Social Enterprise Coalition and financial representatives to review the concept.<sup>37</sup> Ed Miliband, the Charities Minister was receptive to the idea, stating that it would be one of the key policies under review over the coming year. Apparently, a number of social enterprises have already raised capital through share issues.

**Conclusions.** Yunus' ideas were also intended for poverty reduction in developing nations. However, many of his thoughts can also be applied in Canada and Ontario. The following concepts should be considered when developing a new perspective on poverty and hunger in Ontario:

- Poverty reduction and development policies cannot exclusively coordinated and implemented a national or macro level. It must also occur at a local and individual level.
- Asset-building and savings are necessary strategies for the reduction and elimination of poverty.
- Individuals living in poverty have a great demand for self-sufficiency and ownership.
- Social enterprise is a key component of a poverty reduction and development strategy.
- Social profit should be understood, valued, and quantified.

## Perspective Three: Ireland

Beyond these experts, there are peer nations such as Ireland that offer a valuable perspective on hunger and poverty. Ireland is often used as an example of a nation that has successfully developed an implemented a poverty reduction strategy by both the media and advocacy organizations.<sup>38,39</sup> The government established poverty reduction targets alongside economic development goals in the mid-nineties, and has aggressively and successfully pursued both aims. Although a great deal of the progress has been attributed to broader economic growth resulting in increased employment opportunities and a larger government treasury, the associated poverty reduction strategy has been a necessary condition to successfully reducing consistent poverty.<sup>40</sup>

Ireland's approach to poverty reduction has a number of key characteristics including:

**1. Series of coordinated long-term strategies and plans.** Ireland has focused on poverty reduction in a series of coordinated long-term strategies and plans. Ireland first developed a National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) in 1997, which was revised in 2002.<sup>41</sup> These strategies had a timeline of 1997 to 2006, and have been extensively reviewed and revised over that time period. These plans laid the groundwork for expanded income supports, increased resources for social services and infrastructure in areas such as health, housing, education, and disadvantaged communities. In addition, the theme of these plans

was woven into the overall planning framework of government. Government departments and agencies were required to address poverty in overall strategy statements and report progress achieved in the previous year related to this strategy.<sup>43</sup>

Ireland's current long-term strategies and plans include a National Development Plan (2007-2013) and National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007-2016) which are intended, "...to mobilize resources to address longstanding and serious social deficits."<sup>44</sup> These coordinated strategies represent macro-scale plans for economic development and social inclusion. The ultimate goal of this plan is to reduce consistent poverty by between two and four per cent by 2012.<sup>45</sup>

The National Action Plan for Social Inclusion (2007-2016) targets children, working persons and families, seniors, persons with disabilities, and communities.<sup>46</sup> Each target area includes high level goals, income supports, services and innovative measures intended to reduce poverty amongst the groups.<sup>47</sup> The plan also includes a strategy for implementation and monitoring poverty and evaluating the impact of the plan.<sup>48</sup>

The National Development Plan establishes a seven-year comprehensive and transformative economic strategy for continued growth in Ireland.<sup>49</sup> The ambitious plan represents a 184 billion Euro investment framework in five key areas including: Economic Infrastructure, En-

terprise, Science and Innovation, Human Capital, Social Infrastructure, and Social Inclusion.<sup>50</sup>

**2. Focus on goals, measures, data collection, and reporting.** Ireland's poverty reduction strategy is very focused on accountability, through the establishment of goals and measures, and regular data collection and reporting. As mentioned above, Ireland has set a goal to reduce consistent poverty by between two and four per cent by 2012. Alongside this goal are multiple measures of poverty, as the Irish government has identified that, "...there is no one measure that gives a complete picture of the situation regarding deprivation, poverty and social exclusion."<sup>51</sup> Three current measures of poverty include consistent poverty, risk of poverty, and deprivation. Consistent poverty is defined as those below 60 per cent of median income who are deprived of one or more goods or services considered essential for a basic standard of living.<sup>52</sup> Risk of poverty is defined as all those individuals who live below 60 per cent of median income. The deprivation poverty measure is based on an 11-item index including basic items such as shoes, furniture, and home heating.<sup>53</sup> Persons are considered to be living in poverty if their income is 60 per cent below median income and they lack two or more items on the index. In addition to these measures of poverty, the Irish government also produces a number of other social inclusion indicators such as income, levels of deprivation, dropout rates, jobless households, long-term unemployment, and life expectancy.<sup>54</sup> These indicators match with common indicators developed by EU Member States.<sup>55</sup>

Fortunately, the measures and data are publicly reported and reviewed. Reports on each of the established measures and indicators are published in an Annual Social Inclusion Report.<sup>56</sup> A review of the targets and actions contained in the long-term strategies and plans is conducted approximately every three years.

**3. Lifecycle approach.** The Irish government has adopted what is known as the "Lifecycle approach" in both the National Development Plan and the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion. This approach is centred on the individual and develops solutions based on the circumstances that lead to their poverty. This approach focuses primarily on those who are most deprived and vulnerable, working to:

- ensure children reach their true potential;
- support working age people and people with disabilities;
- provide improved supports for seniors; and
- build viable and sustainable communities, improving the lives of people living in disadvantaged areas and building social capital.<sup>57</sup>

**4. Multiple actors.** There are multiple actors in poverty reduction efforts in Ireland, including the federal government, government agencies, and the European Union. Each actor plays a significant role in forwarding the poverty reduction agenda at a different level.

**Irish government.** The Irish government has made a strong commitment to poverty reduction in its social inclusion plan, stating, "The Government is committed to a coherent strategy for social inclusion based on the lifecycle

approach set out in the national partnership agreement Towards 2016."<sup>58</sup> This mandate comes directly from the highest elected representatives, and is reflected in many of the actions of the Irish government, as outlined below.

**Combat Poverty Agency.** The Combat Poverty Agency is an arm's length state agency that acts as an advisory body to the Irish government. The agency carries out activities in four primary areas, including policy advice, research, project support, and information and public awareness.<sup>59</sup> The agency's current focus is on: the distribution of income and jobs to promote a fairer distribution of income and employment by providing evidence-based advice on tax, welfare and employment policies; access to quality services to develop and promote policy proposals for people in poverty to have access to quality health and education services; and local and regional responses to poverty to support local and regional responses to poverty, including border areas affected by the Northern Ireland conflict.<sup>60</sup> In 2006, the agency engaged in a number of activities including assisting local authorities in the development of anti-poverty strategies, offering grants to community agencies and government departments for poverty reduction, conducting research on health and inclusion, and submitting policy papers to various levels of government and government agencies. CPA has over 40 staff and an annual budget of 5.7 million Euros.<sup>61</sup>

**Office for Social Inclusion.** The Office for Social Inclusion (OSI) is a major agency within the Irish government based in the Department of Social and Family Affairs with overall responsibility for developing, coordinating and driving the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion.<sup>62</sup> The OSI has six major functions, including:

**1. Coordination.** OSI coordinates the social inclusion agenda across departments, agencies, regional and local government.

**2. Monitoring and Evaluation.** OSI completes an Annual Social Inclusion Report which reviews progress at each stage of the lifecycle process, reviews progress towards set targets and actions, identifies emerging issues, and reports on stakeholder views.

**3. Support Functions.** OSI performs a number of support functions including developing a data strategy, reviewing the impact of poverty reduction policies, and funding relevant research. The OSI works together with various agencies including the Combat Poverty Agency on these support functions.

**4. Regional and Local Implementation.** Many of the policy measures to reduce poverty are implemented at a regional and local level, requiring coordination and an understanding of the local context. The office works with federal government ministries and regional governments to implement strategies at a local level.

**5. Communications and Consultation.** OSI carries out communications and consultation activities to involve and inform stakeholders on the progress of the social inclusion agenda.

**6. International Collaboration.** OSI works with other partners at an international level, including the EU, the Council of Europe, the UN, and the OECD to share and understand best practices in terms of poverty reduc-

tion.<sup>63</sup>

**European Union (EU).** The European Union (EU) is a significant actor in Ireland's poverty reduction strategy, as both a source of funding and policy direction. The EU offers Structural Funds to members which, "...were created to help those regions, within the European Union, whose development is lagging behind. The aim is to reduce the differences between regions and create a better economic and social balance within and between Member States." Between 2000 and 2006, Ireland received approximately one billion Euros (or 150 million Euros per year) in assistance from the European Social Fund, which is one of four EU Structural Funds. In total, Ireland received 3.35 billion Euros from EU Structural Funds between 2000 and 2006.<sup>64</sup> This represents a significant proportion of the total investment required for the plan during that period, which was 57 billion Euros.<sup>65</sup>

The EU also sets direction and assists with policy development. This can be seen in the EU's Jobs and Growth Strategy, which influences domestic economic policies of its members. The precursor to this Jobs and Growth Strategy is known as The Lisbon Strategy. The Lisbon Strategy is a ten-year plan for economic, social and environmental renewal for the European Union established in March 2000 at a meeting of European Union leaders in Lisbon, Portugal. There were six key goals, with three specifically relating to the working poor, which were as follows:

1. Promote employment and employability through active labor market measures to help those who have the most difficulty in entering the labor market and a mutually reinforcing system of social protection, life-long learning, and labor market policies.
2. Ensure adequate social protection systems, including minimum income schemes, for all to have a sufficient income for a life with dignity and effective work incentives for those who can work.
3. Increase the access of the most vulnerable and those most at risk of social exclusion to decent housing conditions, to quality health and long-term care services, and to lifelong learning opportunities, including to cultural activities.<sup>66</sup>

The plan set ambitious goals for economic growth at three per cent per year, and labour force growth of 20 million new jobs by 2010.<sup>67</sup> The emphasis on all new job

growth was for higher quality jobs.<sup>68</sup> This "quality jobs" goal has also been emphasized in the European Employment Strategy.<sup>69</sup> Unfortunately, many commentators believed that the plan will not meet its intended aims as economic growth stagnated and unemployment rose since the goals were established in 2000.<sup>70</sup> Recognizing their lack of progress on their goals, the EU refocused its plan into a new Growth and Jobs Strategy with similar economic growth targets, but a reduction in job creation to six million new positions.<sup>71</sup>

**5. Demonstrable success.** It cannot be argued that Ireland has eliminated poverty or that they are in the ideal state. Despite their progress, Ireland does still have high poverty rates compared to other EU nations. According to the Combat Poverty Agency, Ireland would rank in the bottom three EU nations in terms of child poverty (60 per cent of median income) and the bottom four EU nations in terms of risk of poverty.<sup>72</sup> However, Ireland has had clear and demonstrable success in reducing poverty. Consistent poverty fell from 15.1% in 1994 to 6.2% in 2000, and in between 1997 and 2006, 250,000 citizens were lifted from consistent poverty.<sup>73,74</sup>

**Conclusions.** The Irish approach to development and poverty reduction can teach us a great deal in terms of overall principles, necessary actors and actions. The following concepts should be considered when developing a new perspective on poverty and hunger in Ontario:

- A development strategy must focus on jobs and growth as well as basic protections such as legislations and income supports.
- A successful poverty reduction strategy connects strategies of economic and social development.
- It is vital to establish targets and timelines for poverty reduction.
- There is no single measure for poverty. Multiple measures of poverty are required to understand hunger and poverty.
- Poverty reduction requires a comprehensive plan and designated government development agencies, bodies, and/or leaders.
- Poverty reduction is not the role of a single level of government. A broader framework and multi-level participation from all governments is required, from the federal to the local or regional level.

## Perspective Four: Global environmental movement

Beyond the approaches of individuals and nations, the global environmental movement provides an excellent perspective to understand when developing a new perspective on hunger and poverty. The "movement" faces similar challenges of opinion and engagement, demonstrating the necessity of coordinating action, fostering collaboration, and developing innovative responses to issues and concerns.

The environmental movement is not a homogeneous entity with a singular perspective, approach, or ideology.

There are multiple drivers, actors, and organizations. But the "movement" has experienced a great deal of success, not only in terms of visible public opinion, but in the movement's ability to have an impact and deliver tangible results.

The modern environmental movement emerged as a grassroots social movement in the 1960s and early 1970s, driven by writings of Rachel Carson (*Silent Spring*) and the Club of Rome (*The Limits to Growth*), as well as the first direct actions of Greenpeace against U.S. atomic tests

in the Pacific. Today, the environmental “movement” is much more vast and diverse. This “movement” has evolved into a multi-tier, sustainable enterprise with characteristics including:

**1. Educational programming from Kindergarten to Graduate Studies (K-16+).** The global environmental movement has been extremely successful in the development and integration of educational programming into curriculum and course work at elementary and high schools, as well as colleges and universities across Canada. Environmental studies have become a prominent feature in curriculum in Ontario from Kindergarten to high school. In Ontario, the provincial government responded to the recommendations of the provincial Curriculum Council and a Working Group on Environmental Education by further integrating environmental education into high school curriculum, expanding experiential opportunities for students, developing online resources, and providing training and resource guides to teachers.<sup>75</sup> In addition to these supports, the government has provided funding to third sector organizations such as EcoSchools and Evergreen to work with students on environmental issues. This prominence in academic programming has not been limited to primary and secondary studies, as the environment has experienced significant inclusion in academic discourse and planning at a post-secondary level. Most universities in Ontario have a faculty of Environmental Studies or Environmental Policy focusing on an improved understanding of the environment and policy solutions that can be implemented to improve sustainability. Some universities have gone further, with centres, institutes and interdisciplinary programs. For example, the Centre for the Environment at the University of Toronto is an interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate teaching and research unit that serves as a doorway to environmental research and teaching.<sup>76</sup> The Centre offers academic programs, seminars, conferences and workshops, and has an associated student organization.

**2. Highly sophisticated research institutions and associated agendas.** The environmental movement in Canada also has a number of highly sophisticated research institutions and associated agendas. These think tanks include entities like the Pembina Institute and the Energy Probe Research Foundation. Pembina is an excellent case student of an environmental research institution.

**Pembina Institute.** The Pembina Institute is a non-profit organization that develops and implements practical, multi-stakeholder solutions to energy and environmental issues across Canada through innovative research, education, consulting and advocacy. Pembina has an annual budget of \$4.2 million and a staff team of 48 with offices in Calgary, Drayton Valley, Ottawa, Vancouver, Edmonton, Canmore, and Toronto.<sup>77</sup> Pembina works to create and implement energy solutions through activities in at least five areas:

**1. Youth engagement.** Pembina works to engage youth in creating a sustainable future through the development and delivery of a national energy education program and framework known as GreenLearning. In addition to curriculum development, Pembina also has youth engagement

campaigns and a youth leadership education program.

**2. Community development.** Pembina supports community development in Canada and internationally through research, advocacy, and project development. For example, in 2006, Pembina completed work on its successful Clean Development Mechanism Small Project Facility in Nigeria. Along with project partners, the Institute worked to help local developers of small, sustainable projects access carbon financing.

**3. Consulting services.** The Pembina Institute has a consulting arm that helps to develop sustainable energy solutions for community and corporate leaders. These services include organizing forums and workshops, corporate sustainability reporting, technology evaluation, and the development of sustainable strategies.

**4. Research.** Pembina works to minimize the impact of energy developments through detailed reports and assessments of planned and current activities. For example, the Institute conducted technical research on greenhouse gas emissions for the Mackenzie Gas Pipeline.

**5. Policy Solutions and Advocacy.** Pembina works to change the way governments approach environmental challenges through the development of policy plans and strategies, direct advocacy and lobbying, and polling.

**3. A substantial environmental enterprise sector.** The writings of Rachel Carson and the actions of Greenpeace in the sixties have bred a substantial environmental enterprise sector. According to the Washington Post, green enterprise represents a \$228 billion industry in the United States.<sup>78</sup> In 2006, GE's Ecoimagination Program, which was self-described as building, “...innovative technologies that help customers address their environmental and financial needs and help GE grow,” generated \$10.1 billion. This represents growth of \$6.2 billion in 2004.<sup>79</sup> In Canada, over 6,000 businesses employing over 250,000 Canadians are involved in the green enterprise sector generating substantial financial and environmental returns.<sup>80</sup> We have a number of firms in Canada such as Ballard Power Systems that are leading the way in the development of green enterprise.

There are also a number of signs of a successful and growing green enterprise sector at a local level. Green Enterprise Toronto (GET) is a small business association based in Toronto with 171 business members and growing.<sup>81</sup> GET offers networking events and workshops with eco-smart entrepreneurs to help independent businesses and customers to become greener and to think local first. GET also encourages consumers and businesses to buy and produce goods and services based on their shared commitment to these “living economy” principles – strong communities, a healthy environment, providing meaningful employment, and buying local first.

**4. Active spokespersons and public intellectuals.** The global environmental movement also has many high profile active spokespersons and public intellectuals. The vast majority of Canadians have seen David Suzuki, Al Gore or others on television or in-person talking about the environment, sustainability, or global warming. In addition to these public intellectuals, there are many active spokespersons on the environment from Rick Mercer and

Sarah Harmer to Bob Geldof and Richard Branson.

**5. Micro and macro scale engagement activities.** Another key feature of the green movement is the organization of numerous micro and macro scale engagement activities at a local, regional, national, and international level. These activities range from the global Live Earth concerts and Earth Day activities to Hamilton Harbour clean-up activities organized by the Bay Area Restoration Council (BARC). These engagement activities allow citizens to participate in activities furthering the goals of the green movement, offer an entry point into further actions, and allow organizations to connect individuals with further information including issues and solutions related to the environment.

**6. A diversity of well-staffed, well-funded national and international organizations (NGOs).** The environmental “movement” has moved out of the basement home office and coffee shop into a diversity of well-staffed, well-funded national and international organizations with various programs, initiatives, approaches, and priorities. These highly participatory organizations have emerged and evolved significantly over the past thirty years into well-respected and well-known non-profit organizations such as the David Suzuki Foundation, Greenpeace (Canada), and Evergreen.

**David Suzuki Foundation.** The David Suzuki Foundation works through science and education to protect the diversity of nature and our quality of life, now and for the future. The Foundation has revenues of \$6 million and a staff team of over 50 with program areas including: sustainability, climate change and clean energy, and oceans and sustainable fisheries.<sup>82</sup> Program activities include direct and public advocacy, research and policy development, scientific research, and public education. Since 1990, the foundation has also published numerous books on sustainability that are used as resources for scientists, conservationists and the general public.

**Greenpeace (Canada).** Greenpeace Canada has experienced a great deal of evolution since its founding. In 1971, a handful of concerned individuals set sail from Vancouver in a hired fishing boat for the US atomic test zone of Amchitka, Alaska to protest nuclear weapons tests. This loose band of brave people called themselves Greenpeace, linking their concern for the environment with their desire to see a world unthreatened by nuclear war. After Greenpeace’s inaugural action, the US abandoned its nuclear tests at Amchitka. Thirty-five years later, Greenpeace is a global environmental organization operating in more than 40 countries with over 2.8 million members around the world. Today, they bolster direct actions with cutting edge research in science and technology, international treaty negotiations, market pressure, public education and engagement and tightly focused legislative initiatives. They also initiate their own media activities, through photojournalism and more traditional journalism activities.<sup>83</sup> Greenpeace is also extremely well-financed. Greenpeace Canada has revenues of \$8.7 million and Greenpeace international has a budget of \$44.5 million Euros.<sup>84,85</sup>

**Evergreen.** Evergreen is a national non-profit environmental organization with a mandate to bring nature

to our cities through naturalization projects. Evergreen motivates people to create and sustain healthy, natural outdoor spaces and gives them the practical tools to be successful through its three core programs including Learning Grounds (transforming school grounds), Common Grounds (conserving publicly accessible land), and Home Grounds (for the home landscape). Program activities include curriculum development, online resources, stewardship, project development, support and training, and consultation services. The organization has revenues of \$3.4 million and over 40 staff with offices in Calgary, Vancouver, and Toronto.<sup>86</sup> In 2005, Evergreen initiated a \$50 million capital project to redevelop the Don Valley Brick Works with the support of major donors including the Government of Ontario.

**7. Popular public support.** In addition to the above characteristics, the environmental movement has also achieved popular public support. In March 2007, Angus-Reid reported that 30 per cent of Canadians believed that global warming was the top issue for politicians to address.<sup>87</sup> This was another among a long series of public opinion polls that placed the environment and global warming along with health as the top issues for Canadians.

**Conclusions.** The environmental movement represents an excellent case study for those interested in furthering a new social movement focused on the reduction of hunger and poverty in Ontario. It has experienced a great deal of success in evolving to meet its aims over the past thirty years. The following concepts developed by the environmental movement should be considered when developing a new perspective on poverty and hunger in Ontario:

- Enterprise and innovation are necessary elements of the success of a broader movement or strategy.
- The achievement of our agenda requires a multi-pronged, multi-leveled approach.
- Institutes can have more than just a research focus – they can deliver funding supports and programs at different levels.<sup>88</sup>
- Education and engagement are vital to the success of a movement.
- Success is dependent on a strong third sector to develop innovative programs, provide supports, conduct research, develop policy, and advocate for change.
- It is necessary to engage the broader public and encourage participation in our activities. In order to keep people engaged, we must help provide answers to the question: what can I do?
- It is necessary to develop public personalities (poverty experts and advocates) to forward a poverty reduction agenda.
- Journalism and storytelling organized by advocates and activists are vital components of a movement.

The perspectives and experiences of the above experts, nations, and movements are invaluable, but not immediately transferable. However, many of their elements can help to shape a new perspective on hunger and poverty for Ontario.

# TOWARDS A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON HUNGER & POVERTY

The principles outlined in this discussion paper represent the complete framework or worldview for a new perspective on hunger and poverty, informed by the experiences and thoughts of others, as well as the collective thoughts of the contributors to this document. Each principle is fully outlined through a series of postulates or theses that describe a necessary action or statement of belief. It is hoped that this method will allow individuals and organizations to enter into a structured dialogue and develop a common understanding on a new perspective on hunger and poverty.

In addition, these principles will lay the foundation for the development of policies and programs to achieve the aim of poverty reduction, as you cannot feed, clothe, or provide opportunities with a series of principles. There is a need to move from principles to policy and practice. Therefore, in addition to the postulates, there are also a set of outcomes and actions that align with each of the principles.

Before moving into the principles, we have identified two necessary and overarching themes that guide the following principles and policies: connections and mix.

**Connections.** A new perspective on hunger and poverty requires the development of new social policy widgets or connections. These connections need to be made with similar approaches or strategies from different contexts, such as international development practices, other movements, and other nations.

In addition, it can be said that the first law of ecology applies to poverty and development: **everything is connected to everything else.** There is a clear connection between poverty and health, poverty and economic development, poverty and democracy, poverty and education, and other areas. We must make a connection between poverty and the resulting substantial social costs which result in an increased financial burden or lost potential for all citizens.

Decision-makers, opinion shapers, experts, advocates and the general public must also be connected with **knowledge** of circumstances and solutions. It is vital that we understand the current state of hunger and poverty in Ontario, as well as its effects on individuals and the broader public. It is also vital that we understand the myriad of solutions that are available as well as their known or potential impacts. Knowledge of these circumstances and solutions will allow us to make the right decisions and implement programs that are most effective at meeting our aim of poverty reduction.

We must also be able to connect the **agendas** of current actors or potential partners in poverty reduction. Organizations, agencies, departments, and individuals are often engaged in independent activities, or do not know that their activities can or do have an impact on poverty and hunger. There is also a great deal of silo thinking that goes on in the sector, and relatively limited interaction and exchange between actors. But there is great poten-

tial for connecting these agendas for improved success. There are thousands of individuals, departments, agencies, and organizations which are committed, involved, or are somehow connected with poverty and responses to poverty. If one were able to connect these agendas, the potential impact could be immense.

We must also be able to effectively connect **development strategies** with an additional aim of improved social justice. Economic development, community development, and skills and human capital development strategies can, and must be connected into a single, unified strategy. As in any ecological system, an intervention in one area affects the other. A coordinated strategy including interventions in multiple areas will have the greatest effect. For example, we know that education is one of the most powerful tools for advancing one's income and overall quality of life. Horace Mann, the influential American education reformer, once wrote that education was, "...the great equalizer of the conditions of men – the balance-wheel of the social machinery." The introduction of grants for low-income university and college students in Ontario would be an example of a coordinated development strategy that has already been implemented. These grants increase the likelihood of low-income students attending and succeeding in university. As university graduates, their income would be much greater than if they had not attended (The median salary of university graduates is 53% greater than high school graduates), and much greater than their parents (The median salary of university graduates is 98% greater than the poverty line).<sup>89,90</sup> A new connected strategy may also be one which encourages vocational training in skilled trades in adult education programs. This strategy would assist in building a labour market to meet the demands of a skilled trades labour shortage, and provide quality employment to individuals that currently have limited income potential and labour mobility. As noted above, this idea of better connections with development strategies has been effectively implemented by the European Union through the Lisbon Strategy and Jobs and Growth Strategy.<sup>91</sup>

**Mix.** Our new perspective also requires a mix of perspectives, solutions, and scales by which we understand and respond to poverty.

We must include a mix of **perspectives** in our response to hunger and poverty. There is not one perfect ideological approach. We require a mix of cultural and political approaches, from the Calvinist-Protestant work ethic to Catholic principles of social justice to Eastern principles of collective harmony, and the progressive political belief in the collective protection of individual rights and quality of life to the conservative political belief in enterprise and economics as a means of achieving success. In this way, our approach must reflect the diverse cultural and political backgrounds of the citizens of Ontario.

We must develop an appropriate mix of **solutions** to reduce poverty. Governments often tout a single pro-

gram, financial investment, or legislative change as the sole means of ending poverty in our land. But there is no silver bullet, single solution, or magic switch. For example, jobs, or even quality jobs, are not the only solution. There are some citizens that cannot work for a variety of reasons, from a disability, to age, to skills and experience. Social policy targeting poverty reduction cannot focus solely on those who work. We require a mix of solutions that provide the basics, encourage collaboration, encourage enterprise, foster self-sufficiency and accountability, and get citizens engaged in poverty reduction.

We must also mix the scale at which we understand

and respond to poverty and hunger. This requires the development of strategies that work in multiple dimensions and levels. In economic terms, we must fight hunger and poverty at both a macro and micro level. Some solutions may only be effective locally, or even only in a single community. For example, a community garden may be successful in an urban setting in Southern Ontario, but may not be as successful in a rural Northwestern community. This may require larger governments to step back and provide funds and resources to cities, community agencies and grassroots organizations based on a set of targets or aims of poverty reduction.

## PRINCIPLES FOR A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON POVERTY

Six principles have been developed which outline our new perspective on poverty: understand hunger and poverty, focus on the basics, cooperate and collaborate, advance social enterprise, act global, and get Ontarians

engaged. If we were to adopt the following principles, we believe that we would be able to significantly reduce poverty and hunger in our province and our nation.

### PRINCIPLE ONE: UNDERSTAND HUNGER & POVERTY

The first principle to guide a new perspective on hunger and poverty is perhaps the most important: understanding. Understanding hunger and poverty provides a strong base to allow us to develop solutions for its reduction. This principle has the following postulates:

**1. We must come to an understanding of the absolute and relative depth of poverty and hunger in our province and nation.** It is vital that we understand the broad picture of poverty in terms of absolute deprivation and relative status. Absolute poverty can be determined by deprivation of the basics of life, or those who do not meet a certain standard of living. If we are to determine these figures, we can work to create practical solutions to ensure our citizens are able to access these basics, and meet a determined standard.

But poverty and hunger are not merely problems of deprivation. There is also the challenge of relative poverty, as determined by one's income or overall resources. Income inequality is perhaps as insidious as deprivation. It is the experience of a teenager going to high school for the first time without the right shoes, right jacket, or right jeans. This "rightness" is often a function of the cost of those products, and is a threat to one's social inclusion.

The measure of a progressive society is one in which ensures or reaches towards equity amongst its citizens. If we live in a society with yawning gaps in wealth and a severe imbalance of individual resources, then that society is inequitable. This is not to say that there can be no differences in income or resources, or the profession of an unreachable utopian ideal. But we must at least explore and understand relative poverty, and ask questions about what it means for those who experience it, as well as what it means for a province and nation where it is so prevalent.

Beyond understanding the depth of poverty, or an-

swering the "what", we must also explore the causes of poverty, or the reason "why" our fellow citizens live in deprivation. This can be understood in the context of the other statements below. An understanding of both absolute and relative depth of poverty and its causes will allow politicians and policymakers to come to an understanding of how to create effective responses.

**2. We must understand the characteristics of those that find themselves in poverty, including age, geography, labour, income, health, and education.** We must be able to understand poverty beyond the raw population statistics. It is necessary that we build a poverty profile, including a diversity of characteristics of those who find themselves in poverty, including age, geography, labour, geography, income, health, and education. A detailed poverty profile will allow us to develop an understanding of the many causes of hunger and poverty in Ontario. This will allow politicians and policymakers to develop targeted interventions at specific populations.

**3. We must understand poverty in its present state as it relates to our past.** Hunger and poverty are not new phenomena. But their incidence, causes, and solutions have changed over time. We must understand poverty in its present state as it relates to our past for at least two reasons.

First, we can learn a lot from our past. An understanding of our past will allow us to learn about the effectiveness of interventions, and the impact of broader economic or social circumstances. One may look at the rates of poverty for Canadian seniors as an example. Taxation reform and income support programs, specifically the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) which provides low-income seniors with additional money in addition to Old Age Security (OAS) Pension, have been highly successful in alleviating poverty among elderly Canadians

since the early eighties.<sup>92</sup> The poverty rate for seniors was cut in half from 34 per cent in 1980, to 17 per cent in 2001.<sup>93</sup> This gives us reason to believe that, with further improvement, improved benefits targeted at children may achieve similar results.

Second, we need to understand our progress and determine whether we are meeting our stated aims. If it is vital that we reduce poverty, and the state is directing energy and resources towards that aim, we need to know whether these efforts have been effective. This will allow us to maintain, alter or reform policies so that we are able to improve our poverty reduction efforts.

**4. We must understand poverty as it relates to other provinces, states and nations.** As Sachs outlines in his concept of clinical economics, we must understand poverty in the context of a “family.” This requires that we understand the family of issues as well as the conditions of family of similar nations or peers. This involves the comparison of poverty in Ontario to peers in absolute and relative terms, as well as progress in poverty reduction compared to yardstick made up of our peers.

**5. Our understanding must be based on a diversity of reliable statistics, as well as personal accounts and stories.** It is difficult to dispute cold, hard facts. But those figures must be balanced with the individual experiences of those living in hunger and poverty. We often forget that every number represents a person, and their circumstances and stories are all unique. By understanding their qualitative characteristics such as attitudes, feelings and perceptions, we may be able to identify other trends that are not easily identified in statistical figures such as shelter costs or labour income.

This comprehensive quantitative and qualitative understanding of the circumstances of those living in hunger and poverty will also improve our understanding of causes, as well as necessary responses.

**6. We must have a clear understanding of why it is important that we reduce poverty.** We often discuss the circumstances of poverty from our beliefs regarding impacts and causes to our opinions on responses and inaction. Arguably, the vast majority of the population agrees that we should not have hunger and poverty in Ontario. But we often miss out on the reason why it is important to reduce hunger and poverty.

There are at least two reasons for reducing hunger and poverty. The first is the moral reason: it is wrong to have hunger and poverty. This moral reason is the basis of our beliefs around social justice, which requires that all citizens receive fair treatment and an equitable share of the benefits to a society. Hunger and poverty are a violation of the principles of social justice, as not all citizens would receive fair treatment or equitable benefits to society given their deprivation.

The second is the practical reason: it is unproductive and impractical to have hunger and poverty. This practical reason is based on the fact that hunger and poverty have negative economic effects. Hunger and poverty result in direct costs such as lost productivity, lost potential for children and youth, and increased health care costs. There are also related social impacts which result in fu-

ture economic costs. For example, the social impact of persistent poverty for our First Nations and New Canadians may create a permanent underclass. Beyond the moral implications of these class divisions, we know that there are economic impacts as well, as witnessed already in Canada and in other parts of the world.

The moral and economic case are most effective when combined. And it is also important that we diligently work to argue this case to prove the importance of reducing poverty. We cannot let anyone forget that it is morally wrong and economically unproductive for our fellow citizens to be poor or hungry.

**7. We must have a common language when discussing issues of hunger and poverty.** There are many voices on hunger and poverty: academics, activists, politicians, policymakers, and those who live in poverty. Each has a valid opportunity to express their opinion and outline their experiences. Unfortunately, there are many different “languages” spoken when discussing poverty. It is difficult to have a productive conversation about poverty reduction when people don’t agree on the definition of poverty, the prevalence of poverty, or the basic description and experience of those living in poverty.

A common and inclusive language must include recognition of the validity and use of multiple measures, an agreement on what those measures determine, and a basic, but broad definition of the experience of those living in poverty. The result would be common words, common measures, and a principle-based definition of poverty.

## ACTIONS:

### UNDERSTANDING HUNGER & POVERTY

Some of the necessary actions that would allow us to understand hunger and poverty include:

**1. Common definitions of poverty.** Ontario could develop or adopt a common, principle-based definition of poverty. This definition would be supported and described by both a quantitative and qualitative description of poverty, including multiple measures and the experiences of those living in poverty.

**2. Low-income Library & Databank.** Ontario could create an extensive Low-income Library and Databank to compile and house information on hunger and poverty. This Library would include detailed data on those living in poverty in Ontario, historical data, and comparative data from other jurisdictions. All of the information in the Library would be publicly accessible.

## PRINCIPLE TWO: FOCUS ON THE BASICS

The second principle to guide a new perspective on hunger and poverty is a focus on the basics. These basics are deemed to be those elements which ensure citizens are able to meet a certain standard of living or quality of life. These basics may include items such as food, shelter, income, and employment. This principle has the following postulates:

**1. We must focus on ensuring that all citizens have access to the basics of life, including food, shelter, health, education, energy, and the internet.** The UN Declaration of Human Rights establishes one's right to a standard of living, including food, shelter, health care, and education.<sup>94</sup> These are basics both of survival (food, shelter, health care) and success (education). Beyond these recognized basics, it is necessary to add energy and the internet as basics of life. Energy is certainly a necessary basic of life for survival, in order to heat one's home, preserve food, and prepare meals. Energy poverty is emerging as an important issue in the context of increased pressures including demand for energy efficiency and the rising cost of energy. These pressures affect low-income individuals most acutely. The internet is also a basic of life for an individual's success. We live in an age where information and knowledge capital are emerging as a form of real and potential currency, not unlike raw resources (gold) or one's skilled labour were in previous eras. The primary portal to information is the internet. Without regular access to the internet, individuals are placed at a social and economic disadvantage to others who have access.

Given that we are determining the above items as basics of life, we will also require an effective understanding of the sufficiency or level of each of these basics amongst our citizens. Unfortunately, it is clear that many Ontarians do not have the very basics given that:

**Hundreds of thousands of Ontarians do not have enough money for food.** Over 330,000 Ontarians are served by food banks every month.<sup>95</sup>

**Tens of thousands of Ontarians lack adequate or affordable housing.** In 2006, 122,426 Ontarians were on a waiting list for affordable housing.<sup>96</sup> 270,000 Ontario renter households spend over 50 per cent of their income on rent.<sup>97</sup> This represents 20 per cent of all renter households in the province.

**Hundreds of thousands of Ontarians lack basic education & literacy skills.** Almost 1.4 million working age Ontarians have less than a high school education. This represents roughly 20 per cent of the total population.<sup>98</sup> A further 27 per cent have a high school diploma or some post-secondary education. For adults who have not completed secondary school, Canadian adults ranked 13th, 14th and 15th respectively in prose, document and quantitative skills among 30 OECD countries in a recent test of literacy.<sup>99</sup> We know that these education and skill gaps are found predominantly in low-income populations. Without these skills and educational background, it is extremely difficult for Ontarians to get a job. Over the next five to ten years, it is predicted that approximately 70 per cent of all job openings will require post-secondary education, from a trade certificate to a university degree.<sup>100,101</sup>

**Many Ontarians go without health care they need because of cost.** 26 per cent of Canadians with below average incomes went without health care they needed because of the cost.<sup>102</sup>

**Low-income Ontarians spend a disproportionate amount of their income on energy.** Low-income Canadians spend 13 per cent of their household income on energy, compared with the Canadian average of 4 per cent.<sup>103</sup> The average energy burden for an Ontario household is 13.7 per cent.<sup>104</sup> On electricity alone, low-income households in Ontario spend 6.1 per cent of their household income on energy, which is six times as great as the highest income quintile.<sup>105</sup>

**The vast majority of low-income Ontarians do not have access to the Internet.** Only 35 per cent of house-

## DO ALL ONTARIANS HAVE THE BASICS?

### Food

Over 330,000 Ontarians are served by food banks every month.

### Shelter

122,426 Ontarians are on a waiting list for affordable housing.

### Education & Literacy

1.4 million working age Ontarians do not have a high school education. This represents 20 per cent of the population between 20 and 64.

### Health

26 per cent of Canadians with below average incomes went without care they needed because of the costs.

### Energy

Low-income households spend six times as much household income on energy as high income households. The energy burden represents one-seventh of all household income.

### Internet

Only 35 per cent of low-income households in Canada had access to internet in 2003, compared to 90 per cent for high income households.

holds in the lowest income quartile had internet access in 2003, compared to 90.3 per cent for the highest income quartile.<sup>106</sup>

**2. We must ensure all citizens have the right mix of income, assets, and benefits that adequately meets their needs.** Another basic building block is the right combination of income, savings, and benefits to meet one's current and future needs. Ontarians need adequate income in order to afford to pay for the basics of life on an ongoing basis. Therefore, we must ensure that wages are adequate for those who work, as determined by wage legislation. We must also ensure that there are adequate income supports for those who cannot work, or are temporarily unemployed, including: social assistance, employment insurance, disability supports and child supports.

Maintaining a quality of life is not merely a question of income. Citizens must also have sufficient assets and benefits for future needs. Assets in the form of savings can protect individuals from periods of economic difficulty, sustain them following retirement, and provide them with opportunities to increase their economic potential through education, business development, or home ownership. Unfortunately, all Canadians have been struggling with saving money and building assets. The number of Canadian households that saved money in 2004 fell to its lowest levels since the 1930s.<sup>107</sup> Two-thirds of low-income households in Canada outspent their income by an average of 54 per cent.<sup>108</sup> In 2004, just over 84,000 Canadians declared bankruptcy, a 57% increase from 1994.<sup>109</sup>

These circumstances are also specifically reflected in low-income families. Between the mid-eighties and the late nineties, low-income families became less likely to own a home. The proportion has lowered from one in three to one in four families holding a residence as an asset.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, although the percentage of low-income families with any financial assets has increased by five per cent, the average value of those assets has decreased by over one third.<sup>111</sup> This decline in savings or financial assets is also reflected in home ownership amongst new Canadians, with the rate of home ownership declining by five per cent between 1981 and 2001.<sup>112</sup> Without savings or any financial assets, it is difficult for families to contribute to the advancement of their children through higher education, receive loans based on their own equity or transfer wealth to subsequent generations. The result is increased limitations on intergenerational mobility, or the ability of children to move out of poverty.

Beyond assets, individuals must also be able to access benefits for preventative care, emergency circumstances, and their retirement. Unfortunately, many low-income workers lack basic supplementary benefits, including life or disability benefits, supplementary health, vision, or dental coverage, or registered pension plans.

- **Life or disability benefits.** Only 18 per cent of low-income workers have access to life or disability insurance in Canada, compared to 61.5 per cent for non low-income workers.<sup>113</sup>

- **Supplementary health or dental insurance.** In low-income families with at least one worker, only one quarter of the families receive supplementary

health or dental insurance, compared to 75 per cent for other households.<sup>114</sup>

- **Registered pension plan.** Only 15.1 per cent of low-income workers were offered a pension plan by their employer, compared to 48.7 per cent for non low-income workers.<sup>115</sup>

The lack of these kinds of benefits can have a tremendous impact on the quality of life of many working families in Ontario. Without access to life, disability, supplementary health, vision or dental insurance, or retirement benefits, unforeseen circumstances that may be temporary emergencies for many turn into long-lasting crises for many low-income families.

**3. We must create quality employment with adequate benefits and protections.** A focus on the creation of jobs with good benefits should also be one of the basic pursuits of any poverty reduction strategy. Quality employment is one of the best avenues for an individual to access the basics of life, and to have adequate income, assets, and benefits. All jobs must have adequate protections, as outlined in progressive employment legislation, from the right to collective action to rules around hours of work. Additional protections provided by government also include items such as employment insurance and wage legislation.

**4. We cannot focus social policy entirely on employment as the solution to poverty.** Although we need to create quality employment with adequate benefits and protections, we must recognize that social policy that focuses entirely on the certain transition from welfare to work is extremely shortsighted. We must recognize two facts: one is a present circumstance, and the other a persistent feature of any nation since time began. First, we must recognize that a job is not a first class ticket out of poverty. It is a troubling fact, but a fact nonetheless that presently there are many jobs that do not offer sufficient hours or pay sufficient wages for individuals and families to pay for the basics of life. These citizens require our collective support.

Second, we must recognize that there are also some citizens that cannot work, or who struggle with finding and maintaining employment. There is a seemingly intractable perception that this is a circumstance of one's own making, the result of a lack of will or a grand defect that must be ignored, if not criminalized. But there are no statistics that prove that this is the norm, or even a significant minority. So, these citizens who cannot work, or struggle with finding and maintaining employment also require our collective support.

Accordingly, we must ensure that we provide adequate social supports for all Ontarians who cannot work or struggle with finding and maintaining quality employment.

**5. We must recognize and develop the latent or unrecognized human capital of all citizens.** Even a generation ago, an individual's current circumstances and future success could be shaped by their own physical effort, will, and hard work. If you did not have the right training, you could live a good life by working your way up the corporate ladder by putting in longer hours, "learning the busi-

ness” or finding a well-paying job on the line. This story is changing dramatically, as today one’s current and future prospects are heavily influenced by the presence and level of their own human capital. Put simply, if you don’t have the right skills and credentials, you have less chance of success.

If your human capital is now a greater determinant of (or perhaps “the” determinant of) your level of success and quality of life, then your ability to attain and increase it becomes a matter of equality and social justice. If all citizens are equal, and deserving of a high quality of life, then consequently, all citizens must have equal opportunity to advance through the development of their own human capital.

This means that all Ontarians must have unhindered access to training or retraining to develop their human capital in order to improve their job prospects and household income. In addition, individuals with non-Canadian credentials should have the opportunity to prove their qualifications and experience and have them recognized, or be provided with a clear path for achieving the necessary domestic credentials. If we do not take these steps, we will continue to lose potential for our province and nation. It is clear this is already taking place, as many creative and qualified new Canadians with post-secondary education are living in poverty.

#### **ACTIONS: FOCUSING ON THE BASICS**

Some of the necessary actions that would allow us to focus on the basics include:

**Income support reform to improve adequacy and access.** We need to reform Employment Insurance (EI) and social assistance in Ontario in terms of both access and adequacy. EI no longer meets its aim of providing necessary transitional supports for those who have lost their jobs. Only 27 per cent of unemployed persons in Ontario receive EI benefits.<sup>116</sup> As outlined by the Report of the Task Force on Modernizing Income Security for Working Age Adults (MISWAA), there is a specific need for the federal government to reform EI to reverse the decline in EI coverage and the related decline in associated training and supports. The adequacy of income provided through both Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) must also be improved. Currently, a single person on ODSP receives a maximum of \$999 per month through the support program. Unfortunately, even without taking into account the special circumstances of the individual, this amount is below many established poverty lines, from the Low-Income Cut-off (LICO) to Market Basket Measures (MBM).<sup>117,118</sup> The result must be income supports that are both adequate and accessible for all Ontarians.

In addition to these income supports, it is also vital that we build targeted income support programs. These targeted programs include working income tax benefits or supplements for working Ontarians, and enhanced child benefits for all low-income families. The provincial government has already taken a positive step in this direction with the creation of the Ontario Child Benefit, but there is greater up-front investment required. The federal govern-

ment has also taken very small steps on income supports for low-income workers, but the qualifications are quite restrictive and level of support is low.

**Affordable Housing Strategy.** There are too many Ontarians that are living without adequate shelter. There is a need to develop an Affordable Housing Strategy outlining an adequate mix of community-based initiatives including non-profit and co-operative housing. This strategy must include a specific investment commitment and a commitment to building a set number of spaces before the end of the next government’s mandate.

**Child care re-investment.** Another necessary condition for survival and success is the care of one’s children. There is a clear need for more child care spaces as there is only one regulated space in the province for every ten children below the age of twelve. Child care legislation in Quebec has increased that number to three spaces for every ten children. The creation of new spaces must be paired with a cost-reduction strategy so that affordable, subsidized child care spaces are available to all Ontarians.

**Early intervention programs.** Re-investment in child-care should be paired with investments in early intervention programs for the future success of Ontario’s children. Early intervention programs target students as they are making decisions about their future educational pathways. Furthermore, these types of programs, “...encourage educationally and economically disadvantaged students to gain the information and perform the steps necessary to enter the post-secondary education pipeline.”<sup>119</sup> These programs can have a number of deliverables depending on the target population and the needs of the jurisdiction, including counseling, academic and personal enrichment, social integration, mentoring and scholarships.<sup>120</sup> There are already very successful early intervention models in place in Ontario that could be replicated, such as Pathways to Education, based in Toronto’s Regent Park neighbourhood.

**Adult literacy, training, and re-training programs.** Many adult Ontarians lack the basic education required to succeed. Fortunately, the provincial government has already conducted an extensive review on needed reforms for adult education in our province. Ontario Learns: Strengthening Our Adult Education System was a landmark report on adult education in Ontario, examining ESL/FSL courses, literacy and basic skills programming, credit high school courses, correspondence and distance education courses, continuing education, citizenship preparation programmes, and academic upgrading by community colleges.<sup>121</sup> The recommendations focus on integrating federal and provincial programmes, building partnerships between providers and learners through information sharing, defining clear pathways to educational opportunities for adults, ensuring access, and fostering quality and diversity in learning.<sup>122</sup> Each of the specific recommendations would be of tremendous benefit to the skill development and advancement of working Ontarians living below the poverty line. It is also likely that these recommendations could be integrated into the proposed quality job development strategy.

**Low-wage strategy.** We need an effective Low-Wage Strategy to respond to the growing number of low-wage workers in Ontario. This Low-Wage Strategy could be developed by a Low-Wage Board, modeled on the Low Pay Commission of the United Kingdom. It would be comprised of representatives from industry, labour and the third sector, and would be responsible for recommending the schedule of minimum wage increases to the provincial government. The minimum wage would be required to meet a certain standard of adequacy, as demonstrated by the Board. The Low-Wage Board would also have a small Secretariat to conduct research on low-income workers in Ontario, conduct jurisdictional comparisons, and offer other recommendations on how to improve the lives of low-income workers.

**New quality jobs and training strategy.** The provincial and federal governments should create quality jobs and training strategies to create, attract and retain quality employment and build a workforce with the necessary training to fill these positions. New provincial and national quality job strategies must include improved supports and protections, promote the growth of human capital, and establish targets for improvement. It is also vital that this strategy is integrated with an overall economic growth plan. Ontario's quality jobs and training strategy should follow a similar model to the European Union's Jobs and Growth strategy, with a coordinated system of social protection, lifelong learning, labour market development and economic growth. Accordingly, a provincial quality job development strategy should have the following features:

1. the inclusion of measures to improve low income worker supports and protections;
2. measures that will provide social protections to those who cannot work and those who are transitioning in or out of the labour force;
3. a discussion on the establishment of a minimum income threshold for Ontarians;
4. linkages between the jobs and skills renewal strategy and the province's overall economic growth strategy;
5. targets for the creation of quality jobs in sectors that align with the overall economic growth strategy;
6. a focus on training and retraining investments and the expected results of those investments; and
7. targets for the number of Ontarians to be involved in training and retraining opportunities including: basic education and literacy, apprenticeships, and language training.

The federal government should work with the provinces to develop an overarching strategy that reflects economic differences in each region of the country, but ensures the same level of protections and supports for all Canadians.

**Improved supplementary benefits.** Ontario should provide enhanced supplementary benefits to low-income individuals and families, with a particular focus on basic health and dental benefits to ensure that all Ontarians have access to basic care. These enhancements could include expanded coverage and the creation of new pro-

grams. The provincial government could expand access to and coverage for the Trillium Drug Program to ensure that low-income workers have prescription drug and vision care coverage. The benefits that are provided should offer the same coverage that is provided to social assistance recipients, with an established income threshold of between \$20,000 and \$25,000 per year, depending on family type. There should also be no deductible for this new coverage. In addition to this expanded coverage, the provincial government could create a new dental care program for low-income Ontarians. These enhancements would represent a valuable investment, as they focus on basic or preventative care that would reduce chronic illness and costly emergency room visits.

**Enhanced worker protections.** We must work to provide enhanced worker protections through reforms to employment legislation and enhanced awareness and enforcement of those standards.

There are significant reforms required to employment legislation in Ontario in order to respond to the changing labour dynamic in Canada. A change to include dependent contractors in the Employment Standards Act would extend basic protections to many self-employed workers who may be employed by single clients, or contractors who are economically dependent on the contracting person or company. This recommendation is shared by Quebec's Bernier Report, the Canadian Policy Research Networks, and the Status of Women Canada.<sup>123,124</sup> There is precedent for this change. In New Brunswick, dependent contractors are covered by the provincial Employment Standards legislation.<sup>125</sup> Similarly, as also stated by Canadian Policy Research Networks, it is further recommended that the Employment Standards Act prohibit contract provisions that prevent temporary employment agency employees from accepting regular employment with a client.<sup>126</sup> It may be necessary to establish a group to assess the legislation and make recommendations for improvement.

In addition to these reforms, there is a clear need to communicate and enforce their provisions. Many policy makers, employers and workers' rights advocates agree that employment standards are not well understood, which increases the potential for violations.<sup>127</sup> This has been exacerbated by limited proactive enforcement and limited numbers of standards officers.

In 2004, the Auditor General recommended that the Ministry of Labour expand investigations when violations are found and increase the number of proactive inspections in higher risk industries.<sup>128</sup> Fortunately, some action has been taken, as the number of surprise visits has increased. In 2005, it was announced that the employment standards enforcement officers would initiate 2,500 proactive inspections.<sup>129</sup> This represents an increase from 1999, when 1,000 proactive inspections were initiated by the Ministry of Labour.<sup>130</sup> However, the 2005 figure only represents 0.6 per cent of all employers.<sup>131</sup>

There is a great need for increased enforcement and awareness, given the changing labour dynamics of Ontario's workforce. This could be achieved through the development of a targeted public advertising campaign, as well as the creation of a number of new positions focusing

on outreach to new entrants to the labour market, such as youth, new Canadians, new employers and high risk sectors like the food service and retail sectors. Beyond awareness, it will be necessary to enhance enforcement through the hiring of additional employment standards enforcement officers. Currently, the Ministry of Labour has 144 employment standards enforcement officers.<sup>132</sup> This has made it difficult for the Ministry to substantially increase its efforts for proactive enforcement.

The employment standards staff complement is also much lower than other similar agencies. The Health & Safety Branch has roughly double the staff in the Employment Standards office. It is recommended that Ontario

should have roughly the same number of employment standards enforcement officers, so that there would be one officer for approximately every 1,000 employers. This would also allow the Ministry of Labour to visit one per cent of all employers for proactive site visits every year.

**Other recommendations.** There are also other necessary recommendations that will ensure Ontarians have the basics. These recommendations are presented in other sections.

## PRINCIPLE THREE: COOPERATE & COLLABORATE

Beyond understanding and the basics, another necessary principle to guide a new perspective on poverty is the necessity of cooperation and collaboration. There are numerous entities, organizations and individuals with an interest in poverty and hunger, including governments, the third sector, academic institutions, activists, and those living in poverty. Their efforts are best spent working together. In order to achieve cooperation and collaboration, we must apply the following statements:

**1. There must be cooperation between ministries and agencies within governments.** Governments are massive enterprises, with tens of thousands of employees. Given their size, it can be difficult to ensure alignment with overall aims and to ensure collaboration between agencies. For example, Ministry of Education officials may not meet or regularly collaborate with officials from the Ministry of Economic Development on areas of mutual interest. However, governments must work to break down barriers to inter-ministerial and inter-departmental cooperation, and to discourage “silo” thinking. Cooperation within governments could be fostered through Ministry groupings, or “clusters” whereby each focused on collaborative efforts to reduce poverty.

**2. There must be cooperation between levels of government, particularly the federal and provincial levels of government.** The lack of cooperation between levels of government is perhaps more visible than the lack of cooperation within governments. It is a rare news week when there is no verbal sparring between the federal government and its provincial cousins, or the provincial government and its municipal counterparts. But their cooperation is vital for the success of poverty reduction efforts, given the division of responsibilities that influence hunger and poverty between them.

We know that there is, at least, an agreement on overall aims between the provincial government and many municipal governments in Ontario. The last provincial budget had a focus on poverty, and many municipal governments across Ontario have been developing community plans to respond to poverty locally.

**3. There must be cooperation between governments and emerging third sector organizations.** The third sector, or non-profit community organizations and

enterprises, play an important role in the provision of programs, policies, and ideas to respond to hunger and poverty. The third sector also often has the benefit of a strong local connection with communities and a direct connection with the issue of hunger and poverty. The sector is also more flexible, adaptable and responsive than governments to changing conditions given their connection and their ability to make decisions at a faster pace. There is a need for improved collaboration and cooperation amongst governments and third sector social organizations at both a local and provincial level. Beyond these government-third sector partnerships, it is also vital that partnerships are forged between third sector organizations to maximize the effectiveness of their efforts.

**4. We must collaborate with institutions and sectors where there is a convergence of interests and agendas with shared aims and means.** There are many individuals, organizations, institutions, and sectors where our interests converge and our aims are shared. We just need a big tent. The creation of this big tent may first begin with discussions, but the potential is immense.

There are at least two areas of potential collaboration for the social movement: the environmental movement and post-secondary institutions. It is partly a pragmatic approach to seek alignment with the environmental movement, given the level of interest in being “green” or environmentally responsible. But the “social” movement shares many basic goals and principles with the environmental movement, including respect, responsibility, and triple-bottom line thinking. The movements are also equally valued by Canadians. Two of the defining characteristics of Canadians are our value for our social safety net and our environment. The resulting policy changes driven by the environmental movement will also have an impact on low-income households. For example, the recognition of the real cost of energy will raise household energy costs. This will make the energy burden for low-income households even greater. However, collaborative projects and initiatives between the social and environmental sector could increase the energy efficiency of low-income households. This would decrease the overall cost of energy for that household, and their environmental impact through decreased energy usage. Beyond this practical impact,

think of the potential of the dynamic duo driven by the passionate spirit of David Suzuki and Tommy Douglas.

Beyond the environmental movement, there is also a lot of potential for collaboration with post-secondary institutions. Ontario has 24 colleges and 18 universities, each with programs and departments with some connection or potential connection to issues of hunger, poverty, and human development. In addition to this academic infrastructure, there is potential for igniting and fueling the passion of young minds. These young minds could be educated in the issues of hunger and poverty, and engaged in real world, experiential opportunities that help reduce poverty and hunger.

#### **ACTIONS: COOPERATING & COLLABORATING**

Some of the necessary actions that would foster cooperation and collaboration for poverty reduction include:

**Permanent inter-governmental and inter-ministerial working groups or clusters on poverty reduction and development.** In order to meet the principle of fostering collaboration and cooperation within governments, and between governments, it will be necessary to create clusters or groups including relevant officials with a shared mandate to ensure the activities of their respective governments, ministries or departments reduce poverty. At a federal-provincial level, this group would have much broader scope than the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services. It may require the designation of a First Ministers Conference on Hunger and Poverty. At a provincial level, this may require the creation of a working group of representatives from the Ministries of Labour, Training, Colleges & Universities, Education, Economic Development, and Community & Social Services.

## **PRINCIPLE FOUR: ADVANCE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE**

The fourth principle to guide a new perspective on hunger and poverty is to advance social enterprise. By advancing social enterprise, we are applying creativity and entrepreneurial spirit to our poverty reduction efforts. We know that social enterprise has been successful at a local level in Canada, and has had a tremendous impact internationally. The application of social enterprise is also an implicit recognition of the value of social capital and the impact of social deficits. In order to advance social enterprise, we must apply the following statements:

**1. We must employ creativity in the process of fighting hunger and poverty and identifying solutions to drive development.** Poverty reduction cannot be solely achieved through simple solutions or the provision of resources to individuals. If so, perhaps we would have done it by now. As poverty is a complex problem, we must be creative in our response. We must also look to move beyond a singular focus on activism and advocacy to programs, entrepreneurship, and service provision by an expanded third sector. This evolution to a multi-tiered, sustainable enterprise could follow the same path as the environmental movement.

**The orange-green coalition: collaborative development projects between social and environmental organizations.** Collaborative projects between social and environmental organizations represent a unique orange-green coalition. Green represents the recognized colour of the environment, and orange represents the recognized colour of hunger awareness and social justice. Big tent projects involving organizations or individuals from each of these movements would seek to achieve aims of both improved sustainability and social justice. An example of this kind of project is the Energy GreenBox, developed in collaboration between the Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB), and Friends of the Earth – Canada (FOE-C). 20,000 of these energy efficiency kits, including energy efficient light bulbs, window seals, insulation, and energy efficiency tips were distributed to those served by food banks in Ontario through our organization's supply chain network.

**Targeted funding of academic programs, curriculum, and research centres at higher education institutions.** The federal and provincial governments could allocate funding towards the creation of academic programs, curriculum, research centres, and research chairs with a focus on social innovation, human development and poverty reduction. A particular focus on academic programs and curriculum would need to be on experiential opportunities, where students were able to engage directly in the development or implementation of solutions to hunger and poverty. In addition to this funding, work would need to be done to forge collaboration between these new and existing programs and researchers through academic conferences and publications.

**2. We must create the right conditions for the development of social enterprise, including supportive institutions, as well as financial and other resources.** Like traditional enterprise, social enterprise requires the right conditions for success, including supportive institutions, as well as funding and other resources. Supportive institutions would provide the framework for success, including mentoring, guidance, peer supports, and training. Financial resources, or social venture capital, would allow new or growing social enterprises to reach their entrepreneurial aims and get their ideas off the ground.

**3. We must value social capital.** By advancing social enterprise, we are implicitly recognizing the value of social capital. It is vital that we make this value explicit to determine the success of social enterprises. And by explicitly valuing social capital in qualitative or quantitative terms, we add importance to the value assessed. This also allows us to value the social deficits incurred by inaction in reducing hunger and poverty.

#### **ACTIONS: ADVANCING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE**

Some of the necessary actions that would help to ad-

## What are existing examples of social enterprises?

There are already examples of social enterprise in Ontario and in Canada that demonstrate the success of the business model. Some examples of these for-profit and non-profit social enterprises include:

- **TurnAround Couriers.** TurnAround Couriers is a professional and socially responsible bicycle courier service in Toronto. TurnAround Couriers recruits at-risk youth for all its bicycle courier positions and back office staff. This affords job-ready young people a chance to gain the experience, confidence and financial means they need.
- **FoodShare Toronto.** FoodShare operates several innovative grassroots projects that promote healthy eating, teach food preparation and cultivation, develop community capacity, and create non-market-based forms of food distribution. One of the major initiatives that FoodShare coordinates is the Good Food Box, which is a low-cost grocery purchasing co-operative. Twice a month individuals place orders for boxes with volunteer co-ordinators in their neighborhood and receive a box brimming with fresh, locally grown, tasty produce. In addition to these projects, FoodShare also organizes major public education activities on food security issues. They create and distribute resources, organize training workshops, and facilitate networks and coalitions.

## What could a social enterprise look like in Ontario?

The potential for social enterprise development in Ontario is tremendous. A few examples of future social enterprises in Ontario could include:

- **Wild Rice Co-operative in Northwestern Ontario.** Wild rice is a high fibre, high protein food that is found in the shallow waters of Northwestern Ontario, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan. The potential of wild rice as a successful enterprise is demonstrated by businesses such as Shoal Lake Wild Rice and Canadian Wild Rice in Northwestern Ontario. A new wild rice co-operative could be created in Northwestern Ontario with the support and leadership of First Nations communities. This niche business could be organized to meet both fair trade and environmental standards, which would appeal to an emerging group of environmentally and socially conscious consumers.
- **WiFa (Wireless Internet For All).** Another potential social enterprise could be WiFa, or Wireless Internet For All. This enterprise would be a low-cost, high speed wireless internet provider targeting household clusters in low-income neighbourhoods. In addition to these wireless services, the enterprise could also offer low-cost new and refurbished computers and wireless cards.
- **Community garden: The Farm.** Another potential social enterprise focusing on food could be a large scale community garden known as “The Farm.” The Farm would also be a volunteer co-operative that grew produce to sell to food banks at a cost recovery basis. There is certainly a market for fresh food in food banks in Ontario, as they spend hundreds of thousands of dollars every year on food products.

vance social enterprise include:

**Social innovation incubators.** Social innovation incubators would be facilities that provide individuals with opportunities to explore and develop new ideas or social enterprise concepts. These facilities would provide operational expertise, including the strategic mechanisms necessary to facilitate the establishment and growth of new business ideas. The expertise provided would include strategic advice when writing business plans and raising capital, as well as access to a network of professional advisors, such as lawyers, accountants, and human resource specialists. In addition, the incubators would offer working space to the start-up companies, and allow occupants to network with each other and build on each others' expertise. The working space and facilities could be located on or associated with university and college campuses in order to access their available resources, including staff and other supports. The concept of an incubator draws on the U.S. experience, where ideas generated by student entrepreneurs have led to successful multi-billion dollar businesses such as Yahoo! The trend has reached the UK, where a number of firms have supported students setting up start-up businesses. The development of social innovation incubators in Canada has been limited, as it is still a relatively new concept. However, the Centre for Social

Innovation would be considered an excellent Canadian example of a leading social innovation incubator.

In order to encourage participation in the social innovation incubators, Ontario could host regional and provincial Social Innovation Business Plan competitions. Successful applicants would have an opportunity to access the space and resources available in the social innovation incubators. In addition, these social innovation incubators could have specialized areas of focus targeting poverty reduction, including agriculture and food security, education, housing, and connectivity.

**Social investment exchange.** Another supportive institution to help advance social enterprise would be a social investment exchange. A Canadian or Ontario Social Investment Exchange would be based on Yunus' theoretical model, and the existing models found in Brazil and South Africa.

**Social budgeting.** Social budgeting would allow us recognize the value of social capital, both for enterprises and our society as a whole. Both social enterprises and traditional enterprises could apply social budgeting to value the impact of their work. The government could apply the concept of a triple bottom line budget including an economic accounting of the social deficit of hunger and poverty.

## PRINCIPLE FIVE: ACT GLOBAL

The fifth principle to guide a new perspective on hunger and poverty is to act global. For years, we have been told to think global, and act local. This phrase means that we should take into account the global impact of our local actions, particularly those actions that may have an impact on the environment. It is a simple, but powerful statement.

The statement “act global” is also simple. It compels us to act like other countries that have created effective responses to both relative and absolute poverty. We must apply the same principles and processes of international development in Ontario and Canada, alongside our existing responses. This is partly a call to unify theories of development, including human development, international development, social development, and economic development into a Canadian context. Crudely put, this may be described as a process of domestic development, or targeted development of a developed nation to reduce hunger and poverty.

We must see poverty and those who are poor in Canada as no different than the poor in other countries. It should motivate as much creativity, passion, and interest. Our response should be similar: we should not have hunger and poverty in our nation. We should promote and ensure development, self-sufficiency, dignity, collective prosperity, and quality of life. In order to act global, we must apply the following statements:

**1. We must focus development in certain industries and geographic areas that will provide the greatest benefit to our collective quality of life.** We operate within an extremely competitive global economy. Business quickly crosses borders and goes where labour is low-cost or skill levels are high. There is a very visible shift in Ontario away from higher paying manufacturing jobs. Since 2005, we have lost 111,500 manufacturing jobs in Ontario, many with good wages and benefits.<sup>133,134</sup> In a competitive environment, we need to focus our efforts in target industries and sectors that reflect our strengths and provide citizens with the greatest benefits. For example, instead of low-wage service occupations, we could target growth in the social enterprise sector, high quality manufacturing sector, or financial services sector. But focused development cannot merely be limited to industries. It must also focus on those geographic areas that are hardest hit by hunger and poverty. This would involve targeted development at a local level for regions, communities, and neighbourhoods. The ultimate aim of this focused development should be twofold: to provide quality employment opportunities, and to improve the quality of life for low-income Canadians.

Many developing nations are already applying the targeted development approach to specific industries, developing areas with strong educational clusters, developed infrastructure, and attractive government incentives. For example, General Electric, Texas Instruments, and Microsoft have headquartered large operations in India since the mid and late eighties, taking advantage of the extremely well-educated graduates from the state-run Indian Insti-

tutes of Technology (IITs).<sup>135</sup> Today, cities like Bangalore are major software, information technology, and computer engineering powerhouses, competing on the same level as places like California’s famed Silicon Valley.<sup>136</sup>

**2. We must encourage asset-building, skills acquisition, and local business development amongst low-income Ontarians.** Asset-building works. It has reduced and eliminated poverty for hundreds of thousands of individuals internationally and in Canada. However, we have not realized the full potential of asset-building activities as a means to fight hunger and poverty in Ontario. Through asset-building and other expanded initiatives, we must also encourage further skills acquisition and local business development amongst low-income Ontarians. We should seek to foster an environment where low-income individuals are able to build their human capital and apply their creativity to improve their own quality of life.

**3. We must focus on actions, results, targets and achievable outcomes that are measurable and accountable over an established time frame.** At least some of these measures and targets should be internationally recognized. We are not going to eliminate poverty in a day, a month, or a few years. The reduction of poverty is not a short-term process. But it is vital that we establish benchmarks for success in our efforts to reduce poverty, and track those benchmarks over time. This will be a demand of the public, stakeholders, and those living in poverty who want to ensure their government is accountable for its commitment to reducing poverty.

These benchmarks include actions, results, targets, and achievable outcomes that are measurable over an established timeframe within the context of a broader plan. This approach has been applied by the UN through the creation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). These goals, as approved by all the world’s countries and all the world’s leading development institutions, range from cutting extreme poverty in half to providing universal primary education to ending the spread of HIV/AIDS.<sup>137</sup> The goals were established in 2000, with a target date of 2015. Although progress on these goals has been mixed due to a lack of financial commitment from many developed nations, there have been many successes. For example, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty worldwide has fallen from nearly one-third in 1990 to one-fifth in 2004.<sup>138</sup>

These goals have been specifically tailored to fight extreme poverty, and provide the basics of life for survival and success. However, there are other internationally recognized measures including the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Human Poverty Index (HPI). Canada is still in the top ten, but has fallen to sixth (HDI). In addition to these measures, there are also broadly accepted and locally developed measures that can be applied, including measures of relative poverty, and Irish and British measures of deprivation.

We could also tie development goals to government funding and program principles. For example, the Ministry of Community and Social Services would need to

demonstrate that their funding and programs led to the reduction of hunger and poverty. This approach would be similar to efforts to make international development dollars target poverty reduction.

**4. We must provide tools for the increased self-sufficiency of low-income Canadians to ensure they have the basics of life.** There is a great deal of emphasis in international development activities and the activities of developed nations on self-sufficiency and local economic development.

For example, the Canadian government provide funding to developed nations for the establishment of housing co-operatives managed by local citizens. Other developed nations also have a greater proportion of social housing compared to Canada. Only five per cent of the housing stock in Canada is social housing, compared to 22 per cent in the United Kingdom, 16 per cent in France, and six per cent in Australia.<sup>139</sup> This is not to say that we have not developed programs or ideas such as housing co-operatives or that there have not been successes.<sup>140,141</sup> But we have not placed the level of focus and funding that is needed, as we still have a very significant need for shelter in Ontario.

**5. We must increase the capacity of third sector organization's abilities to reduce poverty.** Beyond individuals and traditional enterprise, the third sector also has an important role to play in terms of poverty reduction. As noted earlier, these organizations can be much more flexible and responsive than governments. But they often struggle to obtain stable, long-term funding to sustain their operations, or seed funding to build their capacity. They could play a much greater role and have a larger impact in poverty reduction efforts if they had the right resources.

## ACTIONS: ACTING GLOBAL

Some of the necessary actions that would ensure we are able to act global include:

**Geographic development zones.** Federal, provincial, and local governments could establish geographic development zones focusing on areas that are hardest hit by hunger and poverty. These zones could attract and create business by:

- providing financial incentives such as tax exemptions;
- making necessary linkages with educational institutions, such as local colleges and universities; and
- providing necessary “bricks, mortar and cables” infrastructure for businesses.

Beyond their raw economic success, businesses would need to demonstrate their efforts to foster community development at a local level. The locations of zones and incentives could be developed in collaboration with the labour, business, education, and third sectors.

These types of development zones have been implemented in a number of countries, including China, India, and the United States. For example, New York State created Empire Zones to stimulate economic growth, attract new businesses, and allow existing businesses to expand and create more jobs.<sup>142</sup> Regions or communities are often

designated as Empire Zones because they experience high unemployment rates.

If these development zones were created in Ontario, they must:

- be located in areas hardest hit by hunger and poverty;
- demonstrate long-term success in reducing poverty in the geographic area;
- be coordinated cooperatively with government, business, labour, education, and the third sector;
- have a particular industry focus, or foci, that result in the creation of high quality jobs and/or enterprises that build social capital; and
- include more than just tax incentives.

**Development clusters.** Beyond geographic targets, a great deal can also be achieved through the targeted growth of particular industries in key development clusters that created high quality jobs and/or enterprises that build social capital. Selected industry clusters would receive supports and resources including tax exemptions, training, and low-interest loans. These industry clusters, as defined by the government in consultation with stakeholders, could include social enterprise, sustainable agriculture, financial services, and high quality manufacturing. The assignment of development clusters would need to align with the broader training and jobs strategies to ensure that we had the right people to make the existing and new businesses in the development clusters successful. This would also allow us to create clear pathways for success for low-income Ontarians and our province as a whole. For example, if high quality manufacturing was classified as a development cluster, adult education and re-training programs could be oriented towards specialized skills training in that sector. This would ensure that individuals had relevant skills and opportunities once they had completed their training. In addition, it would ensure that businesses had the right people to make their businesses successful.

**Domestic development agency.** The proposed reforms represent a significant shift in the priorities and programs of the provincial government. If poverty reduction is a priority of government, it needs to have a home. A domestic development agency could be that home, with a defined budget and support staff to carry out its mandate.

In broad terms, this agency would be a government Ministry or department within the Ministry of Community and Social Services with a mandate to implement the government's poverty reduction strategy and coordinate poverty reduction efforts across government ministries. It could play a role similar to the Combat Poverty Agency or the Office of Social Inclusion in Ireland.

Specific responsibilities for this agency could include:

- **Accountability: Monitoring & Evaluation.** A key function of the agency would be to ensure accountability to the public, and stakeholders on the government's efforts to reduce poverty. This would include the collection and publication of data outlining the government's progress in reducing poverty.

- **Coordination.** The agency would also work to coordinate the activities of various Ministries within the government towards the goal of poverty reduction.
- **Engagement.** It would be vital to ensure that the public, stakeholders, and those living in poverty were engaged in the development and continual refinement of a poverty reduction plan. The agency would play this role by creating opportunities for consultation.
- **Regional and Local Implementation.** Many poverty reduction efforts require implementation at a regional or local level. It will be necessary for the government to ensure that it has individuals working at these levels to ensure activities meet the needs and interests of local communities.
- **Collaboration & Exchange.** The agency would also foster collaboration within government, between governments, and between governments and the third sector.
- **Funding.** The agency could also be responsible for the provision of funding to third sector organizations for development activities and initiatives that reduced hunger and poverty.
- **Program delivery.** The agency could also deliver province-wide programs that reduced hunger and poverty. For example, they could house a youth domestic development program for university students.

**Asset-building programs for low-income populations.** Following similar models as outlined in this paper, the provincial and federal governments should implement asset-building programs for low-income populations to encourage savings for education, business development, or home ownership. These programs have already proven successful in the United States, and in pilot projects in Canada.

These asset-building initiatives would be quite differ-

ent from Registered Education Savings Plans (RESPs) or other similar initiatives. First, the level of support provided through matching funds by government would reflect a household's income. For example, a family with an income of greater than \$30,000 annually may not receive any matching funds for the savings program. Second, the money that was invested could be used for all manner of investments, including education, shelter, or small business development.

The provincial and federal governments would need to be careful when establishing this initiative. When setting up this program, one must consider a number of important factors, such as eligibility, acceptable use of funds, and the effects of participation for other public benefits. These asset-building programs should not be solely available for working Ontarians – they should encourage savings regardless of income source. In order to follow this principle of encouraging Ontarians to retain savings, allowable asset levels for Ontario Works (OW) recipients would also need to be increased.

**Poverty reduction measures and targets.** The government must be held publicly accountable on poverty and hunger. This will require the adoption and/or development of multiple measures of poverty, similar to those measures and targets developed by Ireland, the UK, and the UN. These measures should include both absolute and relative data on poverty, as well as measures of adequacy and deprivation. Beyond an understanding of the current state of poverty, it is also necessary to establish targets for poverty reduction. The recent proposal for a 25 per cent reduction in poverty in five years represents a reasonable and achievable goal.<sup>143</sup> These measures and targets should be developed in consultation with stakeholders and the provincial government.

## PRINCIPLE SIX: GET ONTARIANS ENGAGED

The sixth, and final, principle to guide our new perspective on hunger and poverty is to get Ontarians engaged. Engagement is extremely important as it can cultivate ownership in the issue and foster a continued belief in the importance of reaching towards a province and nation without hunger and poverty.

The environmental movement has developed many means of getting engaged, as they have developed answers to the questions: “What can I do?” and “What can we do?” This is perhaps one of the most difficult challenges for any movement. We can win many hearts and minds if we identify a connection point between hunger, poverty, and social justice with every day actions or answers for every day life. There is a need to move towards a lifestyle or an identifiable experience that would allow a significant number of individuals to become engaged and involved. It is not a simple proposition. But it certainly was not simple to identify opportunities to get engaged in the early days of the modern environmental movement. In order to get Ontarians engaged, we must apply the following principles:

1. **We must ensure that all citizens have the opportunities, tools and pathways to engage in poverty reduction.** We need to provide answers to the questions: “What can I do to reduce hunger and poverty?” and “What can we (organizations, corporations, etc.) do to reduce hunger and poverty?” The environmental movement has very tangible actions that can be performed in order to improve the environment: drive less, buy green, recycle, reduce, reuse. The social movement will similarly need to identify more tangible actions that would result in the reduction of hunger and poverty, both on a daily basis and through discrete experiences. There is certainly more that can be done to engage Ontarians during certain periods of time, from opportunities to engage in dialogue or engage in direct community action, but it will be difficult to identify ways that citizens can become more regularly involved. It should also be noted that as a matter of self-sufficiency and dignity, those living in poverty must be engaged in poverty reduction efforts.

2. **We must focus on youth engagement in poverty reduction programs and activities.** Young people must

be engaged in poverty reduction programs and activities. They represent the future voting public and a group that does, and will, influence broader public opinion. It is also necessary to engage youth in order to impart knowledge and experience, and foster leadership in the reduction of hunger and poverty. We need to build a new generation of thinkers and leaders concerned with these important issues. In addition, youth often have a keen political interest and awareness on broader social issues, and are looking for opportunities to invest their time in something they believe will have a positive impact. There is certainly a growing number of highly skilled, educated, and socially aware Ontarians attending and graduating from Ontario's post-secondary institutions, as demonstrated by the success of organizations like Meal Exchange.

**3. We must ensure that low-income Ontarians exercise their democratic right and responsibility to vote.** As a pillar of a democratic society, voting is one of the most important avenues of political engagement. It is vital that the voice of low-income populations is represented in democratic institutions, as they represent a significant constituency within our province. But they must exercise this right to vote. Unfortunately, low-income Canadians are much less likely to exercise their franchise. On average, they are nine per cent less likely to vote compared to non low-income Canadians.<sup>144</sup>

#### **ACTIONS: GETTING ONTARIANS ENGAGED**

Some of the necessary actions to get Ontarians engaged include:

**Voter engagement initiatives for low-income citizens.** In order to foster political engagement for low-income citizens, new programs would need to be developed to increase their voting participation in municipal, provincial and federal elections. This would raise their profile amongst political parties, who would need to respond to their concerns and issues. Voter engagement initiatives would need to provide relevant information on voting and the platforms of political parties, registration campaigns, and accessible avenues and means for participation through voting. Food banks will be organizing these kinds of activities for the 2007 provincial election through the provision of voter information packages for those they serve in their grocery or meal programs.

**Forums on hunger and poverty issues.** There is a need to provide publicly accessible forums for leaders and thinkers to learn, exchange ideas and build their profile. These forums may take shape in the form of new conferences, publications, blogs, and online discussion forums. Newspapers including the Toronto Star and the Hamilton Spectator have already taken a leadership role in public engagement through their focused efforts in reporting on issues of hunger and poverty, as well as associated activities. This is public participation achieved through the written word.

**Youth domestic development program.** University students are often excited by the prospect of development work overseas fighting poverty and disease, building homes, and educating other youth. Although the conditions and geography are different, similar kinds of

opportunities could function well here. The provincial and federal governments could cooperate on the creation of a youth domestic development program with particular focus on areas including poverty reduction, community economic development, social enterprise, and food security. The success of programs like Katimavik, which is a national community service initiative targeted at youth aged 17 to 21, demonstrates the potential for success of a new program targeting a larger age group with a focus on poverty reduction and community development.

There would be two components to the placement. The first part of the experience would be an educational opportunity, including training and research on hunger and poverty, social development, community development, food security, and social enterprise. The second element of the experience would be work experiences in community organizations whereby they are able to develop, implement or coordinate a project that focused on the reduction of hunger and poverty. This youth domestic development program could be coordinated by the newly formed national development agency. Students may also choose to solely participate in a research program to help understand and identify solutions to hunger and poverty.

**Footprint Pledge.** Beyond the engagement of particular groups, it is also important to foster engagement amongst the broader public. One of the potential activities that could foster engagement would be a footprint pledge, which would be an individual or corporate commitment to increase the size of one's social footprint and decrease the size of one's ecological footprint.

Many have heard of the concept of an ecological footprint, or a carbon footprint. It is a quantifiable measure of an individual's or corporation's impact on the environment, measuring the amount of land area needed to generate the resources a population consumed and the waste generated from their activities given a particular lifestyle. For example, if everyone had the same lifestyle as a Canadian in terms of energy usage, food and consumer product consumption, and services, we would need three Earths to support the world's population.

A number of individuals and organizations have worked to develop a similar social footprint to measure how business operations impact people and their communities. The Centre for Sustainable Innovation in the United States has even conceptualized a social footprint measurement tool that, "...organizations can use to assess, manage, and report their impacts on people and society in a broad range of areas."<sup>145</sup>

A social footprint could be more broadly defined as the social impact of the actions of an individual or corporation on their communities, their neighbours, and or their workers. The more positive the impact, the greater the size of one's social footprint. For example, if an individual were to purchase fair trade products, they would increase the size of their social footprint. If a corporation were to provide high quality employment with adequate benefits and wages, they would also increase the size of their social footprint. Voluntary community service would also increase the size of one's social footprint.

A Footprint Pledge would be more of a conceptual

commitment to action, rather than a quantitative exercise, which would represent a commitment to social justice and environmental sustainability. It would commit a corporation or individual to actions in their daily lives that would reduce the size of their ecological footprint and maximize the size of their social footprint.

**Other engagement outcomes.** The above outcomes are only a few of the necessary actions required to foster engagement. Beyond these activities, it would also be

important to impart knowledge and foster engagement through elementary and secondary school curriculum. Other outcomes outlined above would also represent activities to get Ontarians engaged in the reduction of hunger and poverty, such as building or supporting social enterprise. But these activities are only be the beginning. The social movement will need to work on the development of new positive and inclusive engagement activities.

## A NEW PERSPECTIVE IN PRACTICE

An evolution in thinking about hunger and poverty in Ontario has already begun. Organizations and individuals have already adopted some of the principles described in this paper. This work is already being done on a small scale, or is in the process of development. But their work is just the beginning.

### The Stop Community Food Centre and the Green Arts Barn Project

The Green Arts Barn Project is one of the most exciting collaborative, community-based initiatives in Toronto that will have a demonstrated social and environmental impact. The Green Arts Barn Project is one of a new generation of self-sustaining, multi-tenant, multi-use centres designed to promote collaboration. The Green Arts Barn buildings are on a designated heritage site located in former TTC streetcar repair barns in Toronto's St. Clair West neighbourhood. Sustainability has been a vital component of the project, as the project has sought the well-recognized Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design (LEED) designation. The project includes a number of features including:

- A green barn which includes a greenhouse, garden, and bake oven where neighbours can grow, eat, celebrate and learn about sustainable food systems. The Stop Community Food Centre has taken a leadership role in developing this feature of the project.

- A community barn that will include affordable space for non-profit community arts and environmental organizations.

- A studio barn including 26 live/work studios and 15 work-only studios for professional artists; and

- A street barn which is an open space that will act as a hub of neighbourhood economic activity featuring events, exhibitions, and festivals.

### Social Enterprise Development Innovations (SEDI) & Asset-building

Social Enterprise Development Innovations (SEDI) is a pioneer in asset-building in Canada. SEDI has initiated a number of very successful asset-building pilot projects focusing on savings for education, home ownership, and the movement from transitional housing to the mainstream rental housing market. Their asset building projects involve a combination of money, investment and financial training, with a focus on linking low-income persons and communities with local non-profit agencies and financial institutions.

SEDI's Individual Living Account (ILA) pilot project focusing on the movement of low-income individuals from transitional housing to the mainstream rental housing market was a great success. Project participants were provided with matched funds and financial training supports that allowed them to save for the first and last months rent or damage deposits, utility hook-ups, apartment insurance, and moving expenses, while simultaneously receiving life-skill training to increase their future self-sufficiency. By using this approach, SEDI proved that those individuals living in financially constrained circumstances can and do save money when provided with the right incentives and supports. Collectively, the 129 participants in the project saved over \$33,000 and leveraged almost \$79,000 in matched contributions.

### Social Innovation Generation (SiG) at MaRS

Social Innovation Generation (SiG) at MaRS is a collaborative initiative including MaRS, the provincial government, and the University of Waterloo. The McConnell Foundation invested \$10 million in the project and the provincial government invested \$6 million in its most recent budget to create the new centre.<sup>146</sup>

SiG's aim is to facilitate social innovation and social change in Ontario through effective engagement of the public, private and third sector. The initiative will focus on themes like funding for social innovation, the use of community-based "open source" technology to enhance learning and strengthen social change networks, and the development of leadership capacity to allow social innovators to work with a broad range of stakeholders across various sectors. Some of the programs delivered at the SiG@MaRS node will include seminars and programs to support emerging organizations and their leaders and supports to expand Canada's small cluster of social enterprises. There will also be activities delivered at the University of Waterloo known as SiG@Waterloo, including academic programs aimed at strengthening the capacity for social innovation, and the development of new methodologies to engage researchers and practitioners across the country in collaborative work to find and test innovative solutions to social problems.

## NEXT STEPS

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The completion of this paper only represents the beginning of the discussion. The Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB) will be moving forward with a number of additional activities including:

**1. Feedback and Consultation.** Following the release of the discussion paper, the OAFB will be soliciting feedback from the public and partners.

**2. Public Education.** The OAFB will engage in public education activities to promote the new perspective on hunger and poverty and encourage discussion including blog entries, public opinion pieces, and presentations.

**3. Fall Lecture Series.** We are organizing a Fall Lecture Series featuring selected Ontarians who will answer the question: how can we reduce hunger and poverty in

Ontario? Respondents will include activists, academics, politicians, and community leaders.

**4. Advocacy and Collaboration.** We will work with our advocacy partners to develop and advocate for a comprehensive poverty reduction plan. These efforts will push towards the Throne Speech of the incoming provincial government.

**5. Provincial Poverty Reduction Plan.** Our ultimate goal is the development of a provincial poverty reduction strategy resulting in the implementation of policies and programs that will reduce hunger and poverty in Ontario. We are confident that this poverty reduction plan can be developed by the incoming provincial government.

## YOUR TURN

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One of the six principles outlined in this paper is engagement. It is vital that we follow our principles we have espoused. Therefore, there are many ways that you can get engaged in our discussion on hunger and poverty in Ontario:

**1. Join the discussion.** Ontarians can join our Facebook group, start a discussion of their own, or engage others in a conversation about hunger and poverty in Ontario. We also encourage Ontarians to ask questions of their candidates during election forums in the coming months. There are resources on our website to encourage those discussions.

**2. Answer the question.** We are also interested in your answer to the question: How can we reduce hunger and poverty in Ontario? We encourage teachers and pro-

fessors to present this question to their students for discussion. Please send us your thoughts via e-mail, fax, and lettermail.

**3. Read and research.** You can find out more about the perspectives discussed in this paper on our website. You can also read more about the national and provincial poverty reduction plans developed by Campaign2000 and the National Council on Welfare (NCW) at [www.campaign2000.ca](http://www.campaign2000.ca) and [www.ncwcnbes.net](http://www.ncwcnbes.net). There are other provinces and nations working on poverty reduction strategies, including Quebec, Newfoundland & Labrador, the United States, and the United Kingdom. These strategies and other background information can also be found online at [www.endhunger.ca](http://www.endhunger.ca).

# CONCLUSION

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The time has come. We need a new perspective on hunger and poverty in Ontario. Hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens live in hunger and poverty, including our children, First Nations, new Canadians, and working Ontarians. An alarming and growing number of Ontarians are served by food banks each year, and there is a growing gap between the rich and poor in our country. This is not supposed to be our story. But we can take action to change our province and nation's circumstances, to encourage development, to improve overall quality of life, and ensure equality for all citizens.

It is in our collective interest to do so. It is a morally just and economically sound approach.

We can learn a great deal from leading thinkers, international approaches, and the environmental movement. These approaches provide us with important lessons in how we approach problems, and what we do to respond to them. We have seen the effects of their revolutionary thinking and actions. It is time to ignite our own revolution in thought and action.

Accordingly, this discussion paper is not just a simple call for a poverty reduction plan. We seek a fundamental change in the movement to which we are a small part. We must change our collective approach to hunger and poverty. We will pursue this path in our own activities and hope that we are joined by others along the way. Beyond the stated outcomes, our discussions may also result in

the creation of entirely new organizations and entities to carry out activities associated with the reduction of hunger and poverty.

We are also raising a clarion call for the emergence of leaders and thinkers. We certainly cannot claim ownership for all of the ideas we are presenting, nor can we claim to know all of the solutions to reduce hunger and poverty. We need new leaders and thinkers to join the movement, and to join an emerging public discussion on hunger and poverty.

This is an important discussion to have in the midst of a provincial election. We hope that this paper will be a part of the broader public discourse during the coming weeks and months, as Ontarians have important discussions about the character and condition of our province, and what kind of leadership will be required to build a society which aligns with our needs for social justice and economic stability. We hope that Ontarians will ask why we are unable meet these needs for so many of our fellow citizens.

A number of our partners have offered their responses to this question, and we are proud to join them in their call for a poverty reduction plan. We believe that we can achieve the change we seek by understanding hunger and poverty, focusing on the basics, fostering cooperation and collaboration, advancing social enterprise, acting global, and getting Ontarians engaged.

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