ONTARIO ENGLISH Catholic Teachers ASSOCIATION

Poverty Reduction Strategy

Submission to the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services

November 2025

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The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) represents the 45,000 passionate and qualified teachers in Ontario's publicly funded English Catholic schools, from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

René Jansen in de Wal
President

David Church
General Secretary

Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association
65 St. Clair Avenue East, Suite 400
Toronto, ON M4T 2Y8
416.925.2493 or 1.800.268.7230

catholicteachers.ca

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INTRODUCTION

The Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) welcomes the opportunity to provide input as the Government of Ontario assesses the current poverty reduction strategy and explores opportunities for the next strategy.

Catholic teachers take a broad view of our responsibility to make this province a better place. This is not simply a philosophical position. Every day, teachers see the real-world consequences of social and economic inequities – we see it on the faces of students who have difficulty focusing because they come to school hungry. We see it on the faces of students whose parents are unable to assist with homework, because they must work multiple, low-paying jobs.

Teachers have a front row seat to the impact socio-economic factors play within a student's educational journey – and this has steeled our resolve to make this province, and world, fairer and more just for all.

Ontario is a wealthy province, with the capacity to build a society in which everyone has genuine opportunities to participate and succeed; but achieving this goal will require shifts in attitudes and bold investments in infrastructure, public services, and people.

Where We Were, and Where We Are

As context, it is important to remember that Ontario's current poverty reduction strategy was developed in 2020, against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic – a time of deep uncertainty, economic disruption, and collective hardship.

The pandemic magnified the realities of poverty that millions of Ontarians were already facing, including precarious work, unaffordable housing, food insecurity, under-funded and under-resourced public services, and systemic inequalities that disproportionately affected children; Black, racialized, and Indigenous communities; persons with disabilities; newcomers; and low-income families (Movahedi et al. 2025; Tranjan and Robinson 2023).

While some emergency measures were implemented to stabilize households and support communities, the crisis revealed how fragile many of Ontario's social systems had become after years of government underfunding. At the same time, it became abundantly clear that

policies designed to inch forward over generations are not solutions – they are delays with real human consequences.

Although the immediate dangers posed by the pandemic have faded from view, the devastating impacts remain. As of 2025, poverty in Ontario has reached a critical juncture. While around 10.2 per cent of Canadians were living below the poverty line in 2023, Ontario's situation has worsened (Statistics Canada 2025).

In Ontario, child poverty has more than doubled in recent years – rising from 5.6 per cent in 2020 to approximately 12 per cent in 2023 (White 2025). Meanwhile, social assistance rates remain far below the poverty threshold: for a single person, the maximum Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) rate remains approximately $1,368/month, about 40 per cent below Canada's official poverty line (United Way 2025). Housing, food, and basic-need insecurities persist, and the labour market continues to generate jobs that are often precarious, low-paid, or part-time – compounding the challenges for families and children trying to stay afloat, all during a period of increasing inflation.

For children in particular, these circumstances are deeply consequential. When families live on the edge of income, every missed meal, every unstable rental situation, every under-resourced school undermines a child's chance to learn, grow, and thrive. If Ontario's next poverty reduction strategy is to make a real difference, it must tackle this urgent, multi-dimensional reality – not defer action for another generation.

The Way Forward

As the province now begins consultations to inform the next poverty reduction strategy, we must build on the lessons of the pandemic – not by returning to the status quo or adopting piecemeal stopgap measures, but by committing to strong, equitable public systems that ensure dignity, security, and opportunity for all.

In doing so, the government must acknowledge the complexities of poverty, and move away from its tendency to view employment as a singular policy solution.

For instance, Ontario's current 2020–25 poverty reduction strategy sets a target of moving more social assistance recipients into meaningful employment and emphasizes employment as the primary pathway out of poverty. This sentiment has been echoed on numerous occasions – sometimes crassly – by Premier Doug Ford.

Asked about poverty and employment at an event with the Toronto Region Board of Trade in September 2025, Premier Ford said, "I assure you, if you look hard enough – it may be in fast food or something else – you'll find a job" (D'Mello and Callan 2025). When questioned about the growing crisis of unhoused Ontarians living in encampments, the Premier was even more blunt: "Get an application and drop it off … you need to start working… if you're healthy, get off your A-S-S and start working like everyone else is" (Callan and D'Mello 2024).

Such comments border on insulting, and fundamentally misunderstand both the nature of poverty and the multifaceted solutions needed to address it.

Simply put, poverty reduction cannot rely solely on employment; it must be supported by strong publicly funded education, universal access to essential services, safe and affordable housing, and equitable economic opportunities.

Catholic teachers understand that publicly funded education is one of the most powerful tools for breaking the cycle of poverty, and as such, any credible poverty reduction strategy must significantly invest in early learning, elementary and secondary schools, and pathways to post-secondary education.

In the pages that follow, Catholic teachers outline a series of areas that the government should prioritize as it develops Ontario's next poverty reduction strategy. These include:

- Early childhood education and care
- Quality publicly funded education that supports every student
- Access to post-secondary education and lifelong learning
- Decent work, labour rights, and employment equity
- Addressing food and economic security
- Strengthening the social safety net
- Ensuring affordable housing
- Climate action as an economic tool
- Measuring what matters

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

While Ontario's current poverty reduction strategy acknowledges the importance of expanding child care spaces, far too many families still cannot afford or access regulated

care, particularly in rural, northern, and low-income urban communities. A market-based approach has proven insufficient. What is needed now is a publicly funded, universally accessible child care system that provides stable, high-quality care for every child, and ensures fair wages and working conditions for the early childhood educators who deliver it.

Research confirms the importance of the early years in a child's life in the development of cognitive and non-cognitive skills (Cleveland 2021). It also improves labour force participation, particularly among women, which helps to boost household income, which in turn boosts tax revenues and reduces dependence on social assistance (Dhuey 2025).

Studies have quantified the returns: the Government of Canada cites research showing that every dollar invested in early childhood education and care (ECEC) yields approximately $1.50 to $2.80 in broad economic return (ESDC 2025). A 2024 report found that the rollout of the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) contributed to over 50,000 new jobs, increased female labour-supply by 175,000 full-time equivalents, and raised national GDP by more than $32 billion (Standford 2024). In this respect, public investment in high-quality ECEC is not simply a social policy – it is a smart economic strategy.

Our Association has long advocated for accessible and affordable publicly funded child care in Ontario. Unfortunately, the Ontario government has too often taken an opposite approach – cutting millions of dollars in child care funding; loosening child care regulations; and refusing to transfer promised funds to municipal service managers, therefore making it very difficult for them to pass on proper levels of funding to the frontline operator (Jones 2024).

As a result, Ontario has the lowest rate of child care centre participation in the CWELCC of any jurisdiction in Canada – a figure driven primarily by the number of for-profit child care operators choosing not to participate (Kennedy 2025).

Beyond financial consequences, child care in Ontario remains plagued by long-standing systemic issues. The sector continues to suffer from a severe staffing shortage, precipitated by low pay for workers – with internal government documents projecting a shortfall of 8,500 child care workers by 2026 (Jones 2024).

Coupled with the chronic staffing crisis is a lack of available child care spaces. The introduction of the CWELCC has increased demand for publicly funded child care. According to Statistics Canada, 31 per cent of Ontario parents were on a waiting list in 2025, up from 26 per cent in 2025 and 19 per cent in 2022 (Statistics Canada 2025a; Statistics Canada

2023). Sadly, wait times to access centres are measured in years due to a lack of available space.

At the local level, the Scarborough—Rouge Park and Humber River—Black Creek regions of Toronto do not have enough licensed child care spaces, with only space for less than 20 per cent of the children in the area (Hasham 2023). More broadly, a Financial Accountability Office of Ontario (FAO) report estimates that the province will be more than 220,000 child care spaces short of meeting demand by 2026 (Jones 2024).

The reality is that without access to affordable, publicly funded child care, parents may be forced to leave their jobs to care for children – only deepening poverty and negatively impacting the economy.

It is time for the government to invest in Ontario's future. Locally and provincially, investments in ECEC translate into stronger communities – it is infrastructure that underpins economic stability, workforce participation, and long-term prosperity.

QUALITY PUBLICLY FUNDED EDUCATION THAT SUPPORTS EVERY STUDENT

Education is one of the most effective tools to reduce poverty and strengthen long-term economic and social well-being. Research consistently shows that every dollar invested in education yields broad economic returns – including higher employment, increased productivity, and reduced reliance on health, justice, and social assistance systems.

The Conference Board of Canada estimates that every public dollar invested in education generates up to $1.30 in economic return – with the inverse being true of cuts to funding (Conference Board of Canada, 2017).

Ontario's poverty reduction efforts have not fully recognized education funding as a poverty reduction strategy. Chronic underfunding has resulted in larger class sizes, reduced special education services, understaffed schools, and insufficient mental health supports – conditions that disproportionately impact low-income students. Poverty affects learning before school begins: children experiencing food insecurity, unstable housing, trauma, or limited access to early childhood education face significant barriers to academic success. Without sustained investment, education cannot serve as a pathway out of poverty.

Supporting Every Student

For education to serve as an equalizer, all students must have access to the supports they need – regardless of income, disability, race, language, or geography. Low-income students are more likely to require special education, mental health services, technology, and transportation support, yet these services are unevenly available across the province. In many school boards, psychologists, social workers, and speech-language pathologists are shared across multiple schools, delaying critical support (OECTA 2025).

Mental health needs are rising. A 2023 study from the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) found that over half of students in Grades 7 to 12 report moderate to severe psychological distress (CAMH 2023). Students facing poverty experience higher levels of stress, food insecurity, and instability, yet school-based mental health supports remain fragmented and reliant on year-to-year funding. Nutrition programs – often sustained by charitable donations rather than provincial funding – remain the lifeline for many students in low-income communities.

Supporting every student must also include adult and continuing education, which provides vital second-chance pathways for early school leavers, newcomers, and adults seeking better employment. These programs are underfunded despite their clear role in poverty reduction.

Safe and Modern Schools

Learning conditions are life conditions. Students in low-income communities are more likely to attend aging schools with poor ventilation, overcrowding, lead in drinking water, and accessibility barriers. Ontario's school repair backlog now exceeds $17 billion, with the worst conditions concentrated in marginalized communities. Decaying infrastructure sends a clear message about which students are valued.

Nearly nine in ten educators report experiencing or witnessing violence at school (OECTA 2025). These behaviours often reflect unmet needs: trauma, inadequate staffing, poverty, and mental health challenges. Schools require more child and youth workers, mental health professionals, restorative practices, and smaller classes to foster safety and belonging.

The digital divide persists. Students in rural, northern, and low-income communities face unreliable internet, outdated technology, and fewer course offerings – obstacles that limit

access to future employment and contradict the goals of a modern poverty reduction strategy.

Apprenticeships and Skilled Trades

Apprenticeships and skilled trades pathways can reduce poverty when they provide students with equitable access to stable, well-paid employment. Demand for trades workers is increasing as Ontario faces labour shortages. However, accelerated pathways that pull students out of school too early risk limiting their future opportunities.

Students – especially those from low-income or marginalized communities – should not have to choose between immediate income and completing the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) (OECTA 2023). Apprenticeship models must remain rooted in education, ensuring students receive academic support, guidance counselling, mental health services, and safe working conditions. When funded properly and integrated into the education system, apprenticeship pathways can provide meaningful careers and help break cycles of poverty.

Education as a Public Investment in Poverty Reduction

If the Government of Ontario is serious about reducing poverty, it must treat education as central to its strategy, not peripheral. Poverty reduction is not only about employment preparation – it is about ensuring that every child has access to the conditions that make learning possible: food, safety, belonging, stability, qualified teachers and education workers, modern learning environments, and hope. Investments in education pay dividends for generations; cuts deepen inequality and cost more in the long term. Timid, incremental policies are not enough. A bold, well-funded publicly funded education system must be at the heart of Ontario's next poverty reduction strategy.

ACCESS TO POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Access to post-secondary education (PSE) and lifelong learning is essential to any credible poverty reduction strategy. Postsecondary credentials are now one of the strongest determinants of employment, income security, and social mobility.

That said, in Ontario, access remains deeply inequitable. Students from low-income, rural, Indigenous, Black, racialized, and newcomer communities are significantly less likely to

attend or complete college, university, or apprenticeship training due to financial, social, and geographic barriers. These systemic inequities must be addressed if education is to function as a pathway out of poverty rather than a system that reproduces it.

Ontario's current Poverty Reduction Strategy acknowledges that education is a gateway to employment, but does not fully confront the financial and structural barriers that prevent low-income students from accessing post-secondary pathways (Ministry of Children, Community, and Social Services 2020).

Tuition in Ontario remains among the highest in Canada, and although the 2019 changes to the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) emphasized loans over grants, this has deepened student debt burdens and discouraged participation among those who can least afford to take financial risks. According to Statistics Canada (2023), students from the lowest-income quartile are half as likely to attend university compared to their highest-income peers, even when academic performance is comparable. Student debt in Ontario now averages over $28,000 for university graduates (Romard and Robinson 2023), disproportionately burdening first-generation and low-income learners.

Financial hardship is not the only barrier. Students from low-income households are more likely to work long hours while studying, experience food and housing insecurity, or drop courses due to caregiving responsibilities. In OECTA's 2020 submission, teachers reported that many students – especially those in marginalized communities – do not see post-secondary pathways as realistic due to cost, lack of guidance counselling, or family financial pressures (OECTA 2020). These realities undermine the province's economic goals and deepen cycles of intergenerational poverty.

Indigenous, rural, and northern learners face additional barriers, including long travel distances to institutions, limited local programming, and inadequate broadband access. Indigenous students also face the legacy of colonialism, underfunded schools, and ongoing systemic discrimination. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2015) calls for improved funding, culturally relevant supports, and guaranteed access to post-secondary education for Indigenous youth. Meeting these obligations must be central to Ontario's poverty strategy.

Lifelong learning and adult education must also be recognized as essential poverty reduction tools. Adult and continuing education programs provide opportunities for early school leavers, newcomers, and workers facing displacement due to automation, disability, or

economic transitions. However, these programs are funded at significantly lower rates than traditional day-school programs – often less than one third – and many adult learners face long waitlists and limited course offerings (OECTA 2020; OECTA 2025). Investing in adult education is critical to building an adaptable workforce and reducing long-term reliance on social assistance.

Apprenticeships and skilled trades training also hold potential for poverty reduction, but only when access is equitable and education is not sacrificed. Catholic teachers have cautioned against models that divert students from completing their high school diploma in favour of narrowly focused training (OECTA 2023). Without foundational education, young workers face limited mobility, higher risk of injury, and fewer protections in an evolving labour market.

To ensure post-secondary education contributes to poverty reduction, Ontario should restore a needs-based OSAP model, prioritizing grants over loans for low- and middle-income students. We must also increase public operating funding to colleges and universities to prevent downloading costs onto students.

At the same time, the government should turn its attention to expanding targeted supports for Indigenous student funding, Black and racialized student outreach, first-generation student programs, housing and transportation subsidies, school-to-college transition supports, and campus-based mental health services.

When post-secondary education is accessible, affordable, and supported, it becomes one of the most effective poverty reduction strategies available. When it is not, it entrenches inequity. The next poverty reduction strategy must choose the former.

DECENT WORK, LABOUR RIGHTS, AND EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

A credible poverty reduction strategy must recognize that employment alone does not lift people out of poverty – only *decent work* does. Increasingly, workers in Ontario are employed in low-wage, part-time, temporary, or contract positions with no benefits, pensions, or job security.

Nearly one in three jobs in Ontario is now considered precarious or non-standard, and low-wage work is especially concentrated among young people, women, Black and racialized workers, newcomers, and people with disabilities (Aragão and Pickthorne 2025). Many

individuals are forced to hold two or more jobs, without security. Employment standards have not kept pace with rising costs of living, and wages below local living wage thresholds force even full-time workers to rely on food banks, social assistance, or multiple jobs to survive.

Within the publicly funded education system, this reality is stark. Educational assistants, early childhood educators, lunchroom supervisors, school secretaries, custodians, and other frontline education workers – many of whom are women – are among the lowest-paid workers in the public sector, despite being essential to student learning and well-being (OECTA 2025). Many are employed on 10-month contracts, split shifts, or part-time schedules, often without benefits or pensions.

These conditions contribute directly to high turnover, staffing shortages, and disruptions in student support. The same dynamics are now affecting the teaching profession itself, with growing recruitment and retention challenges linked to workload, stagnant wages, and eroding working conditions.

Employment equity must also be central to poverty reduction. Racialized workers earn, on average, 16 to 25 per cent less than their white counterparts; Indigenous workers face disproportionately high unemployment and underemployment; and women – particularly Black, Indigenous, racialized, immigrant, and disabled women – remain overrepresented in the lowest-paid sectors of the economy (Statistics Canada 2023a; Ng and Gagnon 2020). Without targeted policies, poverty will continue to be gendered, racialized, and intergenerational.

At the same time, it is important to highlight that persons with disabilities experience some of the highest rates of poverty in Ontario, not because of individual inability, but because of systemic barriers in employment, education, housing, and social assistance.

Over 40 per cent of adults with disabilities in Ontario live in poverty, and many rely on ODSP, which provides incomes that remain 30 to 40 per cent below the poverty line. Inaccessible workplaces, discrimination in hiring, lack of accommodations in schools, and long wait times for assistive services further entrench inequality.

Poverty is not an inevitable outcome of disability; it is the result of policy choices that fail to guarantee income security, accessibility, and inclusion. A poverty reduction strategy must therefore ensure that disability rights and economic justice are treated as inseparable.

At the same time, strengthening labour rights should not be viewed as a barrier to economic growth, but rather as a proven anti-poverty strategy. Unionized workers earn higher wages, are more likely to have benefits and pensions, and experience greater job stability. Despite this, Ontario government legislation in recent years, such as Bill 124 and the imposition of contracts on education workers, have undermined collective bargaining rights and contributed to wage suppression across the broader public sector (OECTA 2025; OECTA 2020).

Ontario's poverty reduction strategy must involve a comprehensive decent work agenda. This should include: legislating a living wage tied to regional costs of living; guaranteeing at least 10 permanent paid sick days; job security and better access to benefits; enforcing fair scheduling and full-time employment where possible; strengthening protections for unionization; repealing wage suppression legislation; and embedding employment equity obligations across the public and private sectors.

ADDRESSING FOOD AND ECONOMIC SECURITY

Food insecurity is one of the most urgent and visible symptoms of poverty in Ontario, and any serious poverty reduction strategy must treat it as a systemic policy issue – not an act of charity. More than one million Ontarians used a food bank between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024, a 25 per cent increase over last year – and one in five children lives in a food-insecure household (Feed Ontario 2024; PROOF 2023).

This crisis is not caused by poor budgeting or personal choices but rather by inadequate incomes, low wages, unaffordable housing, and a weakened social safety net. Many food bank users are employed yet are still unable to afford basic necessities, because wages no longer keep pace with rent, groceries, or transportation – realities driven by inflationary pressures, price gouging, and corporate greed.

Schools see the consequences every day. Teachers report students arriving hungry, unable to focus, hoarding food for siblings, or frequently missing school due to unstable housing and income (OECTA 2025).

In many communities, school-based breakfast or snack programs are the only consistent source of nutrition for children. However, these programs rely predominantly on donations, volunteers, and fundraising, rather than stable provincial funding. Until the 2024 budget

announcement by the federal Liberal government, Canada held the dubious distinction as the only G7 country without a national school food program.

Food insecurity cannot be separated from broader economic insecurity. Low-wage and part-time workers – especially single mothers, Black and racialized workers, and newcomers to Canada – are increasingly represented among those who are employed but still hungry (Maytree 2025).

At the same time, the ongoing lack of access to clean drinking water in many Indigenous communities is not only a violation of human rights, but a direct driver of poverty – restricting health, education, economic development, and perpetuating systemic inequities created by colonial policies.

Ontario must adopt a rights-based approach to food security. This includes implementing a universal, publicly funded school nutrition program; raising Ontario Works (OW) and ODSP to the Market Basket Measure; ensuring living wages; and supporting community food hubs and Indigenous food sovereignty initiatives. Hunger is a policy failure – not an inevitability.

STRENGTHENING THE SOCIAL SAFETY NET

A meaningful poverty reduction strategy must recognize that poverty is not caused merely by a lack of employment, but by systemic gaps in housing, health, income security, childcare, and community supports.

Over the past eight years, Ontario's social safety net has been weakened by underfunding, fragmented service delivery, and policy choices that prioritize short-term savings over long-term stability. The consequences are felt most acutely by children and families in low-income communities – and also by schools, which increasingly serve as *de facto* social service providers when other systems fail (OECTA 2020).

Ontario's current Poverty Reduction Strategy emphasizes individual responsibility and rapid entry into employment, but it does not adequately address the structural failings that drive poverty (Ontario 2020). However, a robust social safety net is foundational to economic participation. Research consistently shows that investments in housing, income supports, and mental health reduce health care and justice system costs and improve long-term employment outcomes (Wellesley Institute, 2023; OECD, 2022).

Ontario must take a systems-based approach to poverty reduction by strengthening core social supports. Social assistance must meet basic needs, and income supports must no longer be treated as temporary charity, but as essential infrastructure for dignity and participation.

A strong safety net does not replace personal responsibility – it makes it possible. Without it, poverty becomes permanent, hardship is individualized, and schools are left to manage crises they cannot solve alone.

ENSURING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Affordable, stable housing is foundational to any poverty reduction strategy. However, Ontario is in the midst of a housing and homelessness crisis, with rents and home prices rising far faster than wages or social assistance.

A minimum-wage worker would need to work over 80 hours per week to afford a one-bedroom apartment in many Ontario cities (CMHC 2024). Households on OW or ODSP routinely spend 70 to 90 per cent of their income on rent, leaving little for food, transportation, or medication (ODPH 2024).

Teachers and education workers see the impacts: students experiencing eviction, overcrowded housing, long commutes from temporary shelters, and rising absenteeism tied to housing instability (OECTA 2020).

As such, any credible poverty reduction strategy must increase the supply of deeply affordable and supportive housing, expand rent-geared-to-income programs, protect tenants from renovictions, enhance portable housing benefits, and restore public builder initiatives. Rather than view housing as a commodity, we must reframe our mindset and view it as a human right and a prerequisite for learning, health, and dignity.

CLIMATE ACTION AS AN ECONOMIC TOOL

Climate action should be viewed simultaneously as an environmental imperative and an economic strategy that can reduce inequality and create resilient, sustainable communities. Low-income households are disproportionately affected by extreme weather, energy poverty, and poor air quality, yet they are least equipped to recover from climate-related disasters (OECD 2021). Investments in climate-resilient schools, public transit, green

infrastructure, and energy-efficient affordable housing create high-quality jobs in construction, skilled trades, and clean technology (OECTA 2025).

These sustainable jobs must include apprenticeships, fair wages, and union protections to ensure they contribute to poverty reduction rather than precarious employment. Climate policy that pairs emissions reduction with job creation, public ownership, and retraining opportunities – particularly in rural, northern, and industrial communities – can stimulate economic growth while advancing social justice. Climate action, when linked to decent work and public investment, is a tool for both environmental and economic security.

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

A poverty reduction strategy is only as strong as the measures used to evaluate it. Ontario must move beyond economic growth and employment statistics, and instead track indicators that reflect the real conditions of people's lives – food security, stable housing, access to publicly funded education, child well-being, mental health, and community safety.

Reliance on GDP or job creation alone masks the rise of working poverty, homelessness, and widening income inequality. Instead, Ontario should adopt equity-based metrics aligned with the Market Basket Measure, UN Sustainable Development Goals, and Genuine Progress Indicators (GPI), as recommended by researchers and anti-poverty groups (White 2025). Data must be disaggregated by race, disability, gender, and geography to expose systemic inequities. What we choose to measure determines what we choose to change – poverty reduction demands that we measure what truly matters for dignity and opportunity.

CONCLUSION

Ontario stands at a crossroads. The last poverty reduction strategy was developed in the shadow of a global pandemic that exposed deep inequalities and pushed many families to the brink. Today, rising costs of living, unstable employment, underfunded public services, and growing child poverty make it clear that incremental change is no longer enough. Poverty is not inevitable, it is the outcome of policy choices.

A renewed strategy must affirm this government's responsibility to ensure that every person in Ontario has access to the fundamental conditions of dignity: safe and affordable housing, nutritious food, quality publicly funded education, decent work and fair wages, accessible health and mental health care, and a strong social safety net.

Publicly funded education, early childhood learning, and supportive school communities must be recognized not as budgetary burdens, but as essential public infrastructure that reduces long-term costs and builds social and economic prosperity long into the future.

Ontario has the necessary tools, resources, and evidence to end poverty. What is required now is political will, sustained investment, and a commitment to justice rather than austerity. Children growing up in poverty cannot wait another decade. A bold, fully funded poverty reduction strategy is not just good social policy – it is the foundation of a fair, thriving, and hopeful Ontario.

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