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Halton Groups Welcome Government's Poverty Reduction Plan

Turning the corner on poverty

Burlington, December 10, 2008: Local Halton groups are welcoming a recently released poverty reduction plan by the Government of Ontario. The report entitled, *Breaking the Cycle*, provides leadership both socially and economically and turns a corner on poverty. It breaks away from the past when governments could ignore and could even make political gains on the backs of the poor with cutbacks in social assistance and social support programs.

Across the province and in Halton, individuals and groups concerned about poverty have been supporting the plan of the 25-in-5 Network for Poverty Reduction to reduce poverty by 25% for all within five years and 50% over ten years.

"We called on the Government of Ontario to produce a plan with targets, timetables and accountabilities," said Dr. Joey Edwardh, Executive Director of Community Development Halton. "The plan released by the Government of Ontario is a key first step in improving the lives of Ontario's poor families and children, and commits to lifting 80,000 Ontario children out of poverty."

But she also stated that the plan does not go far enough to address those who are most at-risk of poverty, particularly seniors, newcomers, people with disabilities, members of racialized communities and those on social assistance. She said "more attention must be given to creating liveable incomes, early learning and childcare spaces and affordable housing."

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The Burlington-Halton chapter of Make Poverty History is among those who are identifying the plan as a good foundation, but are pushing to see a good jobs strategy in which all people who work fulltime are ensured a standard of living out of poverty.

“Almost half of all Ontario families living in poverty have at least one parent working fulltime, year round,” said John Versluis, who chairs the local group. “Hard working Ontarians who meet their responsibilities by working full time should not be forced to raise their families in poverty.”

Anti-poverty activists are pleased that the Government plans to table legislation to have a dedicated secretariat to support the implementation of the poverty reduction plan and measure its success and failures. “We have a group in government with whom we can work to make this commitment to poverty reduction a reality,” commented John Versluis.

“A recent poll by Environics Research Group showed that 81% of Ontarians support government action to reduce poverty – especially during hard economic times,” added Dr. Edwardh. “It is critical that the Government of Ontario builds on this public support and makes an adequate down payment in their spring budget in order to meet their commitments and further strengthen their plan.”

For local information on poverty reduction, visit Community Development Halton at www.cdhalton.ca. For more information on the 25-in-5 Network for poverty reduction, visit www.25in5.ca. You can also visit Poverty Watch Ontario at www.povertywatchontario.ca.

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