

MEDIA RELEASE

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Ontario Speech from the Throne

Fair Ontario still a faint hope for people in deep poverty

Community leaders and groups across Ontario calling on the new Premier for action on a social justice agenda to improve the living conditions of more than 1.6 million Ontarians living in poverty were offered faint hope in today's Speech from the Throne. Reference to recommendations for social assistance reform by Commissioners Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh did not even make the Summary of Highlights posted at the front end of the speech. <http://www.premier.gov.on.ca/home/index.php>

Poverty Free Ontario (PFO), a province-wide network of individuals and organizations in 25 communities across Ontario, advocates for a provincial government commitment to end the deep poverty experienced by Ontarians living on social assistance and to end the working poverty of people earning the minimum wage.

The new Government under Premier Wynne's leadership states its commitment to implement recommendations in the Lankin and Sheikh report to help people find employment and to introduce an unspecified earnings exemption for social assistance recipients before benefits are clawed back. The Government will make a special effort on supporting youth job creation. The Speech also recognized the need for affordable and secure housing.

"These measures are not unimportant, but we hope they are only the first glimmers of the Premier's social justice agenda," says Peter Clutterbuck, PFO Coordinator, "We were really hoping to see some evidence of the Government's intention to introduce the \$100/month increase in benefits to people on social assistance as also recommended by Commissioners Lankin and Sheikh. A fair society cannot tolerate so many of its members experiencing monthly cycles of hunger and hardship at great cost to their health and well-being."

"We remain hopeful that the Government's first budget will more strongly reflect the social justice mission that the Premier has espoused," adds Clutterbuck.

Poverty Free Ontario is an initiative of the Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO) working with local community groups across the province www.povertyfreeontario.ca

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