



## INTERFAITH SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REFORM COALITION

### **ISARC Provincial Social Audit Forum**

June 2, 2010, at University of St Michael's College, Toronto

*A provincial gathering of faith leaders and participants in the local social audit forums to share and discuss the initial findings of our community hearings on poverty in advance of the release of ISARC's book Persistent Poverty: Dispatches from the Margins.*

#### **Resolution to Eliminate Poverty in Ontario**

- Whereas as faith communities, we affirm the principle of dignity of life for all and the means to sustain that dignity;
- Whereas we have heard many desperate stories of terrible poverty from across the province and the resulting loss of human dignity;
- Whereas we have heard how those who live in poverty are very fearful for their own future and the future of their children;
- Whereas there exist many regulatory barriers that prevent individuals and families from accessing the full benefits and services of social assistance as well as medical, dental, and housing benefits;

Therefore, the members of the ISARC Provincial Social Audit Forum demand that the government and legislature restore the resilience and hope of those living in poverty by:

- Implementing the five principles for a new nutritional supplement for all people on social assistance as spelled out by the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction, the ODSP Action Coalition and the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. This nutritional supplement must be understood as a benefit above the Special Diet, not its replacement.
- Implementing substantial increases in social assistance.
- Releasing immediately the Social Assistance Review Advisory Council Report and the Ontario Affordable Housing Strategy, promised for Spring 2010. The housing strategy should include safe and decent affordable housing which is integrated with other housing and has units for diverse populations in Ontario.
- Ensuring that this Spring's long term affordable housing strategy provides protection and maintenance for existing social housing and includes an immediate commitment to create new affordable housing.

- Introducing an Ontario Housing Benefit with sufficient funding in the next budget.
- Reviewing the Minimum Wage and adjusting it to a Living Wage, which is currently \$15/ hour in Ontario. There should be annual Cost of Living increases.
- Addressing provincial employment equity both within government and in the private sector.
- Eliminating the “Stupid Rules” within the provincial social assistance systems, using input from those most affected by these rules: recipients of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program. These have been collected by the Income Security Advocacy Centre and the 25 in 5 Network.

As Ontario struggles to recover from the recession, poverty elimination must be the first priority. This focus prepares the province to compete in the global economy and at once saves significant dollars in other areas of the budget, such as health, long-term care, and public safety.

The 130 forum participants at the June 2 forum approved this resolution unanimously.

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