

Poverty Advocacy Toolkit

<http://www.isarc.ca/projects.php?id=666>

December 17, 2011

With the provincial election behind us, ISARC is prepared to continue its advocacy efforts in solidarity with the diverse faith communities in Ontario to ensure poverty elimination is included in the political debates at Queen's Park over the next four years.

STEP 1: Congratulate your Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP)

Send a congratulatory letter to your newly elected or re-elected Member of Provincial Parliament. Make sure to remind them in the letter about the focus of poverty elimination and that you wish to have a meeting with them in the near future to discuss the poverty-related issues and solutions.

ISARC Letter – Hon. Dalton McGuinty

ISARC Letter – Hon. Tim Hudak

ISARC Letter – Hon. Andrea Horwath

STEP 2: Put together an interfaith delegation

Be sure to plan a delegation made up of the members of diverse faith communities to advocate together on poverty issues. This will demonstrate the solidarity of faith communities on these social and economic issues to public officials and civil servants. It will also help to build strong relationships and dialogue amongst faith communities ensuring a stronger, more inclusive community.

STEP 3: Get educated on the issues

Hold a pre-meeting with the delegation to get educated on the poverty-related issues that will be discussed with the MPP. It is best to focus on practical solutions in addition to presenting the problems. Download any of the resources at the end of this page that discuss the cost of poverty and the economic sense for poverty elimination. You can also download the ISARC primer on key public policy issues and “asks” for the Ontario Government below. Invite content experts as speakers to your preparatory meetings to get a good understanding of the subject matter.



STEP4: Visit your MPP

Arrange a meeting with the MPP in your riding, bring along as many people from the interfaith delegation, the Persistent Poverty book and a printout of the Policy Issue Brief. Let your MPP know your groups' commitment to the poverty elimination movement. Remind them about that every political party voted in the Poverty Reduction Act in 2009 and ask for their party's position to advance its goals and objectives. Remind them of the current review under way of Ontario's income support systems by the Social Assistance Review Commission headed by Frances Lankin and Dr. Munir Sheikh. Ask them to take seriously the recommendations in this report and not simply have it collect dust on a shelf.

STEP 5: Hold a "Meet and Greet" Event

Host a Meet and Greet event for the MPPs for all the ridings in your region or municipality to meet with leaders of faith communities. In some regions, like Kitchener-Waterloo there are four MPPs, if you include the City of Cambridge. Other regions, may only have one. In Toronto, it may be beneficial to have local Meet and Greet events in the four districts (Toronto, North York, Etobicoke and Scarborough) since each district has an average of 8-10 ridings. Find a keynote speaker to open the evening with an overview of poverty elimination strategies and issues impacting Ontario citizens living on low-incomes. Remind them that every political party voted in the Poverty Reduction Act in 2009. Give each MPP an opportunity to give an overview of their plans for poverty elimination over the next four years. The rest of the evening can be an opportunity for casual conversation and discussions with political officials.

STEP 6: Keep the Dialogue Going

After you've meet with your MPP, make sure to keep the dialogue going by keeping them informed about the issues with regular correspondence (e.g. emails, phone calls). Inform them of local events/demonstrations being planned by your group and/or ISARC.

STEP 7: Connect with other Social Justice Groups

Bring the faith communities in your neighbourhood to meet with other community organizations, social service agencies, and other groups advocating for social justice. Now is the time for the faith sector to strategically partner with other grassroots movements for real change to occur. Caution: Do your research before partnering with other groups. Be sure that the groups with whom you wish to partner have the same values as your group. Do some research on the group's past activities and advocacy track record to determine if they are the best fit for your group.

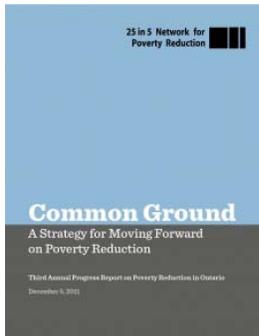
STEP 8: Write to your Local Newspaper

Faith groups need to regularly raise public awareness on poverty issues by writing to their local newspaper's editorial board. Many newspapers consider it newsworthy when local faith leaders stand up on social issues with political relevance. The easiest message to write is a comment or response to an article you've read in the newspaper that perhaps undermines the poverty elimination message. Also, comment on how well or poorly your local newspaper covers poverty-related news stories. Be direct and clear.

STEP 9: Meet with Government Staff

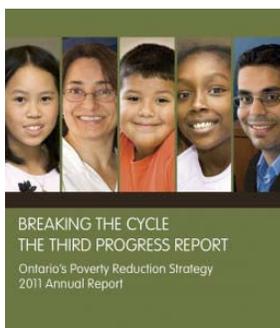
Don't forget that once a legislation is passed, it needs to be implemented by the staff working in government offices. Take the time to meet with the government staff and make sure they are aware of your local group and the impact you are making in your community.

Resources



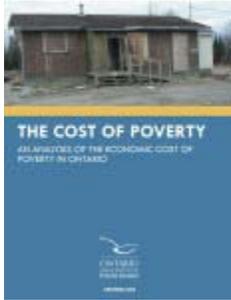
Common Ground: A Strategy for Moving Forward on Poverty Reduction. Prepared by 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction. Fall 2011

Ontario has officially passed the halfway point to its promised target date of reducing child poverty by 25 per cent by December 2013. Much has happened since December 4, 2008, the date the Ontario government announced its first five-year poverty reduction commitment. But, especially in light of ongoing economic turmoil, much more needs to be done in order to meet the target. This report examines the progress Ontario has made to date and lays out the next steps required to make good on the promise.



3rd Annual Report on the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Prepared by Government of Ontario, 2011.

This report is the official 3rd Annual Report on Poverty Reduction Strategy prepared by the Government of Ontario listing achieved successes and recommendations for next steps to achieve targets for 2013.



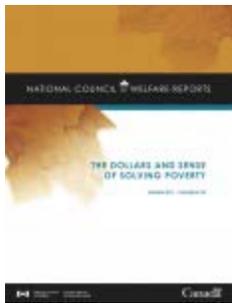
Cost of Poverty: An Analysis of the Economic Cost of Ontario
Ontario Association of Food Banks, November 2005

Canadians who look at poverty through the eyes of those it afflicts know the poor bear huge costs from having to live with deprivation and the stresses it imposes. Together with the strains they create within families, these direct costs of poverty – hunger and inadequate nutrition, inferior housing, alienation from mainstream society and scant opportunity for a better life – take a heavy toll of the poor, their self-esteem and the ability of their children to learn and thrive in school.



Report – Dollars and Sense of Solving Poverty (In brief)
National Council of Welfare, 2011

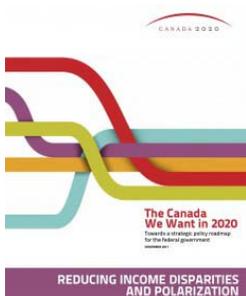
This report is about the high dollar cost we are currently paying for the consequences of poverty, and why investments to end poverty make better economic sense. There are different approaches to poverty. An approach based on short-term spending to help people in poverty get by can often carry indirect costs. It does not do a good job of reducing poverty itself.



Report – Dollars and Sense of Solving Poverty (Full Version)

National Council of Welfare, 2011

This report is about the high dollar cost we are currently paying for the consequences of poverty, and why investments to end poverty make better economic sense. There are different approaches to poverty. An approach based on short-term spending to help people in poverty get by can often carry indirect costs. It does not do a good job of reducing poverty itself.



The Canada We Want in 2020: Reducing Income Disparities and Polarization

This report explores policy changes for federal government to help reduce income disparities and polarization in Canadian society.

ISARC Submissions to Government

The Special Diet Allowance. Letter to Hon. Madeline Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services, March 21, 2010.

Meeting with Honourable Laurel Broten. ISARC's meeting with Honourable Laurel Broten, Minister of Children and Youth Services on March 9, 2010.

Ontario Budget and child care funding. Letter to Premier McGuinty, March 8, 2010

It takes a village to raise a child. Submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs – January 26, 2010 in London

Affordable Housing is Key to our Future: reducing poverty and building healthy communities where all can contribute. Submission to Ontario Affordable Housing Strategy – December 21, 2009

Submission to Legislative Standing Committee on Social Policy Concerning Bill 152: The Poverty Reduction Act – April 20, 2009, at Queen's Park

Submission to the Standing Committee Regarding Bill 152 – An Act Respecting a Long-term Strategy To Reduce Poverty In Ontario – a wise and passionate offering by Sister Pauline Lally, Sister of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, Kingston, ON, April 20, 2009, at Queen's Park

A Down Payment on Poverty Reduction – Reducing Poverty: Is this budget an adequate down payment? – December 11, 2008 at Queen's Park

Pre-Budget Submission – January 30, 2008, in Guelph