

Challenge the Liberal Government's Record on Poverty Reduction

Ten Assertions	Ten Challenges
<p>Our government has increased social assistance rates by more than 16 percent since we came to power</p>	<p>Social assistance was cut by 22% in 1995 by Mike Harris and this amount has never been replaced by the Liberals. The cost of living has risen 22% since the Liberal government came into power which means increases have not kept up with inflation.</p> <p>In addition consider the Liberal government's track record on poverty reduction under Premier McGuinty. His government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • froze the minimum wage since 2010 • cut the Community Maintenance and Start-Up Benefit • threatened to cut the Special Diet Allowance – twice!
<p>Ontario's 2013 budget takes important first steps to reform social assistance in line with recommendations from a review commission headed by Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh.</p> <p>The Commission proposed a package of reforms, including a \$100 rate increase.</p> <p>It also suggested that eliminating the Special Diet Allowance could help to pay for such an increase. We heard a great deal of concern about this from clients and advocates, so we decided to leave the Special Diet Allowance in place while we have further discussion.</p>	<p>The commission's hands were tied by the government's instructions that recommendations could not require new funds.</p> <p>The Special Diet allowance has been kept as the result of incredibly hard work by community advocates. Increases can't be funded by cuts elsewhere in the system.</p>
<p>The 2013 Budget has invested more than \$400 million into social assistance over the next 3 years.</p> <p>This additional investment will increase support by 1 per cent for adult Ontario Works recipients and people with disabilities receiving Ontario Disability Support Program(ODSP) benefits.</p>	<p>This increase is below the current cost of living increase which is approximately 2.7% in Ontario. Even when recipients receive an increase they still have insufficient funds to cover increased costs.</p>

<p>We will also provide single adults without children on Ontario Works with an additional \$14 a month, for a total increase of \$20 each month.</p>	<p>Why only \$14 when the Commission recommended an immediate \$100 increase to the base rate?</p> <p>What is the rationale that justifies \$14?</p>
<p>We will allow all social assistance clients to earn up to \$200 a month without reducing their social assistance.</p>	<p>Thanks! The old 50% deduction was too high and didn't give people enough extra money to live or even afford to go to work. Another obvious problem was that people on OW got no financial benefit from income they earned from self-employment.</p>
<p>We will increase the amount of assets Ontario Works clients are allowed to retain, such as bank savings or a car, so clients won't have to give up all they own before they can get help.</p>	<p>Thanks! This was a constant request from advocates and will enable people some additional financial control in their lives and the opportunity to improve their lives.</p>
<p>Poverty is a complex challenge that requires a variety of approaches.</p>	<p>This is true, but creativity has reduced poverty in many other countries and the Ontario Government could be a leading force in bringing together the community who has solutions.</p>
<p>The government has a new Minimum Wage Advisory panel.</p>	<p>We don't need a panel we need action. The current minimum wage of \$10.25 puts workers 19% below the poverty line. While food, transit and rent costs have soared, the minimum wage has been frozen for over 3 years.</p> <p>\$14 per hour is what is needed to bring the minimum wage 10% above the poverty line for a single person working 35 hours a week.</p>
<p>We need a federal partner willing to help.</p>	<p>Yes, and we will lobby the federal government with you, once we know you have listened and moving forward on the needed reforms. We need action, not consultation.</p>