

Friday, December 14, 2012

Media Announcement:

Ontario Communities Unite and Issue Joint Statement regarding provincial cuts to homelessness prevention programs

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and Hamilton Organizing for Poverty Elimination (HOPE) invited communities to meet today to strategize and mobilize in response to the provincial government's cuts to critical programs for individuals on social assistance.

The communities endorsed the following **Joint Statement**:

“Twelve communities from across the Province met in Hamilton on Dec 14, 2012 to deal with the consequences of the cuts to CSUMB and discretionary benefits.

On January 1st there will be a devastating impact on people in Ontario.

The Province's 1% increase to Social Assistance Rates is not enough to mitigate the damage. Uploading social services is appreciated, but is not going to stop the devastation. While it is correct the programs have been moved to another Ministry, the funding has been cut in half. These facts are not in dispute.

To help people get the jobs that will lift them out of poverty, they need these benefits. In a time when our economy is still struggling, adding barriers to those who are able to gain employment and better quality of life is counterproductive to building a stronger Ontario.

It is far more cost effective to keep people in affordable housing than to deal with the costs and negative health effects of homelessness.

It is bad social policy. It is bad housing policy. It is bad economic policy.

We DEMAND this policy be reversed. We need long term stability. Poverty can be reduced.

Stop legislating homelessness - every person in Ontario deserves a safe place to call home. Stop using the hysteria of the austerity platform to rationalize these inhumane cuts.

The consequences are too great for ALL of us.

Reverse the termination of the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit and reinstate discretionary benefits.

Help the people of Ontario and our economy.

Eliminating Poverty is THE Priority.”

Top 10 Tactics to mobilize the Joint Statement were also discussed. “We intend to demonstrate to the provincial government and to the opposition parties that eliminating poverty is the priority; communities will not sit idly by as critical programs that prevent homelessness, promote health and maintain dignity are slashed” said Tom Cooper Director of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction.

Representatives from community anti-poverty organizations from Windsor, Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, Brant, Niagara, Cambridge, Toronto, Belleville, Peterborough, Halton, Peel and York Regions endorsed the Joint Statement.

Provincial organizations such as the Social Planning Network of Ontario, the Income Security Advocacy Centre, the Canada Centre for Policy Alternatives (Ontario), the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, Vibrant Communities Canada, the Put Food in the Budget Campaign and the Wellesley Institute were also in attendance.

For more information, please contact Tom Cooper, Director Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction at 905-523-5600 x 244 (office) / 905-512-7863 (mobile)