

**Ministry of Children
and Youth Services**

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Dear Partner:

Just one year ago, Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy was introduced when our government committed to a pathway that will *Break the Cycle* of poverty in Ontario. Our plan sets real targets for reducing poverty so that everyone—especially children—has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Today, I was pleased to table in the Legislature the First Annual Report on the Strategy. The report highlights the progress our province has made in the past year to reduce poverty and help low-income families build brighter futures for themselves and their children.

Earlier this year, the *Poverty Reduction Act 2009* was passed. This is landmark legislation that mandates this and future governments to: develop a new Poverty Reduction Strategy at least every five years; consult with those living in poverty; and report annually on their progress. Most importantly, the act ensures poverty reduction remains a priority in this province today and in the future.

With that goal in mind, we have been working hard on all fronts to support Ontario's families, especially children and youth. During the first year of the strategy, several initiatives and programs were introduced to assist low-income families and their kids, including:

- **Accelerating the phase-in of the Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) two full years ahead of schedule, bringing the maximum benefit to \$1,100 annually per child; it will increase again to \$1,310 annually per child within five years;**
- **Committing to the phase-in of full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds beginning in September 2010, with an investment of \$200 million in 2010 and \$300 million the following year; a portion of the phase-one schools will serve**
- **low-income neighbourhoods;**
- **Investing more than \$1.2 billion in federal and provincial funding for social and affordable housing over two years;**
- **Stabilizing rent bank funding at \$5 million annually, helping tenants with short-term rent arrears stay in their homes;**
- **Increasing the Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program rates to help our most vulnerable families and individuals;**

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- Increasing the minimum wage to \$9.50 in 2009, and to \$10.25 in 2010—representing a 50 per cent increase since 2004;
- Investing in after-school programs that benefited more than 15,500 children and youth in 2009;
- Expanding the Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT) dental program to include children and youth up to their 18th birthday through an investment of \$13 million;
- Expanding the Youth Opportunities Strategy—more than doubling the number of disadvantaged youth who are gaining valuable summer job experience with local employers and police services; and
- Amending the *Employment Standards Act* to provide new protections for temporary agency workers and invested \$4.5 million to hire employment standards officers.

All of these steps have contributed significantly to our progress in setting a strong foundation to build on as we continue to work toward our goal of lifting 90,000 children out of poverty within five years. A key achievement in this first year has been establishing indicators to measure our progress. These indicators include:

- Birth Weight;
- School Readiness;
- Educational Progress;
- High School Graduation Rates;
- Depth of Poverty Measure;
- Low Income Measure;
- A new Standard of Living Indicator (also called Deprivation Index); and
- A new Ontario Housing Measure.

Thank you for your ongoing engagement in our province's efforts to reduce poverty. Your support and involvement is crucial as we forge ahead. I am confident that together we can make a difference where it really counts: in the lives of Ontario's kids, their families, and in communities across the province.

Please visit our website to read Ontario's first [Annual Report](#) of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, available for download at ontario.ca/growingstronger.

Sincerely,



Laurel Broten
Minister