



Food Security in Guelph-Wellington: A Provincial Election Issue

PROVINCIAL
ELECTION
2014

Vote Out Poverty

Food
Security



food facts:

1 in 5 households in Guelph Wellington earning \$40,000 or less are food insecure.¹

7.3% of all households in Guelph Wellington are food insecure.²

Between 2009 and 2013 the cost of the nutritious food basket for a family of 4 increased by 14.5%. During the same period, minimum wage increased by only 7.9%, from \$9.50 to \$10.25 per hour.³

30% increase in # of clients served at food banks in Guelph between 2005-2010.⁴

29% of food bank users in Guelph-Wellington are children between the ages of 0-14 years.⁵

It costs \$195 per week to feed a family of 4 in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph a healthy diet.⁶

It costs \$50.52 per week to feed a single adult in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph a healthy diet.⁷

In the UGDSB, during the 2012-13 school year 1,044,454 meals were served by Guelph & Wellington Food & Friends.⁸

Food Insecurity = not being able to access healthy foods

Food security and income are closely linked. Though rising costs of food are a factor, it is clear that inadequate income is a major root issue when it comes to food insecurity. In our region we have 35 emergency food providers trying to provide food assistance to those who need it, but their efforts cannot counteract for a system that allows for inadequate incomes.

There is a direct relationship between income and health. Children who live in low income households are particularly affected. Children who experience food shortages often experience a myriad of problems related to growth and development such as behavioural and learning problems.⁹ As well, they are more likely to have a range of health problems throughout their life, even if their socioeconomic status changes later in life.

A family of 4 on Ontario Works receives a monthly income of \$2,112. Using average market rents for our area and the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Nutritious Food Basket calculations, they can expect to spend \$1,942 on rent and food each month. This leaves them with \$170 with which to purchase all their other necessities, such as transportation, clothing, non-covered medical expenses, child care, school supplies, etc. A single person on OW receives \$626 per month, however, according to the Nutritious Food Basket, the cost of a market rent bachelor apartment together with the cost of healthy food, would require them to spend \$852.24.¹⁰ Clearly the rates are inadequate for healthy living.

How can the province address this issue?

Immediately increase social assistance rates so people can meet their basic needs

Implement a guaranteed annual income to lift all Ontarians out of poverty

Implement an Ontario Housing Benefit

Increase access to social and affordable housing

Questions to ask your provincial candidates:

1. What will your party do to ensure everyone has access to affordable and healthy food in a dignified manner?

2. Does your party support raising the minimum wage above the poverty line? How will you implement this?

3. Will your party commit to making sure people on OW & ODSP have incomes that lift them out of poverty?

4. Does your party support the call for a Guaranteed Annual Income?

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Food Fact Citations: 1. Canadian Community Health Survey, 2012 2. Ibid 3. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (2013). Addressing Social Determinants of Health in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph; Ontario Ministry of Labour Consumer Price Index by Province 2009 to 2013 retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/101/cst01/econ09g-eng.htm> 4. United Way of Guelph Wellington Social Planning. (September, 2011) Poverty in Guelph and Wellington County Factsheet. Retrieved from: http://unitedwayguelph.com/cms/documents/pdfs/124/POVERTY_FACT_SHEET-SEPT_2011.pdf 5. WDG Public Health (2013). Addressing Social Determinants of Health in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph 6. WDG Public Health, The Cost of Healthy Eating in Wellington, Dufferin, Guelph 2013 7. Ibid 8. MacFarlane, A. Food and Friends Stats, Personal email communication, May 2014 9. Campaign 2000 (2010). Report Card on Children and Family Poverty in Canada. 10. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, Board of Health Report, October 2, 2013. Appendix 1.

Poverty is a serious issue in the province and we need solutions

Eliminating poverty saves us money and benefits everyone

Ignoring poverty is simply too costly in economic and social terms. Poverty has significant costs for governments and private citizens. Poverty is linked to compromised health, lost opportunities, lower educational outcomes for children, early use of our health care facilities, lower life span, illiteracy, family violence and unemployment. Eliminating poverty has many benefits: better population health; huge cost savings to governments and tax payers; better jobs and a more productive workforce, increased prosperity and an expanded tax base; and improved health and education outcomes for children, which are essential for breaking the cycle of poverty.

THE FACTS:

- In Ontario, the federal and provincial government lose approximately \$10.4 billion to \$13.1 billion annually due to poverty, a loss equal to 10.8%-16.6% of the provincial budget.¹
- Child poverty costs Ontario \$4.6 to \$5.9 billion annually.²
- Approximately \$2.9 billion is spent annually on poverty-induced health care costs, in Ontario.³
- Of 27 factors identified as having an impact on child development, up to 80% were seen to improve as family income increases.⁴

THE FACTS:

- The first Poverty Reduction Strategy focused on poor children. It demonstrated that well designed social policy works. From 2008-2011, child poverty in Ontario declined by 9.2%, despite the worst economic recession since the 1930s.⁵
- Investments in reducing child poverty lifted 40,000 children out of poverty and prevented 60,000 children from falling into poverty.⁶
- During the mid-1970s, the poverty rate of seniors fell from 30% to 5% as a result of the introduction of an income top-up for seniors who were living below the poverty line.⁷
- A guaranteed annual income and minimum wage levels that lift people out of poverty, would ensure that all individuals and families are able to afford the basic necessities of shelter, food, clothing and basic living for themselves and their children.⁸

Everyone should have enough money to meet their basic needs

In Ontario, the current minimum wage is not enough to ensure that full-time work is a pathway out of poverty. Many full-time low-wage workers in Ontario live in poverty and do not have access to prescription, dental and vision care benefits. As low-wage and unstable employment increases in Ontario, those working full-time and living in poverty will increase. Likewise, individuals and families in receipt of social assistance (Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program) live well below the poverty line and have to make the difficult choice between buying food and other monthly necessities, and paying the rent.

THE FACTS:

- The working poor, as a % of the working-age population, increased by 15% across Canada and by 24% in Ontario, between 2000 and 2005.⁹
- In Ontario, approximately 22% of workers, more than 1 in 5, work at unstable (precarious) employment.¹⁰
- The living wage (hourly rate at which a household can meet its basic needs) has been calculated at \$15.95 in Guelph & Wellington, nearly \$5/hour more than the new \$11/hour minimum wage.¹¹
- An individual earning the full-time living wage earns over \$9,000 more than an individual earning minimum wage.¹²

Poverty can be eliminated

Poverty is not inevitable. It is a matter of ill conceived public policy. We all benefit from good social and economic policy and well designed social programs. Make no mistake, eliminating poverty requires political commitment, collaboration and investment in vital services such as housing, health and dental benefits, adequate social assistance incomes, and early learning and child care. When governments enact the right policies and support them with the right mix of investments, the lives of all vulnerable Ontarians can be changed dramatically, we all benefit.

The Poverty Task Force is calling on the provincial government to:

- Support a Guaranteed Annual Income to lift all people out of poverty
- Introduce an Ontario Housing Benefit to all people living on low-income
- Ensure universal health care covers dental, vision, and prescription drugs for all
- Increase rates for Ontario Works and ODSP so that people can meet their basic needs

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Citations: 1 Robson, (2011). Guelph Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination – Research Report: The Cost of Poverty citing Laurie (2008). The Cost of Poverty: An Analysis of the Economic Cost of Poverty in Ontario. Ontario Association of Food Banks. Toronto. 2 Laurie, N. (2008). The cost of poverty: An analysis of the economic cost of poverty in Ontario. Ontario Association of Food Banks, Toronto. 3 Ibid 4 Ibid 5 Robson, (2011). Guelph Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination – Research Report: The Cost of Poverty. 6 Ibid 7 Mental Health Commission of Canada (2014). National Final Report Cross-Site At Home/Chez Soi Project 8 Campaign 2000, (2013) Beyond Austerity: Investing in Ontario's Future. 2013 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Ontario. 9 (Campaign 2000 – Responding to the Poverty Reduction Strategy April 2014). 10 Segal, H. (2013). Why Guaranteeing the Poor an Income Will Save Us All in the End in Huffington Post. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/hugh-segal/guaranteed-annual-income_b_3037347.html? 11 Ibid 12 Ibid 13 Law Commission of Ontario (2012). Quick Facts About Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Work. Black, S. (August 15, 2012). Precarious Work, health and income inequality. Wellesley Institute. Retrieved at: <http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/economics/precarius-work-health-and-income-inequality/> 14 Ibid