



Health in Guelph-Wellington: A Provincial Election Issue

PROVINCIAL
ELECTION
2014

Vote Out Poverty

Health
Inequities

Income is one of the most important factors that affects health¹

Income inequality is a serious threat to the health, well-being and opportunities available to low-income children and families. Canadians with the lowest incomes are likely to suffer from chronic conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, heart disease, and to live with a disability.²

Seniors and low-income Ontarians are most vulnerable when it comes to oral health. While 68% of Ontarians report having private dental insurance, only 36% of older Ontarians and 40% of lower income Ontarians have private dental insurance.³ Limited access to dental services can lead to severe health complications such as respiratory infection among older adults, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes as well as negative social consequences.⁴ Many Ontarians without dental insurance use emergency departments rather than dental offices, due to financial barriers. In 2012, there were close to 58,000 visits to Ontario hospitals for dental problems.⁵

How can the province address this issue?

- * Ensure universal health care covers dental, vision, and prescription drugs for all
- * Support a Guaranteed Annual Income to lift all people out of poverty
- * Increase rates for Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program to ensure all people can meet their basic needs
- * Introduce an Ontario Housing Benefit - which will ensure that low-income households have more money in their pockets for nutritious food and health related costs

Questions to ask your local candidates:

1. What will you do to make sure everyone in Ontario can afford to see the dentist and get the prescription drugs and vision care they need?
2. With such a strong link between poverty and health, what will you do to ensure everyone in Ontario has enough income to live free from poverty?

health facts:

Children that grow up with ongoing forms of adversity, where they be socioeconomic or psychosocial, are more prone later in life to develop premature health diseases such as heart disease, autoimmune conditions, certain kinds of strokes, and to be more vulnerable to certain kinds of cancers.⁶

In Ontario, approximately \$2.9 billion is spent annually on poverty-induced health costs.⁷

One in every five people in Ontario doesn't visit a dentist because of cost. This means thousands of people are living with pain and infection in their mouths.⁸

Ontario has the lowest per capita public sector spending on dental services, at \$5.67 per person compared to the national average of \$19.54.⁹

12.1% of Guelph residents and 14% of children less than 6 years old were living in poverty in 2010 (based on Low-Income Measure after-tax).¹⁰

8.4% of residents and 15.1% of children less than 6 years old, in Wellington County (excluding Guelph) were living in poverty in 2010 (based on Low-Income Measure after-tax).¹¹



Election Fact Sheets brought
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Health Fact Citations: 1. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (2013). Addressing Social Determinants of Health in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph: A Public Health Perspective on local health, policy and program needs 2. Ibid 3. King, A. (2012). Oral Health - More Than Just Cavities: A Report by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer 4. Ibid 5. Ibid 6. Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (2013). Addressing Social Determinants of Health in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph: A Public Health Perspective on local health, policy and program needs 7. Laurie, N. (2008) The Cost of Poverty: An analysis of the Economic Cost of Poverty in Ontario. Ontario Association of Food Banks 8. Ontario Oral Health Alliance (2014) Election Alert, May 2014 9. King, A. (2012). Oral Health - More Than Just Cavities: A Report by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer 10. Statistics Canada (2011). National Housing Survey 11. Ibid

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 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.

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 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

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. Robson, (2011). Guelph Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination – Research Report: The Cost of Poverty. 4. Ibid 5. Campaign 2000, (2013) Beyond Austerity: Investing in Ontario's Future. 2013 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Ontario. 6. (Campaign 2000 – Responding to the Poverty Reduction Strategy April 2014). 7. 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? 8. Ibid 9. Ibid 10. Law Commission of Ontario (2012). Quick Facts About Vulnerable Workers and Precarious Work. Block, 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/> 11. Ellery, R., Murvi, W. (2013) A Living Wage for Guelph & Wellington. Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination.