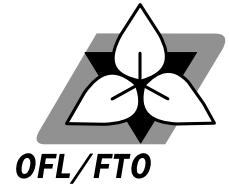




Income Security



Income security continues to be a major issue for women. The growing income inequality is a disgrace and is one of the McGuinty government's biggest failures. Ontario's poorest citizens were already severely punished during the Harris years, but with inflation taken into account, they are actually now worse off than they were when McGuinty was elected in 2003.

Over one million people in Ontario earn less than \$10 an hour. Most low wage jobs, 71%, are with fast food chains, retail giants, or temp agencies. 61% of Ontario's minimum wage earners are women; 31% of all women earn poverty wages (less than \$10/hr.) and 38% of women of colour are among the working poor. Aboriginal and recent immigrants make up a disproportionate share of low-wage earners. The Ontario government, under the McGuinty Liberals, recently voted themselves a 27% salary increase. Think about it – the raise alone is more than a full year's income of a worker earning minimum wage in Ontario.

More and more women are working non-standard (part-time, temporary, sub-contracted) jobs generally without benefits and with little or no security. The existing *Employment Standards Act* is outdated and allows 1 in 3 workplaces in Ontario to violate the *Act*.

Far too many women are still being forced to choose between paying the rent or feeding their children and are living in deprivation and isolation. No one in our rich province should be deprived of adequate nutrition, safe housing or a decent standard of living. The reality is that more than 1.6 million people in Ontario today do, and the majority of these are women and children.

Since 2003 the McGuinty Liberals:

- After a massive grass roots campaign to increase the minimum wage from \$8 to \$10, McGuinty announced an increase – but phased in over three years.
- Brought in the Ontario Child Benefit to replace child welfare benefits and the Ontario Child Care Supplement for all children under 18 years of age. But it will be phased in over 5 years, starting at \$250 per child in 2007, increasing to \$1,100 per child in 2011.

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- In 2003 the Liberals promised to stop the clawback of the National Child Benefit Supplement to families on social assistance. That promise has been broken - only a fraction of that benefit is being given to the poorest families in the province.
- Social assistance rates have increased by only 5%.
- Moved to restrict the availability of funding for special diets for social assistance recipients.
- A \$3.6 million budget increase for employment standards enforcement but no movement to reform an outdated system.
- As a result of the slow progress on increasing welfare rates and the minimum wage, thousands of people continue to rely on food banks. In Toronto alone, 140,000 people use the Daily Bread Food Bank every month, and many of these are female, seniors and children.

What Women Need

Women need an increase in the minimum wage to \$10 an hour **NOW**. We need a range of quality programs so women can get the education and training required to secure a good job with decent wages, benefits and working conditions. Women can gain economic freedom and earn a living wage if these programs, affordable housing and child care are accessible.

Ask Your Local Candidate:

- Do you believe that a living wage is a basic human right and would you increase the minimum wage to \$10 an hour immediately?
- Are you in favour of ending the entire clawback National Child Benefit Supplement immediately?
- Are you in favour of raising welfare rates and fully reinstating the funding for special diets for social assistance recipients?
- If elected, will you work to reform employment standards so that they protect women working in non-standard jobs?

For more details go to the following websites:

Ontario Needs A Wage Campaign: www.incomesecurity.org/campaign

Ontario Coalition for Social Justice: www.ocsj.ca

One Million Reasons Campaign: www.amillionreasons.ca

Step It Up Ontario: www.stepitupontario.ca and Campaign 2000:
www.campaign2000.ca