



For a Better Ontario. Leadership Matters.

The Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario
401-19 Duncan Street
Toronto, Ontario
M5H 3H1

To: Sarah Blackstock, Research and Policy Analyst
Income Security Advocacy Centre
425 Adelaide St. West 5th Floor
Toronto, ON M5V 3C1

From: PC Party of Ontario

Re: Income Security Advocacy Centre Survey Response

We would like to thank you for taking the time to share your concerns. The Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, led by John Tory, is committed to leading the fight against poverty in Ontario.

A key part of our “Plan for Ontario's Future” is working to fight poverty and support vulnerable populations in Ontario. Our plan starts from the premise that creating more jobs will give more people opportunities to escape poverty. However, it also recognizes that some people, trapped by circumstances, will not be able to seize those opportunities. For them, government services and support are vital lifelines.

We must take additional action to bring education, health care, security and hope for people living in poverty, as well as the stronger economy that will bring opportunities for a better future.

A John Tory Government will:

- **Work to revitalize vulnerable communities:** The revitalization of Regent Park and Don Mount Court in Toronto will transform aging housing that's cut off from public streets into dynamic, mixed neighbourhoods with open access to public roads. We will work with our municipal partners and the private sector to extend these successful revitalization projects to other public housing projects in Toronto and other communities across Ontario.
- **House the homeless:** Too often, municipal agencies supporting the homeless through the shelter system do not have the flexibility to use their funding to find permanent housing for the homeless. We will provide the flexibility they need.
- **Grow the supply of co-operative housing:** We will work with the Co-op Housing Federation and our municipal partners to develop strategies to build new co-ops by leveraging the assets of existing co-ops, particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- **Repeal the so-called “health” tax** so that lower income families are no longer forced to pay \$900 that just goes into the consolidated revenue fund and is not dedicated to health spending. This tax



For a Better Ontario. Leadership Matters.

places the greater burden on lower income families, which is unacceptable.

- **Set a realistic minimum wage** that allows Ontarians at that income level to live in dignity. We agree that the minimum wage must be increased. What is needed is a realistic schedule of how much and when those increases should take place, giving employers time to adjust and avoiding job losses, particularly for young people. A John Tory government would seek advice annually on Ontario's minimum wage policy from social, economic, labour and business experts.
- **Break down the barriers** that keep many skilled immigrants in poverty, including faster recognition of foreign credentials and more help for new Ontarians to settle in their new homes and to upgrade their skills and education.
- **Provide equal protection for vulnerable people.** Crimes against vulnerable people, whether they are drug addicts, prostitutes, the homeless or anyone else, must be seen as equally important in the eyes of our justice system. We will work with police, prosecutors and social agencies to make sure that cases involving vulnerable people, including evidence of serial crimes, are not allowed to fall between the cracks. And while we better protect the innocent, we will crack down on the criminal gangs, youth crime and drugs plaguing many disadvantaged neighbourhoods.
- **Improve access to health care** for people in poverty by working to give every Ontarian access to a family physician, and by building and modernizing more health care centres in the places they are needed most, close to the people who use them. Further we will make it a priority to improve health care for children, vulnerable people, families and to improve long term care for the aged. We will invest \$100 million in mental health care, capacity and supports, especially for children and our Aboriginal communities.
- Our plan for 'Better health care', also includes improvements in services for mental health, vulnerable children and families, home care and long-term care for the aged.
- **Provide good education** and decent schools for our disadvantaged neighbourhoods and children. A John Tory government will fix the broken education funding formula and invest more than \$800 million in new money for public education. Our priorities include fixing Ontario's growing number of substandard schools, raising educational quality and standards, and giving schools, teachers and principals the resources to do their jobs. Targeted steps for the disadvantaged include more funding for ESL education, school safety programs, and programs for healthy eating and exercise for all Ontario children.
- **Help community groups** find space through our Open Schools program. Community activities can be a lifeline for people in poverty – and their children. But too often, community groups are unable to access space available in schools because they do not have the ability to obtain liability insurance. Working through community partners, we will assist emerging groups to obtain liability insurance – making it easier for them to access community use space in the public school system. We will also assist in cutting red tape that creates barriers to access.
- **Work with Ontario's Aboriginal peoples** to address the deplorable conditions in many Aboriginal communities. The terrible conditions at Kashechewan brought home the continued failure of government policy towards our Aboriginal peoples. Education, health, social services, and infrastructure needs continue to be unmet. The government of Ontario can provide an important



For a Better Ontario. Leadership Matters.

function in representing the needs of Ontario's Aboriginal communities to the federal government.

A John Tory Government will also strengthen programs that focus on early intervention and prevention, starting from the belief that hope and opportunity can overcome temptation and alienation. We will:

- **Create more jobs** and opportunity by working with community groups to bridge the gaps that can prevent youth from achieving their potential. This is not just a matter of building up education and skills training; it is also a question of educating employers and eliminating misunderstanding and prejudice.
- **Provide more positive experiences for young people** by investing in recreational and community centres, and working with community groups to help more low-income children access healthy activities. Our Open Schools program will help open more schools to community activities on evenings and weekends.
- **Support drug education programs**, including the voluntary efforts of serving and retired police officers in our schools, better training for guidance counsellors, and more coordination of youth and community programs to provide consistent and effective messages to our youth.

Dalton McGuinty made a lot of promises to those in need of affordable housing and he has failed to honour those commitments. He promised 20,000 new units, he did not deliver. He promised 35,000 housing allowances, he did not deliver.

There is growing evidence that much of Ontario's social housing is in bad shape, due to old age or deferred maintenance. As a result, residents are living in buildings that suffer from such chronic issues as leaking roofs, substandard plumbing, poor air circulation and general deterioration.

Right now, social housing operators do not have sufficient capital budgets to address this challenge. In Toronto alone, the cost of needed investment is estimated at \$500 million and continues to grow.

Fixing our existing social housing is the responsible thing to do.

The problem cannot be solved overnight, but there is very practical progress that we can make today.

The Social Housing Capital Redevelopment Fund

A John Tory PC Government will create the Social Housing Capital Redevelopment Fund to revitalize social housing stock in vulnerable communities across the province.

This plan will unlock \$1 billion of equity for capital repairs and new construction over the next ten years. Many of Ontario's social housing providers have the capacity to borrow substantial capital based on their cash-flow and real estate assets. Their problem is that they cannot afford the annual carrying



For a Better Ontario. Leadership Matters.

costs associated with additional borrowing. What this means, is that they are unable to leverage their assets to make the necessary improvements.

A John Tory PC government will make available to the social housing providers a subsidy equal to the full cost of borrowing - allowing them to put that equity to work refurbishing the stock.

Subsidies will be made available to support an additional \$100 million in project financing each year for ten years.

This will cost the province \$6.5 million in the first year. Annual costs will grow by an additional 6.5 million each year for ten years, climbing to a total of \$65 million in the tenth year when the program is fully mature. Each \$100 million block of funding will be amortized over 35 years.

The primary purpose of this fund is to support capital renewal and refurbishment projects.

Proposals for complete redevelopment will also be eligible where sites have deteriorated to the point that it no longer makes sense to invest in further repair.

In addition, where sites are underutilized, intensification projects may also be eligible.

Specific program criteria will be established in consultation with all social housing stakeholders and allocated through an open submission process.

These funds are in addition to existing commitments made by the government. We will honour existing commitments made under the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Agreement of April 2005 which called for provincial investment of \$301 million over four years.

We will seek to extend and improve upon this agreement when it runs out, working towards the existing provincial target of a further 6,000 new affordable housing units by 2011-12 (above and beyond projects already approved).

Housing the Homeless

Too often, municipal agencies supporting the homeless through the shelter system do not have the flexibility to use their funding to find permanent housing for the homeless

Current funding used for the high cost of helping one homeless person through temporary shelters could provide permanent housing to two or more households.

At current funding levels, we believe that in many cases we can help more people, and provide them with permanent housing, through better use of existing funding.

A John Tory government will work with municipalities to review all funding currently provided to house and help the homeless, and will remove any barriers to the better and more efficient use of current funds.



For a Better Ontario. Leadership Matters.

We are also committed to improving the situation for new Canadians, whose skills and experience needs to be recognized sooner, to ensure they will find the employment they deserve.

While it is disappointing that the Liberal government waited until this election year to answer the call of the people of Ontario for action against poverty, John Tory welcomes these new investments, especially the Child Tax Benefit, and will maintain them.

Helping those in need is a difficult task and we thank you for offering options regarding how to improve the situation for Ontarians in need.

Our Platform is entitled; “For a Better Ontario – Leadership Matters,” and it is available on-line at www.ontariopc.com. We encourage you to visit the site and review the platform in greater detail than we can provide here in this forum.