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**Premier's Poverty Reduction Announcement:
"A Good Start, but a Long Way to Go"**

Toronto – Calling the Premier's Poverty Reduction announcement "a good start," Mary Marrone, Director of Advocacy & Legal Services at ISAC, said, "But they've got a long way to go."

The Income Security Advocacy Centre is a specialized community legal clinic with a provincial mandate to improve the income security of people living in Ontario through test case litigation, policy advocacy and community organizing.

The Premier's office announced funding for three priority programs this morning as a 'kickstart' to a Poverty Reduction Strategy, expected by the end of 2008.

"We're clearly glad to see the government move immediately on their dental care commitment, as well as funding for social housing repairs and children's nutrition," said Marrone. "But we expect a more complete Poverty Reduction Strategy to ensure that people on social assistance receive the full value of the Ontario Child Benefit."

The Ontario government has committed to building its Poverty Reduction Strategy around the Ontario Child Benefit, which becomes a monthly program in July 2008. People who rely on social assistance will only receive a portion of the OCB beginning in July because of a simultaneous restructuring of social assistance rates.

"This morning's announcement said the OCB will rise from \$250 to \$600 this year," said Marrone. "However, no family receiving social assistance will see the full \$600 benefit. In the worst cases, families will see a decrease from \$250 to \$24."

"We hope next week's budget will not only reinforce the positive steps we saw this morning, but also resolve this serious inequity in OCB implementation."

ISAC's pre-budget consultation submission called on government to begin to meet its election commitments to dental care and social housing. In addition, specific funds were called for to support a consultation process on the substance of the government's poverty reduction strategy. ISAC also called for a double-digit percentage increase to social assistance rates as well as permanent indexing of rates to inflation. The submission is available at www.incomesecurity.org.

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