

2015 Annual Report on the Implementation of the five-year Poverty Reduction Strategy, Realizing our Potential 2014-19

The 2015 annual report highlights the progress made over the past year – and since the initial launch of the Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2008 – to reduce and prevent poverty in Ontario. It also defines the areas where further work is needed. The 2015 annual report focuses on these four pillars of the strategy:

- I. Breaking the cycle of poverty for children and youth;
- II. Helping people achieve employment and income security;
- III. Ending chronic homelessness in Ontario; and
- IV. Measuring progress through a series of indicators and, as demonstrated through the Local Poverty Reduction Fund, championing evidence-based policy.

Progress in 2015 as per each of the four pillars of the strategy include:

I. Breaking the Cycle of Poverty for Children and Youth

Supporting Children & Families

- ✓ Indexed the Ontario Child Benefit to inflation which increased the maximum annual benefit to **\$1,336** per child.

Improving Educational Progress

- ✓ Provided Full-Day Kindergarten to the province's public schools to prepare children for educational success.
- ✓ Supported secondary schools in high needs urban neighbourhoods so that more vulnerable youth graduate high school.

Building Evidence - *Local Poverty Reduction Fund*

- ✓ Supported **15** projects that strengthen the well-being of children and youth, reduce their barriers to learning and work and help them access employment, education and training to break the cycle of poverty.

Transformation

- ✓ Integrated and expanded six oral health programs under the new **Healthy Smiles Ontario program**.
- ✓ Announced the launch of **Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres** that will offer early years programs.

II. Helping People Achieve Employment and Income Security

Supporting Employment & Training

- ✓ Helped over **1 million** Ontarians secure jobs and earn an income through **Employment Ontario**.
- ✓ Offered programs, employment, training and education opportunities specific to the unique needs and circumstances of Indigenous people.

Improving Earned Income

- ✓ Helped low-income earners and families by further increasing the minimum wage and tying it to inflation.

Building Evidence - *Local Poverty Reduction Fund*

- ✓ Supported 17 projects that provided employment, education and training opportunities that help vulnerable Ontarians leave poverty behind.

Transformation

- ✓ Implemented a **suite of youth employment and training programs** to help support their long-term success.
- ✓ Engaged with stakeholders to inform the province's long-term plan for **social assistance reform**.

III. Ending Chronic Homelessness in Ontario

Preventing Homelessness

- ✓ Helped over 104,000 at-risk of homelessness remain in their homes through the **Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative**, supporting proactive and permanent solutions.

Providing Housing Supports

- ✓ Built and repaired almost **2,000** units and provided rental and down payment assistance to **2,500+** households through the **Investment in Affordable Housing**.
- ✓ Created more than **620** new **supportive housing units** for people with mental health and addictions challenges.

Building Evidence - *Local Poverty Reduction Fund*

- ✓ Committed to providing up to **\$10 million** in funding to prevent and end homelessness.
- ✓ Supported **8** projects that helped vulnerable Ontarians find affordable housing and remain housed.

Transformation

- ✓ Responded to recommendations from the **Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness**
- ✓ Updated the **2010 Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy**

IV. Measuring progress

When Ontario renewed the Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2014 the commitment to evidence-informed policy-making was reaffirmed in two ways:

- ✓ Through the launch the innovative Local Poverty Reduction Fund, which supports community-led poverty-reduction projects to spur innovation and to build a made-in-Ontario body of evidence about what works; and
- ✓ Through developing a provincial indicator for chronic homelessness.

Local Poverty Reduction Fund Key Numbers:



Understanding Poverty Reduction Strategy Indicators:

Tracking progress against a set of indicators helps identify whether poverty reduction efforts are succeeding and the areas where further emphasis is needed.

The following table summarises the Ontario's poverty reduction strategy indicators (11 indicators in total) and their progress to date.

Progress	△
Steady	□
Decline	▽
Under development	○

INDICATORS	WHY IT MATTERS	MEASURE	STATUS
Child poverty target	Children living in poverty are less likely to perform well in school and grow up to find stable employment, and are more likely to experience physical and mental health issues.	The government set a target in 2008 to reduce child poverty by 25% in five years. Low Income Measure After Tax is used as the indicator to track progress on the target.	<i>Progress</i> 
Depth of poverty	Children living in deep poverty are among the most vulnerable and face the most barriers to exiting poverty.	Percentage of children under 18 living in a family with a household income of less than 40% of the median household income, fixed to a baseline in 2008.	<i>Progress</i> 
Birth weight	Babies born to low-income families are more likely to be below or above normal weight, and babies with birth weights outside the normal range may face risk factors that can increase their chances of poverty later in life.	Percentage of newborns born at what is considered to be a healthy weight.	<i>Steady</i> 
School readiness	Children have a better chance to succeed as students and later in life when they attend school ready to learn.	The Early Development Instrument (EDI) measures the percentage of children aged five to six who demonstrate they are on track across five domains of child development and are ready to learn at school.	<i>Steady</i> 
Educational progress	Students who achieve early success in school are more likely to continue to perform well academically, go on to postsecondary education and secure meaningful employment.	Percentage of students in Grades 3 and 6 who score in the highest two levels on province-wide reading, writing and math tests.	<i>Progress</i> 
High school graduation rates	Students who graduate high school are more likely to find meaningful employment and will have greater earning potential throughout their lives compared to those who do not graduate	Percentage of students entering high school at the same time who graduate within five years of having started Grade 9.	<i>Progress</i> 
Ontario housing measure	Children without a stable place to call home are less likely to succeed in school and may experience stress and other mental health challenges.	Percentage of households with children under 18 that have incomes below 40% of the median household income and spend more than 40% of their income on housing.	<i>Steady</i> 
Youth not in education, employment or training	Young people who are not in school or training and who do not have a job are at risk of becoming stuck in a cycle of poverty	Percentage of young people aged 15-29 who are not in education, employment or training.	<i>Decline</i> 

Long-term unemployment	A person's ability to find a job becomes increasingly difficult the longer that they remain unemployed, making it difficult to overcome poverty	Percentage of adults in the labour force aged 25-64 who have been unemployed for 27 weeks or more.	<i>Progress</i> 
Poverty rates of vulnerable populations	Vulnerable populations represent more than half of the people in Ontario living in poverty.	Percentage of adults in five populations considered to be vulnerable who have a household income of less than half the median. The vulnerable groups include: newcomers, persons with disabilities, female lone parents, unattached individuals aged 45 to 64 and Indigenous people living off-reserve.	<i>Steady</i> 
Homelessness indicator	This indicator will track progress on our goals to eliminate chronic homelessness in Ontario in 10 years	In process of being defined, following advice from the Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness.	<i>In development</i> 

Sources:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/poverty-reduction-strategy-2015-annual-report>

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/realizing-our-potential-ontarios-poverty-reduction-strategy-2014-2019-all>

For questions on PSPC info notes, to be added to or removed from the distribution list please email Safo at smusta@pspc.ca.on