




Hamilton

COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Council
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 12, 2025
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Submissions to Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Stuart Beumer Director, Ontario Works Healthy and Safe Communities
SIGNATURE:	

The purpose of this Communication Update is to provide the Mayor and Council with an overview of the key recommendations that municipal and provincial partners have submitted to the Province as part of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy renewal.

Background

Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy is the provincial framework for addressing poverty, required under the *Poverty Reduction Act, 2009*. The strategy sets goals, guides government action, and must be renewed every five years.

The current strategy, created in 2020, is due for renewal. The Province completed a consultation over the month of November consisting of an online survey or opportunity to send them written submissions. This renewal is expected to clarify provincial priorities for income supports, housing affordability, employment pathways and access to essential services.

The renewal comes at a time when poverty, homelessness and food insecurity are increasing across Ontario, including in Hamilton. This communication provides an overview of three key submissions: the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction's policy brief, a joint submission from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) and Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA), and an open letter to Premier Doug Ford written by Maytree and endorsed by more than 180 Ontario organizations. Together, these documents offer a clear and consistent message about the systemic changes needed in the next provincial strategy.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

Key Themes Across Submissions

There is a strong call for the Province to address the underlying conditions that keep people in poverty. Strengthening income supports is a prominent theme, with recommendations to increase and index social assistance rates, update earnings exemptions, simplify benefit structures, and ensure that people can access the stabilizing supports needed for health and well-being.

Housing also emerges as a significant theme across provincial and sector submissions. There is clear emphasis on the need for deeply affordable and supportive housing, expanded portable housing benefits, and investments that reflect the scale of housing need in Ontario.

Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction Policy Brief

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction policy brief focused on strengthening the foundational supports that enable people to move out of poverty. It highlighted that Ontario Works and ODSP rates are far below what is required for health and stability, and recommends increasing and indexing benefits, expanding earnings exemptions, reducing administrative burden through a simplified rate structure, and allowing greater flexibility for voluntary gifts and loans, and increased participation benefits.

The brief also stresses the need for improved pre-employment supports and a re-designed Employment Ontario system that leads to stable, skilled work rather than short-term, low-wage placements. Community feedback pointed to limited, inadequate training options and employment pathways that do not align with labour market needs. Finally, the brief calls for a universal portable rent supplement to improve housing affordability, along with fully funded access to mental health services, childcare, transportation, internet, and telephone services.

AMO and OMSSA Submission

The AMO and OMSSA joint submission highlights the growing pressures facing municipalities, including rising homelessness, increased food insecurity, and escalating demand for human services. The submission stresses that current systems operate in silos and do not address the root causes of poverty, particularly inadequate income security programs and the lack of deeply affordable housing. It recommends that the Province adopt measurable outcome targets and treat human services as essential social infrastructure.

A major focus of the brief is the urgent need to expand the supply of deeply affordable non-market housing, including supportive housing, portable housing benefits, and renewed investment in community housing. The document outlines that supportive

housing improves health outcomes and reduces costs in health care, justice, and emergency services. It emphasizes that without sustained investments in housing, municipalities will remain overwhelmed by homelessness and demand for crisis services.

The submission also calls for improvements to social assistance and employment programs, including increasing Ontario Works and ODSP incomes, expanding earnings exemptions, indexing benefits, and strengthening municipal case management. It encourages better integration between municipal service managers and Employment Ontario providers to support more successful exits to employment.

Additional priorities include continued investment in childcare and improved transportation options that connect residents with education, jobs, and essential services.

Maytree, The Open Letter to the Premier

The Open Letter from 180 organizations across the province to the Premier highlights the growing severity of poverty across Ontario and urges the Province to adopt a bold, human rights-based approach. The letter notes that poverty has deepened since 2020, with almost two million Ontarians now living below the poverty line, child poverty has doubled, there is a sharp rise in food insecurity, and more than eighty thousand people experiencing homelessness in 2024. It emphasized that poverty affects people across all ages, backgrounds and regions, and that current systems are no longer aligned with the realities facing low-income residents, municipalities, and service providers.

The letter calls for Ontario to acknowledge and address the systemic causes of poverty, commit to coordinated and adequate income and support programs, establish measurable goals for reducing poverty and deep poverty, and include people with lived experience in decision-making structures. It recommends that the Province set a target to reduce the poverty rate to no more than 7.5% by 2030. The submission urges that the renewed strategy must be ambitious, collaborative, and grounded in the lived realities of people experiencing poverty. A number of Hamilton based organizations have signed the letter.

For Submission Documents

- [Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction Policy Brief, People Not Pillars](#)
- [AMO and OMSSA Submission to Ontario's Consultation on the Poverty Reduction Strategy](#)
- [Maytree, Open Letter on Ontario's next poverty reduction strategy](#)

Contact

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