



## Opportunity for All – Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy

The Poverty Roundtable HPE is pleased to welcome Canada’s first poverty reduction strategy. In particular, we support the focus of this strategy on “dignity, opportunity, inclusion, resilience, and security”. In collaboration with MP Neil Ellis and MP Mike Bossio, the Poverty Roundtable HPE participated in consultations with over 100 members of our communities to provide input into the federal strategy. After years of advocacy from groups, organizations, and community members who have championed the need for a national poverty reduction plan, the Government has released *Opportunity for All – Canada’s First Poverty Reduction Strategy* on August 21, 2018.

With the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the Government takes a step forward toward ending poverty in Canada. Specific targets include reducing the rate of poverty by 20% by 2020 and reducing the rate of poverty by 50% by 2030. Our recommendations to the National Poverty Reduction Strategy included that there be an official measurement for poverty, and that the measure used be the Market Basket Measure – ensuring the poverty line accurately indicates what it costs to live in various communities across Canada. The Strategy identifies an Official Poverty Line, something that has been missing in Canada. With an Official Poverty Line, the Government can and does set specific targets for poverty reduction, as well as ways to evaluate progress. The next step needs to include bringing people up to that line and ensuring no one falls below it. A minimum income standard still needs to be set, as identified in community conversations on poverty in Hastings Prince Edward (see [Moving Forward](#) report).

The Poverty Roundtable HPE is pleased to see a number of programs and investments identified in the Strategy that also align with the recommendations from communities across Hastings and Prince Edward counties in our [Moving Forward](#) report. The Canada Child Benefit and the Guaranteed Income Supplement have served to increase the incomes of families and seniors. The Canada Workers Benefit will be available to support low-income workers. The Government has also committed to ensuring people have access to these benefits by supporting free community tax clinics. Changes to EI will provide people with access to benefits sooner, provide a cushion for those caring for sick family members, and will increase incomes by allowing people to keep some benefits if they take work while receiving EI. The Strategy also recognizes the need for and invests in public transportation, affordable housing, and community and cultural spaces.

While recognizing the Strategy as an important step, the Poverty Roundtable HPE would still like to see the Government recognize the need for a minimum income standard and support opportunities to ensure that households are able to attain a minimum income. We have heard, through numerous conversations across our communities, that people’s incomes need to be increased, that people need support and opportunity for fair work, and that current social assistance rates are inadequate and punitive.



# Poverty Roundtable

Hastings Prince Edward

In Hastings County 16.3% of households are living in low-income and in Prince Edward that proportion is 13.5%. We are concerned that while the Strategy does set timelines and targets, it will take considerable time to achieve them. Living in poverty is a struggle, often traumatic, and there is an urgency to move people out of poverty now.

The Strategy does reflect a rights-based approach to the reduction and future elimination of poverty, which requires monitoring of the indicators and targets. We support this approach, and the creation of an adequately resourced National Advisory Council on Poverty, enshrined in legislation, that will include people living in poverty in evaluating progress and ongoing needs.

The Poverty Roundtable HPE is encouraged by this strategy's direction, commitments, and plan for accountability. Much needs to be done to meet the national targets. We will continue to come together in our community to build on progress and work toward eliminating the causes of poverty in Hastings and Prince Edward counties.

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