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Subject [BULK] Policy Update - Renewed Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy

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Renewed Provincial Poverty Reduction Strategy

Today Deb Mathews, Deputy Premier, President of the Treasury Board, and Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, announced the government's renewal of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy. The government has stated that their new, refocused strategy to reduce poverty "is built around and rooted in the determination of people struggling with poverty, those who are trying to get ahead and fully participate in the communities and the province that they call home".

The Strategy is built around four key pillars:

- a long-term goal to end homelessness in Ontario;
- continuing to break the cycle of poverty, with a focus on children and youth;
- moving toward employment and income security, as a critical means to reduce poverty; and,
- investing in what works, by funding programs based on evidence-based policy making.

Government investments and initiatives include:

- \$42 million for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), which enables local governments to develop homelessness programs tailored to their community's unique needs, bringing the investment to a total of almost \$294 million per year (as announced in the 2014 Budget).
- Creating 1,000 new supportive housing spaces by allocating \$16 million over three years to help Ontarians living with mental illness and addictions issues.
- Raising the maximum annual benefit for the Ontario Child Benefit -- which supports about one million children in more than 500,000 low- to moderate-income families -- to \$1,310 per child as of July 2014. In addition, the Province is indexing the benefit to inflation to help families keep up with the cost of living (as announced in the 2014 Budget).
- Committing to provide health benefits for children and youth in low-income families to ensure they have access to services outside of publicly funded health care, such as prescription drugs, vision care, and mental health services.
- \$50 million over five years for a Local Poverty Reduction Fund designed to reward local solutions that demonstrate they are helping to lift people out of poverty (as announced in the 2014 Budget).

AMO looks forward to working with the government to help implement the renewed provincial poverty reduction strategy. Municipalities understand firsthand the effects of poverty. It is seen as people in our communities who struggle to earn a living wage, find and keep suitable housing, or visit a food bank. Municipalities are doing their part by investing in critical services such as transportation, community recreation, child care, and housing to name a few. Continued provincial investments in social and human services, transit, and infrastructure are needed over the long-term to adequately address poverty.

Reducing poverty is beyond the magnitude of any one order of government to address alone. It is a collaborative effort and there is an opportunity to build synergies. Municipal and provincial strategies can inform, guide, and complement each other.

For more information on the Strategy, see the Ontario government's news release:

<http://news.ontario.ca/prs/en/2014/09/realizing-the-potential-of-all-ontarians.html>.

Report- Realizing Our Potential; Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy (2014-2019)

<http://www.ontario.ca/home-and-community/realizing-our-potential-poverty-reduction-strategy-2014-2019>.

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