

Elder Health Coalition

November 21, 2008

Honourable Dalton McGuinty
Premier and President of the Executive Council of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y7

Members of the Executive Council of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1Y7

Dear Premier McGuinty and Ministers:

The Elder Health Coalition (EHC), was pleased to host its 7th Annual Think Tank on November 19, 2008 on "Aging at Home: Getting There from Here." This letter is to communicate to you the collective voice of the 75 invited delegates, representing seniors and health organizations from across the province, urging the government to act now to address the crisis of poverty in Ontario. The EHC supports, in the strongest possible terms, the principles and strategies of the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction and urges you to adopt its recommendations.

Like the vast majority of Ontarians (89%) in a recent Environics poll,¹ seniors and those who have the privilege of working with seniors support strong political leadership to reduce the number of people living in poverty. Even more Ontarians (93%) say that if other countries can succeed in significantly reducing the proportion of people living in poverty, so can Canada.² We are concerned that a growing number of Ontarians don't have what is needed to live in health and in dignity. This includes seniors, especially unattached individuals and particularly women, who have a 17.0% poverty rate (after-tax LICO) compared with 11.6% poverty rate for men in the 65 years and older demographic.³ The approximately 57,000 seniors living in poverty in Ontario⁴ need to be treasured not just metaphorically but also in the realities of their daily lives.

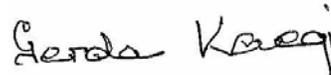
Premier, we know Ontario faces challenging economic times, and we must affirm that this is exactly the best time for our provincial government to stimulate the economy by investing in poverty reduction. For example, infrastructure investments such as building affordable housing and upgrading existing social housing will have both short and long-term benefits. Investing in income security programs will have immediate health and social benefits and will facilitate a boost in consumer spending in local economies. As the 25 in 5 Network points out in their January 21 submission: “reducing poverty is good for the economy, as is preventing poverty by maintaining a strong safety net.” As you have said, Ontario needs all hands on deck and a comprehensive poverty reduction will help this happen.

We await with great hope the upcoming report in December as, after all, you have always said that you are a Premier that will leave no one behind.

Warmest regards,



Doris Grinspun RN, MSN, PhD (cand) O.ONT.
Co-chair, Elder Health Coalition
Executive Director, RNAO



Gerda Kaegi
Co-chair, Elder Health Coalition
Past President, Canadian Pensioners
Concerned

¹ Hennessy, T. (2008). *Ontarians Waiting for Leadership on Poverty Reduction*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 10.

² Hennessy, 10.

³ National Council of Welfare,(2007). Poverty for unattached individuals, by sex and age, 2004. Ottawa: Author. Accessed November 20, 2008:

<http://www.ncwcnbes.net/documents/researchpublications/ResearchProjects/PovertyProfile/2004/PovertyRates-IndividualsENG.pdf>

⁴ National Council of Welfare.(2007) Poverty among seniors by province, 2004. Ottawa: Author.

<http://www.ncwcnbes.net/documents/researchpublications/ResearchProjects/PovertyProfile/2004/PovertyRatesProvinces-SeniorsENG.pdf>