



February 11, 2021

Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy
Minister of Finance

Dear Minister Bethlenfalvy,

In 2018, over 100 nonprofit leaders called on all parties to address poverty and inequality in Ontario. A lot has happened since then. A pandemic, an outpouring of awareness about anti-Black racism and growing recognition of our obligations to Indigenous people have fuelled an even greater awareness of the scope, depth and profound costs of inequality. So we are renewing our call to action, aware of what we have learned since 2018.

Call to Action

We call on all Leaders and all MPPs to ensure a safe and equitable community during the pandemic and begin to plan now for a just and inclusive recovery - to make Ontario a fair, equitable and inclusive place where everyone belongs.

The challenges we have faced for so long have been brought into even starker circumstances by the events of the last two years.

Too many Ontarians live in poverty, struggle to make ends meet, don't have a safe place to live, find themselves unsafe and unprotected at work, and are left without access to safe and affordable childcare, elder care and mental health care.

Addressing these issues is everyone's business. Falling short leaves us all unsafe, robs people of their potential, costs us all too much, and undermines what we stand for: a place where everyone has a fair chance at a good life.

We call on all elected MPPs to commit to end poverty; reduce gender, racial and income inequality; and create an Ontario where everyone has hope for a brighter future.

Action should be grounded in meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and a commitment to ending systemic discrimination and anti-Black racism. It must address the realities of those most harmed, including Indigenous peoples, Black people, people of colour, women, immigrants, LGBTQ2S+, youth, seniors and people with disabilities and/or those facing mental health challenges.

Consideration should be given in building bridges as we transition out of the pandemic and into our new way of living. It's an opportunity to coordinate between federal, provincial and municipal governments for better outcomes in local communities and the commitment of organizations like United Way who are positioned well to support the municipal, provincial and federal government in reaching those most vulnerable or accessing those organizations that deliver direct services in community, reporting back and being accountable is essential in building back better. United Way was able to administer, in partnership with the municipality, a portion of the social services relief funds as well as substantial Federal Funding. Utilizing local partners like the United Way who have trusted local relationships, and the ability to ensure wise investments are made with strong outcomes, United Way

is the vehicle for community investments and a ready partner.

We learned clearly in the pandemic that when governments act with purpose, progress is possible.

Our priorities are to:

1. Fully implement the Calls to Action of **the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and commitments to address anti-Black racism.**
2. Build an **economy with fair and equitable opportunities** and decent work for all.
3. Create **pathways out of poverty** by ensuring that everyone has income security and the supports they need to live with dignity.
4. Ensure **affordable, appropriate and safe housing** is available to all.
5. Invest in **inclusive, healthy communities** with affordable and quality childcare, elder care, and public education, pharmacare and dental programs, transit and transportation, and community programs and services.
6. **Stabilization funding** for nonprofit sector who play an essential role in job creation, volunteer engagement, and programs and services that support the well-being of Ontarians.

In the next budget, we call on the government to support crucial steps toward the goals in the 2021 Call to Action, including:

An economy with fair and equitable opportunities and decent work

- Ensure every worker in Ontario has access to paid sick time so they don't have to choose between endangering their coworkers and risking their livelihood
- Ensure staff in front line jobs have access to the personal protective equipment they require, and pandemic pay that offsets the costs and risks associated with their roles
- Provide a Guaranteed Livable Income for positive economic impacts in community
- Provide the oversight and regulatory environment required to ensure workers have protection from unsafe conditions and the tools to address the safety issues they encounter

Pathways out of Poverty

- Minimize claw back on income supports from other jurisdictions and reinvest any revenues from remaining claw backs into income supports for vulnerable people
- Set rates for all income supports at levels that provide livable incomes for recipients
- Address the breakdowns and backlogs in the Social Benefits Tribunal so everyone has access to a fair hearing
- Review the changes to social assistance administration to ensure that everyone has access to appropriate supports from case workers, and no one is shut out by digital access issues

Affordable, appropriate and safe housing

- Increased investment in the construction of safe, decent, appropriate, purpose built, affordable and deeply affordable rental housing
- Create a realistic plan to preserve tenancies and prevent evictions both now and at the end of the eviction ban, and expand rent bank programs to minimize unnecessary evictions
- Address the growing issues of rural homelessness across Ontario
- Ensure the Landlord Tenant Board is providing due process to all parties, and that digital hearings do not exclude any parties from access to justice

Inclusive, healthy communities

- Make the Investments and regulations necessary to that ensure that services like childcare, elder care and mental health care are accessible, safe and appropriate
- Ensure access to safe, reliable, affordable transit, as a critical way to support access to services and employment
- Implement new programs to ensure that every Ontarian has digital access, and is able to connect to the services, programs and systems that are increasingly online

- Support food security through continued food programs but also through a recognition that adequate incomes are the most effective way to ensure secure access to appropriate food

Stabilization Funding for nonprofits

- Retool the Small Business Support Grant to cover a broader range of small nonprofit employers, including:
 - Extend eligibility to nonprofits and charities that were required by public health regulations to close or significantly modify services prior to the December 26 province-wide shutdown, if they meet the revenue-loss threshold
 - Extend eligibility to those that remained open as “essential services” (approximately one-third of the sector), if they meet the revenue-loss threshold
 - Increase the \$20,000 maximum grant to \$50,000 for nonprofits that suffered \$100,000 or more in revenue declines
- Introduce \$1,000 to \$10,000 micro-grants for volunteer-only nonprofits (with no paid staff) to mitigate the impact of their reduced volunteer and fundraising capacity, and help them adapt through new processes, and technology

Our broad coalition includes people with lived experience, community agencies, social justice and faith groups, the labour movement, nonprofits, racial justice groups and employers. We worked together throughout the 2018 election, the COVID-19 pandemic and the crises of recent years, and are continuing to engage elected MPPs and Ontarians in this Call to Action.

Respectfully Submitted,



Ryan Erb
United Way Perth Huron



Joëlle Lamport Lewis,
Social Research & Planning Council

CC: Randy Pettapiece, MPP Perth- Wellington

Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister of Government and Consumer Services, MPP Huron- Bruce