

The Premier  
of Ontario

Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1A1

Le Premier ministre  
de l'Ontario

Édifice de l'Assemblée législative  
Queen's Park  
Toronto (Ontario)  
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ONTARIO PUBLIC HEALTH  
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April 30, 2007

Dr. David McKeown  
Medical Officer of Health  
City of Toronto  
5th Floor  
277 Victoria Street  
Toronto, Ontario  
M5B 1W2

Dear Dr. McKeown and Colleagues:

Thank you for your letter on behalf of the Ontario Medical Officers of Health regarding the impact of poverty on the health of Ontarians. I appreciate hearing your views on this crucial issue.

No child deserves to live in poverty. As your government, my colleagues and I will continue to do everything in our power to help struggling families and to provide all our children with opportunities for success. By expanding opportunities for children and families, we are investing in Ontario's future. Our goal is to ensure the best possible quality of life for all Ontarians — and we believe we have a responsibility to help low-income families achieve that higher quality of life.

As part of our commitment to lending a hand to Ontario's children and hard-working low-income families, our government introduced a number of initiatives in the 2007 Ontario Budget. A new \$2.1-billion Ontario Child Benefit (OCB) will support nearly 1.3 million children in low-income families. The OCB will provide benefits to all children under the age of 18 in low-income families. It will also enable parents to move off social assistance without worrying about losing financial support for their children.

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Other measures from the 2007 Budget that will benefit children and low-income families include:

- Enhancing child care through an additional \$25 million in 2007-08, growing to \$50 million annually starting in 2008-09
- Increasing funding for children's treatment centres and child and youth mental health centres
- New affordable housing programs that will enable us to reach 20,000 new units and 35,000 housing allowances since 2003
- Investing \$18.3 billion in Grants for Student Needs funding to school boards in the 2007-08 school year as part of our plan for better student achievement and higher secondary school graduation rates
- A two per cent increase in Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program payments

My colleagues and I have always been committed to a policy of steady minimum wage increases because we are on the side of our most vulnerable workers. And that is why — for the fourth time in four years — we increased the minimum wage in Ontario: this past February 1, we raised it from \$7.75 to \$8.00 per hour.

As reflected in our 2007 Budget announcement, we will continue to raise the minimum wage in a balanced and responsible way. Through three annual increases of 75 cents, starting on March 31, 2008, the rate will reach \$10.25 in 2010.

Expanding opportunity for all helps to build a strong and prosperous Ontario. Our government recognizes that giving everyone a fair chance to succeed is the right thing to do — for society and for the economy.

As your comments regarding adequate nutritious food would also interest the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services, I have passed along a copy of your correspondence to her. I trust the minister will take the views of the Ontario Medical Officers of Health into consideration.

Thank you again for writing to me about an issue my colleagues and I care deeply about. Be assured that we will take your views into consideration in our ongoing work to deliver the kind of results you and your fellow Ontarians deserve.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dalton McGuinty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dalton McGuinty  
Premier

c: The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur