

# *Health Providers Against Poverty*

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## **Ontario government sentences low income Ontarians to chronic illness and premature death**

The spring budget released by the Ontario Liberal government on March 23<sup>rd</sup> raises social assistance rates by a ridiculous 2 percent. This means that the lives of Ontarians surviving on welfare and disability are simply considered to be expendable. Social assistance recipients will get *no relief* from hunger, malnutrition, preventable chronic illnesses and early death.

“It has never been more clear that the McGuinty government cares nothing about poor people in this province. With this budget, they have basically ordained that the 760,000 Ontarians on assistance are to be sentenced to lives of chronic illness for the apparent crime of being poor,” says Kathy Hardill, a Toronto nurse practitioner who works exclusively with low income people.

Having a low income is the single most important factor determining whether people become ill. Health Providers Against Poverty has joined with a broad based coalition of social activists across the province to call for social assistance rates to be raised by the 40% they have fallen in real terms over the last decade.

“There is no question that what the Ministry of Social Services does not pay out today, the Ministry of Health will be paying tomorrow. When will governments start paying for an ounce of prevention rather than a pound of cure?” asks Dr. Gary Bloch, an inner city Toronto family physician.

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