

## For Information Only

### Poverty Reduction Strategy Update

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### Recommendation

For information only.

## Background

In 2008, the provincial government released a report titled *Breaking the Cycle: Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy*. This report set a target of reducing the number of children living in poverty by 25% over 5 years, or "25-in-5". The final report detailing the results of the five year strategy will not be available until 2015; however, the provincial government has recently released the 2013 annual report (<http://vibrantcanada.ca/files/2013annualreport.pdf>).

#### Highlights:

- 47,000 children were lifted out of poverty between 2008 and 2011; and
- the child poverty rate decreased in Ontario from 15.2% in 2008 to 13.6% in 2011.

Poverty reduction strategy achievements from 2008 to 2013:

**2008:** Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy was launched

**2009:** the Poverty Reduction Act, 2009 was passed; annual Ontario Child Benefit payments were increased to \$1,100 annually per child under 18

**2010:** minimum wage was increased to \$10.25; full-day kindergarten was rolled out in nearly 600 schools across the province for approximately 35,000 students; the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy was released

**2011:** full-day kindergarten was expanded to nearly 800 schools and approximately 50,000 students; Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy was launched; the Social Assistance Review began; provincial and federal governments agreed to invest \$481 million under the

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## Investment in Affordable Housing for Ontario program

**2012:** investments in child care increased to more than \$1 billion annually; full-day kindergarten expanded to 1,700 schools and about 122,000 students; the Youth Action Plan was released and new investments in 20 initiatives were made to provide youth at risk with access to additional experiences to improve their lives; a 30% off Ontario Tuition Grant was introduced to help students from low- to middle-income families gain access to postsecondary education; the final report of the Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario was released

**2013:** a Minimum Wage Advisory Panel was established to inform future adjustments to the minimum wage; the Ontario Child Benefit increased to \$1,210 annually per child under 18; full-day kindergarten expanded to 2,600 schools and almost 184,000 students; the 100% Tuition Aid for Youth Leaving Care program was available to current and former Crown wards and/or youth leaving care; the Student Nutrition Program was expanded to create an additional 200 programs over two years, serving about 33,000 more children and youth; 30,000 job opportunities were created for young people through the new Youth Jobs Strategy

### Commitments by the provincial government:

- Ongoing investment in the Ontario Child Benefit;
- Continued investment in the child care sector in support of a more seamless and integrated system;
- Expansion of the Student Nutrition Program;
- Continued support of Ontario's After School Program for children and youth in priority neighbourhoods;
- Integration of the provincial low-income dental programs for children and youth into a single new Healthy Smiles Ontario Program in 2015;
- Expansion of the Eye See...Eye Learn vision testing program by 2015 to all school boards that agree to participate;
- Development of a cross-government approach to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder;
- Continued expansion of the Summer Learning Program, including funding this year to the Rainbow school board;
- Implementation of the 2013-14 Parents Reaching Out Grants for parent community engagement;
- Increased funding for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative in 2014-15; and
- Engagement with municipalities, First Nations and employment service providers on developing better ways to link social assistance recipients to employment and training.

A new Poverty Reduction Strategy is scheduled for release in the spring of 2014. The provincial government is planning to broaden the scope of the new strategy from children to all persons living in poverty.