

December 20, 2016

Minister of Finance Charles Sousa  
c/o Budget Secretariat  
Frost Building North, 3rd Floor  
95 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto, ON M7A 1Z1  
By email: [submissions@ontario.ca](mailto:submissions@ontario.ca)

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs  
c/o Eric Rennie, Clerk of the Committee  
99 Wellesley Street West, Room 1405  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A2  
By email: [erennie@ola.org](mailto:erennie@ola.org)

Dear Minister Sousa and Standing Committee members,

We are writing to express the support of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario (MCCO) for the recommendations being made by the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC) in their Billion or Bust campaign that requests the government to:

- invest another billion dollars immediately to social assistance programs; with approximately \$700 million for rate increases and \$300 million to resolve inequities in the delivery system,
- invest another billion dollars over three years to affordable housing programs;
- raise the minimum wage immediately to \$15 per hour.

We also heartily support the recommendations being made by the Income Security Advocacy Centre (ISAC) in their 2017-18 pre-budget consultations. That submission provides details on the rule changes in OW and ODSP needed to resolve inequities in those programs. You can read the ISAC submission at:  
<http://incomesecurity.org/publications/provincial-budgets/Ontario-Budget-2017-ISAC-pre-budget-submission.pdf>

These investments will improve the health and dignity of low-income people, reduce poverty, provide people with affordable housing and decent work and reduce the overall cost of poverty to the province.

In addition to MCC's international work for relief, development and peace, MCCO also has several programs in Ontario. We work with newcomers, indigenous communities, people who have experienced homelessness and people who have been in the correctional system. Many of the people with whom we work locally rely on ODSP or OW. Our program staff and volunteers see daily the struggles of people trying to get by with incomes that are simply inadequate to meet basic needs. Finding decent affordable housing is also a common challenge facing many people with whom we work.

MCCO is also committed to supporting sustainable livelihoods both in our partnerships internationally and in our work here in Ontario. One of the ways MCCO demonstrates that in Ontario is through our commitment to paying a living wage to all our staff and by actively supporting the Living Wage movement. The living wage is a practical tool to help reduce poverty through paid work. Since it is based on the actual cost of living in local communities, it provides employers a more realistic benchmark wage for employees than the minimum wage. Paying a living wage provides employees a means to make ends meet and come to work ready to give their best.

Living wage rates that have been calculated for communities across Ontario are above the \$15 minimum wage threshold proposed by ISARC. We do acknowledge the value of the Government of Ontario's policy of adjusting the minimum wage annually to increases in the cost of living. Unfortunately the current minimum wage is still too low to lift a person working full-time, full-year out of poverty.

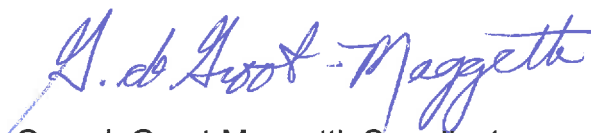
We believe there is a moral and ethical compass that directs us to care for each other and to respect the dignity and value of every person. Called to be neighbour to each other, we believe that the way we care for one another becomes the legacy we bequeath to future generations.

We urge you to leave a positive legacy for low-income Ontarians by making these investments in Budget 2017.

Sincerely,



Rick Cober Bauman, Executive Director  
Mennonite Central Committee Ontario



Greg deGroot-Maggetti, Coordinator  
Walking with People in Poverty Program

Cc: The Honourable Kathleen O. Wynne, Premier of Ontario  
The Honourable Deborah Matthews, Deputy Premier of Ontario  
The Honourable Helena Jaczek, Minister of Community and Social Services  
The Honourable Kathryn McGarry, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry  
The Honourable Michael Chan, Minister of International Trade  
The Honourable Yasir Naqvi, Attorney General of Ontario  
Mr. Patrick Brown, Leader of the Official Opposition  
Ms. Andrea Horwath, Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario

Ms. Amrit Mangat, MPP, Mississauga - Brampton South  
Mr. Arthur Potts, MPP, Beaches-East York  
Ms. Catherine Fife, MPP, Kitchener - Waterloo

Ms. Cheri DiNovo, MPP, Parkdale - High Park  
Ms. Daiene Vernile, MPP, Kitchener Centre  
Mr. Gilles Bisson, MPP, Timmins - James Bay  
Mr. Han Dong, MPP, Trinity - Spadina  
Ms. Harinder Malhi, MPP, Brampton - Springdale  
Mr. James Bradley, MPP, St. Catharines  
Mr. Jeff Yurek, MPP, Elgin – Middlesex - London  
Ms. Lisa Gretzky, MPP, Windsor West  
Mr. Michael Harris, MPP, Kitchener - Conestoga  
Ms. Monique Taylor, MPP, Hamilton Mountain  
Ms. Nathalie Des Rosiers, MPP, Ottawa - Vanier  
Mr. Paul Miller, MPP, Hamilton East - Stoney Creek  
Ms. Peggy Sattler, MPP, London West  
Mr. Randy Pettapiece, MPP, Perth - Wellington  
Mr. Rick Nicholls, MPP, Chatham-Kent - Essex  
Mr. Sam Oosterhoff, MPP, Niagara West - Glanbrook  
Mr. Ted McMeekin, MPP, Ancaster – Dundas – Flamborough - Westdale  
Mr. Ted Arnott, MPP, Wellington - Halton Hills  
Ms. Teresa Armstrong, MPP, London - Fanshawe  
Mr. Wayne Gates, MPP, Niagara Falls

