

Submission to the Ontario Pre-Budget Consultation 2020

Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change works for racial equity, human dignity and social justice by helping to build community based capacity to address systemic racism, the growing racialization of poverty and the resulting increased levels of social exclusion and marginalization of racialized communities – both First Peoples and peoples of colour – in Ontario.

Ontario's demographics are changed rapidly. 1/3 of the province are now either First Peoples or peoples of colour.

As is well documented the gap between rich and poor in Ontario is widening generally, but what is much less well understood is that the impact of this growing gulf is being much more profoundly felt by racialized group members – both First Peoples and peoples of colour. The increasing “racialization” of all the major social and economic indicators can be gleaned not only from the statistics on income and wealth, but also from any one of a number of different measures – such as the increasing rate of incidence and ethno-racial differentials with respect to targeted policing, inequalities with respect to health status as well as learning outcomes, and the re-emergence of racialized residential enclaves. All of these are products of the growing social and economic exclusion of racialized groups from the so-called mainstream of society.

The 2020-2021 provincial budget must work towards improving the life chances and opportunities of First Peoples and peoples of colour by the following measures:

1) Racialization of poverty – the disproportionate disadvantage and systemic discrimination peoples of colour face must be explicitly included in all poverty reduction measures in policy and the budget – including taxation benefits, housing, childcare and more. COP-COC also asks the Committee to recommend:

- a reversal of budget cuts made and planned for the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services;
- maintaining the current Ontario Disability Support Program definition of disability; and
- an increase to social assistance rates.

2) Community Benefits Agreements – Ensure equity in hiring, retention and promotion through mandatory employment equity legislation, and through Community Benefits Agreements being attached to all Ontario publicly funded projects, investments and financial transfers – Agreements that speak specifically to creating labour market opportunities for equity seeking groups and historically disadvantaged communities –



First Peoples, peoples of colour, women, persons with (dis)abilities and LGBTQ community members as a start.

3) Continue to appropriately resource the **Anti-Racism Directorate** to provide for the collection and analysis of ethno-racially and otherwise appropriately disaggregated data across all provincial Ministries and public institutions – including the Ministry of Health. Enhance the Directorate’s capacity to engage in ongoing monitoring, analysis and program development in order to implement comprehensive and inclusive equity and anti-racism policies and practices.

4) Establish an **Equity in Employment Secretariat** fully mandated and adequately resourced to implement a mandatory and comprehensive provincial employment equity program in Ontario, to level the playing field for First Peoples, peoples of colour, women, persons with (dis)abilities and LGBTQ community members and work to ensure merit-based employment practices for all across the province.

5) The Government should augment the provincial funding formula for publicly-funded elementary and secondary schools by introducing a dedicated **Equity in Education Grant** to ameliorate Ontario’s growing ethno-racially defined learning outcome inequities and disparities.

6) Reverse the cuts to **Legal Aid Ontario** and support access to justice for low-income Ontarians. Access to justice is a fundamental right for all residents, and should not be limited on any basis including poverty.