

**Submission to the Ontario Pre-Budget Consultation 2022-2023
January 25, 2022**

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.

Almost two years into the health pandemic, we have ample evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly increased long-standing structural and societal inequalities. Indigenous, Black and racialized communities – including immigrants and refugees - were put at higher risk of contracting the infection. They were more likely to experience bad health, economic and social impacts. They face higher unemployment rates, deepening poverty, and are facing greater negative impacts in education. It will take them longer to recover and rebuild. Some may never regain lost ground.

Economic, social and health recovery is the priority. But as a society we cannot simply re-invest in, and sustain systemic inequalities based on indigenous identity, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, immigration status, religion and faith.

The 2022-2023 Ontario Budget **must** be developed using an equity framework that includes these factors, and must demonstrate a commitment to working with First peoples in a good way.

Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change (“COP-COC”): The Data

COP-COC is a campaign to address growing racialization of poverty and resulting increased levels of social exclusion and marginalization of racialized communities (both Indigenous Peoples and peoples of colour) across Ontario – using a broad and intersectional social/structural determinants of health and well-being approach

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Data collected in Canada and Ontario reveal a growing disparity in all life outcomes for racialized and Indigenous communities. As Ontario prepares the 2022-2023 budget, budgetary decisions must prioritize racialized and Indigenous communities in light of the growing racialization of poverty, their higher rates of unemployment, their worse health outcomes (including the devastating impact of COVID-19 on these communities), the need to enhance access to justice for over-represented racialized and Indigenous communities in the justice system, and the impact of COVID-19 on racial and Indigenous people facing increased gender-based violence.

Peoples of Colour in Ontario (Statistics Canada - Census 2016)		
	Populations in Ontario	Peoples of Colour
Total Population	13,242,160 (100.00 %)	
Total Peoples of Colour	3,885,585 (29.3 %)	3,885,585 (100.0 %)
South Asian	1,150,415 (8.7 %)	1,150,415 (29.6 %)
Chinese	754,550 (5.7 %)	754,550 (19.4 %)
Black	627,715 (4.7 %)	627,715 (16.2 %)
Filipino	311,675 (2.3 %)	311,675 (8.0 %)
Latin American	195,950 (1.5 %)	195,950 (5.0 %)
Arab	210,435 (1.6 %)	210,435 (5.4 %)
Southeast Asian	133,855 (1.0 %)	133,855 (3.4 %)
West Asian	154,670 (1.2 %)	154,670 (4.0 %)
Korean	88,935 (0.67 %)	88,935 (2.3 %)
Japanese	30,830 (0.23 %)	30,830 (0.79 %)
Peoples of Colour, n.i.e.	97,970 (0.74 %)	97,970 (2.5 %)
Multiple Identities of Colour	128,585 (0.97 %)	128,585 (3.3 %)
Not a Person of Colour	9,356,575 (70.7 %)	

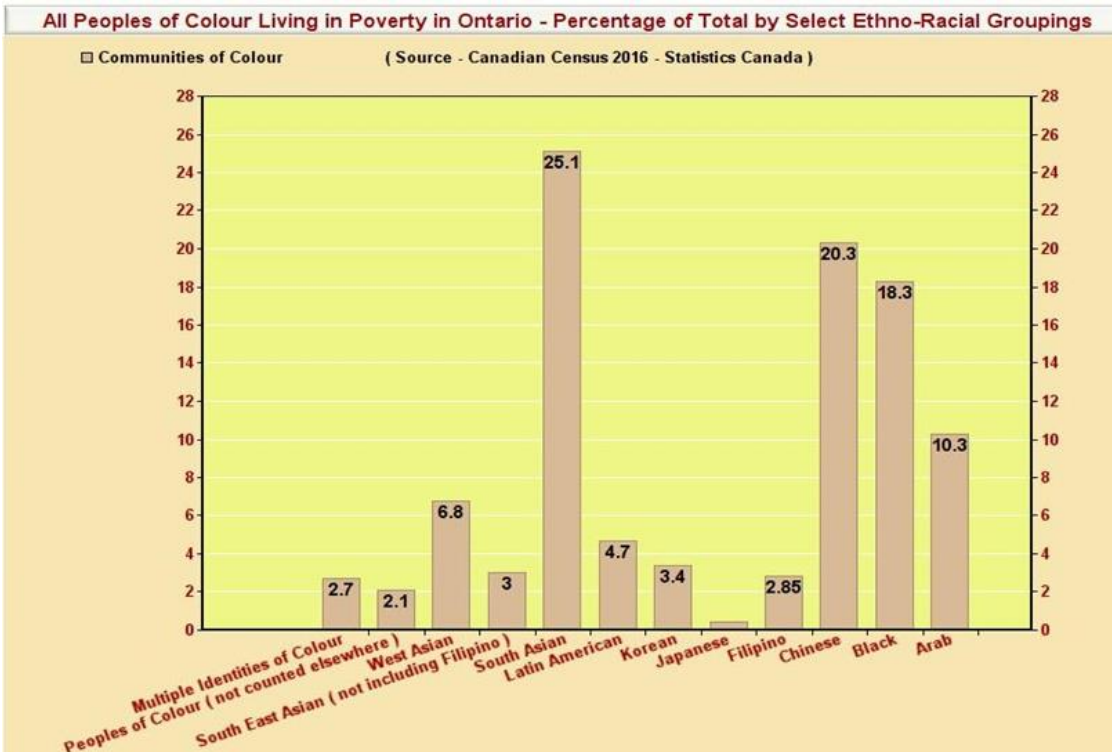
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Sample peoples of colour individual low-income status - Ontario (Statistics Canada – Census 2016)						
Communities of colour	Individual low-income status					
	Total	Low-income status - not applicable	Low-income status - applicable	In low income	Not in low income	Percent low income
Total population	13,242,160	58,100	13,184,060	1,898,870	11,285,185	14.4
Total peoples of colour	3,885,585	165	3,885,420	825,735	3,059,690	21.3
South Asian	1,150,415	0	1,150,405	207,380	943,020	18.0
Chinese	754,550	10	754,540	167,780	586,765	22.2
Black	627,715	55	627,660	150,990	476,665	24.1
Filipino	311,675	25	311,650	23,515	288,140	7.5
Latin American	195,955	35	195,915	38,935	156,980	19.9
Arab	210,440	0	210,435	85,345	125,095	40.6
Southeast Asian	133,855	10	133,850	24,585	109,265	18.4
West Asian	154,670	0	154,670	55,840	98,830	36.1
Korean	88,940	0	88,925	27,890	61,040	31.4
Japanese	30,835	0	30,830	3,720	27,110	12.1
Peoples of colour, n.i.e.	97,970	10	97,960	17,710	80,250	18.1
Multiple identities of colour	128,590	10	128,575	22,045	106,530	17.1
Not a person of colour	9,356,580	57,940	9,298,640	1,073,135	8,225,500	11.5



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Percentage of Population Groups Living in Poverty – in Select Ontario Communities (Census 2016)								
	Windsor	London	Kitchener-Waterloo-Cambridge	Hamilton	Toronto CMA	Ottawa	Ontario	Canada
Total Population	17.5	17.0	12.2	13.0	15.6	12.2	14.4	14.2
Total Peoples of Colour (POC)	35.1	34.3	22.9	23.5	20.4	23.6	21.3	20.8
South Asian	26.0	33.5	17.9	18.0	17.8	15.1	18.0	16.5
Chinese	33.8	37.7	29.0	24.9	21.8	18.3	22.2	23.4
Black	38.2	29.8	24.2	25.4	23.4	28.2	24.1	23.9
Filipino	8.4	11.4	4.2	6.0	7.4	9.0	7.5	7.4
Latin American	22.3	26.1	16.2	17.5	20.3	16.8	19.9	19.8
Arab	51.0	51.2	48.6	49.4	36.4	39.8	40.6	36.2
Southeast Asian	15.9	17.8	13.3	23.2	19.1	16.5	18.4	17.6
West Asian	41.2	44.2	31.0	30.9	37.3	27.6	36.1	34.7
Korean	25.7	42.7	36.3	27.5	31.0	23.3	31.4	32.6
Japanese	0.0	10.7	13.2	12.2	12.7	9.6	12.1	12.9
POC (not included elsewhere)	43.1	39.3	20.9	26.1	16.4	22.4	18.1	18.5
Multiple identities of colour	32.6	28.3	18.5	20.3	16.3	17.9	17.1	16.7
Not a Person of Colour	12.9	13.7	9.6	10.8	10.5	8.4	11.5	12.2

Recommendations:

We recommend that 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 a higher minimum wage, paid sick days, taxation benefits, housing, childcare and more. Statistics reveal that racialized communities are now facing disproportionate levels of unemployment, which is likely to result in the deepening racialization of poverty in Ontario. ***All people in Ontario should be allowed to access social assistance support regardless of immigration status, and social assistance rates must be increased to meet the basic needs on low-income people in Ontario.***

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We appreciate the fact that the minimum wage was increased this year and is finally at \$15 as communities have been demanding for so long. But even 15 dollars is lower than the lowest living wage in Ontario – which was calculated at \$16.20 in Sault Ste. Marie in November 2021.

- 2) **Access to Health Care:** Ontario's response to the pandemic has demonstrated it can extend universal health care to all people regardless of immigration status and period of residence. Effective March 21, 2020, the Government of Ontario began to cover medically necessary health services for uninsured people who do not meet the criteria for provincial health care coverage and effectively suspended the 3-month residence requirement. The expansion of health care coverage is part of Ontario's efforts to reduce the spread of COVID-19 by ensuring that no one would be discouraged from seeking screening or treatment for financial reasons. ***The Extension of Universal Health Care measures should be made permanent so that health care is prioritized as a measure to save costs and lives. The province must also redirect health care funds to focus on targeted and culturally tailored approaches to improving health outcomes for Indigenous and people of colour, who continue to face poorer health care outcomes in Ontario.***
- 3) **Access to Affordable Housing** – We have a homelessness crisis and a housing crisis in Ontario, which has been made worse by the pandemic. Indigenous, Black and racialized communities are disproportionately affected by both. The average market rent in communities across Ontario has increased exponentially, and is completely unaffordable for anyone working for minimum wage. Tenant evictions are on the rise, triggered in large part by investors and speculators. Recent immigrants and refugees are among the hardest hit – they simply cannot find a place to live. ***Invest in a rights-based housing strategy, in consultation with the people who are affected, and not just builders, developers and investors. Ontario must also enhance support for tenants by creating a rent relief program that supports low-income racialized tenants, eliminate vacancy decontrol to increase affordable rental housing stock and to stop “renovictions” (where landlords evict tenants only to re-rent for higher rates of rent), and addressing the digitization of the Landlord and Tenant Board, which is no longer accessible to thousands of low-income racialized communities.***

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- 4) **Collection of Disaggregated Data:** COP-COC has long been working to help develop a culture of socio-demographic data collection across all orders of government as well as other relevant spaces and places. Improved data collection will lay the foundation for budget considerations that address the disparities of our most vulnerable and marginalized populations and will support Ontario to ensure that an equity framework is centred within the budget process moving forward.
Create implement a robust, whole of government approach to the Collection of Disaggregated Data, including race-based data.
- 5) **Employment and Employment Equity:** Racialized and Indigenous communities have long faced poorer labour market outcomes that result of systemic racism and discrimination. Data during COVID-19 (federal labour force survey) confirms that many racialized communities now face much higher rates of unemployment. Bill 124, passed in 2019, imposed a wage freeze for three years to 1% for public funded organizations in Ontario. This is less than the rate of inflation. The wage suppression measure applies to all activities across the organization, including those not funded by the province. The Bill has a disproportionate impact on the care work sector, where women of colour and immigrant women are highly represented.
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. Repeal Bill 124.
- 6) **Child Care:** We urge the Ontario government to quickly reach an agreement with the federal government under the new national Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) program. The delay is unfair to low-income racialized parents and children who need precisely this kind of support from our government to start recovering from the impact of the pandemic. Child care inextricably ties to the ability of these families to work.

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Develop an immediate strategy for safe, regulated and affordable childcare in Ontario, starting with signing onto the national Early Learning and Child Care program to.

- 7) **Access to Justice: Restore and Enhance Funding for Legal Aid Ontario:**
Ontario has Canada's highest population of low-income peoples of colour. Cuts to Legal Aid Ontario and refugee and immigration legal services have had a significant impact on access to justice for these communities. The lack of sustainable legal aid / legal clinic funding has meant a reduction in the capacity to provide legal services in all areas of poverty law. We can no longer ignore the very real and drastic impact of lack of services on racialized communities. In addition, with the increase in self-represented litigants in all parts of Ontario's justice system the costs to the province continue to rise. ***Restore and enhance funding for legal aid in 2022-2023 Budget and work with the Federal Government to establish a long-term, sustainable funding model for legal aid in Ontario, including Immigration and Refugee legal aid.***
- 8) **Education:** The pandemic continues to magnify inequities in educational outcomes, especially in high-density urban areas where low-income, racialized children and youth predominantly reside. ***Immediately invest in funding and resources to reduce class sizes – and where it is still needed – provide support to obtain technological resources and appropriate home environment to facilitate online learning.***
- 9) **Violence Against Women:** Women across Ontario are facing disproportionate hardship and escalation in violence against women because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Preliminary data suggests that racialized and Indigenous women have been deeply impacted by gender-based violence over the course of the pandemic. The South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario reports an increase of approximately 35% in calls related to gender-based violence over the past 20 months. ***Increase Funding for Women's Services, including women's centres, shelters and language interpretation services, to support women facing multiple systemic barriers in employment, income support, housing, access to childcare, unsafe work, and violence.***

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- 10) **Settlement and Language Services:** Immigrants, refugees and other newcomers accounted for almost 44% of all COVID-19 cases in Ontario despite being only 25% of the population and having lower rates of testing. Immigrant and refugee settlement services are essential to get COVID-19 related and other critical information and supports to newcomers. ***Increase funding for settlement services and language training to support newcomers to withstand the pandemic, and support their settlement and integration.***

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