



Canadian Federation of University Women
ONTARIO COUNCIL



Comments on:

BILL 152, POVERTY REDUCTION ACT, 2009

to

**ONTARIO LEGISLATURE
STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY**

April 21, 2009

by the

**Canadian Federation of University Women
ONTARIO COUNCIL**

Submitted by
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This fax is 7 pages including the cover

April 21, 2009

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Re: Bill 152, Poverty Reduction Act, 2009

The Ontario Council of the Canadian Federation of University Women wishes to commend the Government of Ontario for its initiative against poverty as expressed in its report, *Breaking the Cycle, Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy* and now with its legislative framework, *Bill 152, Poverty Reduction Act 2009*. While we have some concerns, this is truly a laudable effort.

Wording of Bill 152:

Purpose

The Preamble is specific to the current situation. In time its value might be lost. For this reason we are suggesting that another clause be added to the Purpose which specifically sets out the reasons for poverty reduction.

Suggested wording:

1. The purpose of this Act is the reduction of poverty to support the social, economic and cultural development of Ontario.

CFUW Ontario Council recommends that a second clause be added to the Purpose including the words - The purpose of this Act is the reduction of poverty to support the social, economic and cultural development of Ontario.

Poverty Reduction Strategy Principles

2.(2)1. Importance of all Ontarians

We are pleased to see this clause. While the first poverty reduction strategy as announced is focusing on children, we must note that adults make up 75%¹ of those who are considered poor in Ontario. In considering "all Ontarians" we must also think of those who are single individuals or families without children.

¹ Income in Canada – 2006, Table 11-7 <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-202-x/2006000/5215152-eng.pdf>, pg.2

2.(2)2. Importance of communities

The wording “strong healthy communities” has been used both here and in *Breaking the Cycle*. What is meant by the word “communities”? Is it municipalities, neighbourhoods within municipalities, religious, cultural, etc? A definition or explanation is required. Depending upon the nature of future governments, this could be limiting especially in terms of funding projects.

CFUW Ontario Council recommends that an explanation or definition of “communities” be incorporated into the Bill.

2.(2)3. Recognition of diversity

Each organization and person commenting on the wording of Bill 152 might wish to add further groups to this list. Two groups that we might suggest are senior women and women impoverished by escaping violence. However as this would make it unwieldy, we would suggest more holistic inclusive wording be used.

Excellent wording can be found in *No Cherries Grow on our Trees*, “Poverty is multi-faceted and to be effective a poverty reduction strategy must be comprehensive and take into account inequalities [such as] gender, Aboriginal status, race, immigration status, age, disability, gender identity, and family status.”²

CFUW Ontario Council recommends that more holistic generic wording be used for 2.(2)3. A suggestion for wording is noted above with the addition of “such as” to allow for the future.

2.(2)6. Involvement

The current wording could be interpreted that those living in poverty could be involved not in the decision making but solely in the doing – a very punitive view which has been seen before.

CFUW Ontario Council recommends that the wording become:

6. That Ontarians, especially people living in poverty, are to be involved in the creation of any poverty reduction strategy.

² Komiotis, W. , N. Currie and J. Mosher, *No Cherries Grow on our Trees*, METRAC, <http://www.metrac.org/programs/info/take.action.report.dec08.pdf> , p.11

Contents of poverty reduction strategy

2.(3)3. Indicators ...

CFUW Ontario Council recommends that a definition for “indicators” be included in the legislation.

Omissions in Bill 152

Definitions

As mentioned above, we are concerned that **certain definitions are missing from the Bill**. Those that we have noted include “**communities**” and “**indicators**”. Also missing is a definition of ‘**poverty**’. Other commentators might note other words which could lead to confusion in the future.

Funding

While this is implied in 2.(3)2. “Contents of poverty reduction strategy” with the word “initiatives”, there is **no actual commitment to the financial resources** necessary for poverty reduction.

Accountability

While an Annual Report will be useful information, there is **no method for evaluation throughout the 5 year period between Strategies**. It is necessary to have these initiatives constantly reviewed for viability and usefulness. While these will be judged against the target, this will be too simplistic. Does this become part of the work of the Auditor-General of Ontario, or is it necessary to establish a separate Commission reporting to the Legislature like the Environment Commissioner?

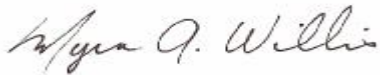
CFUW Ontario Council recommends that:

- **A section be included with Definitions and that includes at least the words**
 - **poverty**
 - **communities**
 - **indicators**
- **Financial commitments be included**
- **A method of accountability to be able to evaluate and review the Annual Report as well as initiatives and outcomes**

CFUW Ontario Council

Ontario Council of the Canadian Federation of University Women is composed of 57 clubs comprised of graduates living in urban and rural areas across Ontario. We are non-partisan, non-sectarian and we are totally member funded. Our members are active in public affairs, advocating on public education, justice, health and environmental issues as well as the status of women and human rights. Ontario Council is part of the Canadian Federation of University Women and has links to the International Federation of University Women.

Respectfully submitted,



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Appendix A**Canadian Federation of University Women
ONTARIO COUNCIL****Policy relating to the****Bill 152, Poverty Reduction Act, 2009**

Note: CFUW Ontario Council policy integrates that of CFUW Ontario Council with that of CFUW and IFUW.

Poverty

CFUW, 2000

RESOLVED, That the Canadian Federation of University Women urge the federal government to renew its commitments to the UN regarding poverty; and

RESOLVED, That the Canadian Federation of University Women urge the federal, provincial and territorial governments to:

1. implement measures intended to reduce and prevent poverty, especially child poverty.
2. initiate a careful re-evaluation of the situation regarding the real economic, healthcare and educational needs of Canadian children, as well as the actual public resources available to fight poverty.

Appendix B

**Canadian Federation of University Women
ONTARIO COUNCIL**

Club Locations

Ajax – Pickering	Kingston	Oshawa & District
Aurora - Newmarket	Kitchener - Waterloo	Ottawa
Barrie & District	Leaside - East York	Owen Sound & Area
Belleville & District	London	Perth & District
Brampton	Markham- Unionville	Peterborough
Brantford	Milton & District	Renfrew & District
Burlington	Mississauga	Sarnia Lambton
Cambridge	Muskoka	Saugeen
Chatham -Kent	Nepean	Scarborough
Cornwall & District	Niagara Falls	Southport
Etobicoke	Norfolk	St. Catharines
Georgetown	North Bay	St. Thomas
Georgian Triangle	North Toronto	Stratford
Grimsby	North York	Sudbury
Guelph	Northumberland	Thunder Bay
Haliburton Highlands	Oakville	Toronto
Hamilton	Orangeville & District	Vaughan
Kanata	Orillia	Welland & District
Kincardine	Orleans	Windsor