



# We've Made Some Progress in Reducing Poverty

## OXFORD CAN'T STOP NOW

**The evidence is in and it's overwhelming. The cost of allowing poverty and social exclusion to continue far outweighs the costs of reducing or eliminating it. But ending poverty not only makes good economic sense, it is essential to meeting basic human rights.**

Poverty makes it nearly impossible for people to meet their most basic needs, resulting in a combination of:

- unsafe and insecure housing, inadequate nutrition, and diminished health and lifespan
- higher costs for hospital care, mental health and addictions, child welfare, criminal justice
- lower high school and college graduation rates and less success in the labour market

Many studies project the cost of perpetuating poverty between 150% and 250% of the cost of eliminating it.

**Since 1996, there has been some progress in reducing the proportion of Oxfordians living in poverty. But too many people remain poor.**

If the poverty rate had remained at 1996 levels, there would be an additional 3,210 Oxford residents today living on incomes below the poverty line. This is the equivalent of filling Goff Hall in Woodstock more than 7 times. Instead, they have been either lifted out of poverty or prevented from losing financial security due to progress in reducing poverty. See the infographic, "*Progress In Poverty Reduction*", for a comparison.

Many different policy and tax changes helped to improve the lives of some low income Ontarians. Efforts focused on families and children, and to a lesser extent seniors but little on single adults. Families with children benefitted from income security programs, both provincial and national child benefits, and from changes to education funding and programs. In recent years, wage growth has reduced child poverty. Again, see the infographic, "*Progress In Poverty Reduction*", for additional comparisons.

Despite some progress, many serious challenges remain for Oxford — the persistence of deep poverty, a lack of affordable housing, precarious work and predatory lending.

**Deep Poverty-** Many on Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program continue to live in deep poverty. They live from week to week on incomes incapable of providing safe, secure housing or enough nutritious food to eat. Their lives are a constant struggle to keep body and soul together, where any emergency can destabilize their lives and result in adverse health effects on them and their families.

**Lack of Affordable Housing -** In Oxford, 30% to 40% of all renters are paying more for housing than they can afford. Many in deep poverty are paying over 50% of their incomes on housing. Waiting lists for affordable housing often extend into years. Locally, municipal government has committed funds for affordable housing but the overall supply is still not adequate to meet the needs.

**Precarious Work -** Both the types of jobs and the quality of jobs has changed. Precarious employment is becoming more common, and a lack of basic protections for low income workers is a widespread problem. No pension means a bleak future.

**Predatory Lending -** People on social assistance as well as those working precariously have become increasingly dependent on payday loan services, a form of legalized loan sharking, which has grown dramatically in the last twenty years, due to deep poverty and precarious jobs combined. Lack of access to loans from banks and credit unions, leaves many with annualized borrowing costs of up to 400%. The Banking Act requires reinforcement.

Even the limited progress made in recent years for people in Oxford will be put at risk without further federal investments in the critical areas outlined below.



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Much more needs to be done. Overcoming the remaining challenges calls for action in three key areas:

### 1. Make social assistance adequate and fair.

Ending a generation of neglect that has justified the continuation of punitive, coercive and inadequate social assistance programs that consign our most vulnerable to live in desperation on the margins by:

- Committing to immediate implementation of a three year plan to supplement the Standard Flat Rate for Ontario Works to \$893/month and for ODSP to \$1,334/month by Fall 2020 as recommended in Income Security: A Roadmap For Change, and

- Consider a basic income model.

### 2. Alleviate the affordable housing crisis.

Giving relief to people across Canada who are living in precarious and unaffordable housing and address Oxford's growing housing crisis by:

- Commit to implementing the Canada Housing Benefit as announced in the National Housing Strategy, and
- Bold investment to both increase the supply of new community housing and renovate older stock.

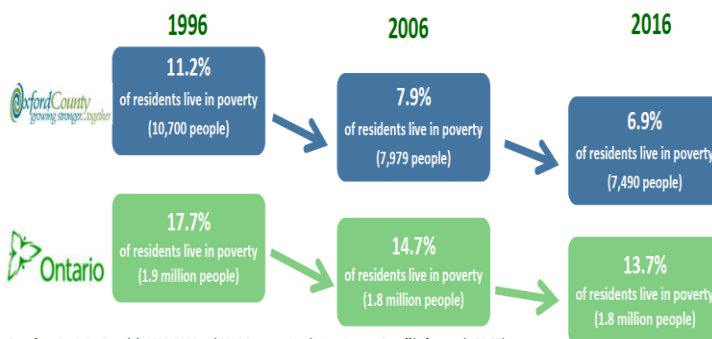
### 3. Address discrimination and inequality

that impact some groups in terms of higher rates of labour market exclusion, unfair workplace practices, the inability to secure rental accommodation and low-cost loans in time of emergency including women, racialized groups, newcomers, and youth by:

- Improvements such as protecting affordable private market units and ensure equal access for all groups and their human rights,
- Improvements to basic workplace standards that will apply to all workers, and
- Access to low-cost emergency loans through banks and credit unions, etc., coupled with the rapid phasing out of predatory lending practices that increase deep poverty.

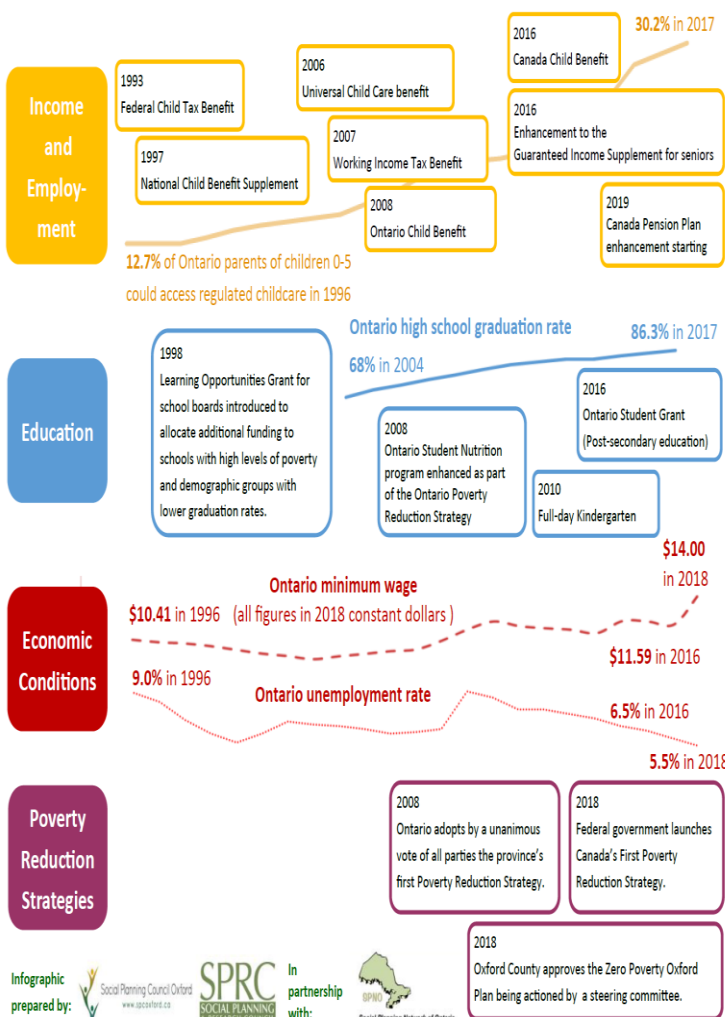
**Social Planning Council Oxford is calling on all Oxford residents, policymakers and candidates to make ending poverty a priority.**

### Don't Stop Now! Progress in Poverty Reduction



Data from Statistics Canada's 1996, 2006 and 2016 Census using the Low Income Cut off before tax (LICO-BT).

### Contributing factors to progress in reducing poverty in Ontario



Infographic prepared by:

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