

The Honourable Deb Matthews
Chair
Ontario Government Committee on Poverty Reduction
Whitney Block Room 4620
99 Wellesley Street West
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Dear Minister Matthews:

I am writing to you in your role as chair of the Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction to offer ideas on how best to reduce poverty in Ontario.

Any plan developed by the province should include three core priorities: sustainable employment, livable wages and incomes, and strong and supportive communities. Sustainable employment to assure a living standard above the poverty level for any adult who lives works full-time; livable wages and incomes allowing all Ontarians to live in dignity, including those unable to work; and strong and supportive communities that can provide affordable housing, child care and public education.

One of the simplest ways for the Ontario government to achieve these goals is to restore card based union certification as recommended by the 25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction. This will restore the balance between labour and management and give workers the right to join a union, be successfully certified, and get a collective agreement without employer interference.

According to Statistics Canada only 39% of Ontario's 9-million jobs provide full-time employment. More than 3.5-million people work in jobs that pay less than \$25,000 per year. The vast majority of these jobs are held by women, single mothers, racialized workers, new immigrants, and youth. More than 85% of those in low-wage jobs are not unionized.

Having a union card can be the number one poverty fighter in the province. Fighting poverty through increased unionization makes good economic sense. It is good for workers who will see their standard of living rise through increased and more equitable wages and benefits associated with unionization. It is good for employers who will profit from having a happier and more productive workforce, and it is good for the economy as workers rise out of poverty to have less reliance on state social programs and greater economic spending power.

From 1950 to 1996, when the province had card based certification, Ontario annual economic growth averaged around 4%. Since 1996, when card based certification was abolished he have witnessed a decline in union density, a loss in consumer spending power, a decline in the standard of living for middle and lower income

Ontarians, and economic growth has averaged only 3%.

I urge your committee to recommend restoring card based union certification to all workers in the province. Only then will we see a decline in the growing gap between rich and poor in the province.

Sincerely,