



Mennonite New Life Centre
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Toronto ON
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Hon. Deborah Matthews
Ministry of Children and Youth Services
14th Flr, 56 Wellesley St W
Toronto ON M5S 2S3

November 26, 2008

Dear Ms. Matthews,

As you know, Premier McGuinty made an election promise to release, by the end of this year, an Anti-Poverty Strategy for Ontario. In the context of an economic downturn, such a strategy is more critical than ever. Recession threatens to throw thousands of precarious workers, especially immigrant and racialized workers, into increasingly dire straights.

The Mennonite New Life Centre is a settlement agency serving newcomers to Ontario. This year, the New Life Centre held a series of focus groups with internationally trained workers from a variety of cultural and professional backgrounds. All spoke of serious challenges accessing jobs that allow them to contribute their full potential to Canada, often due to non-recognition of international training and experience. Many of them were working low paid, low skilled “survival” jobs, where labour rights are frequently violated. All spoke of the need for policy changes to address the growing problem of racialized poverty.

The Mennonite New Life Centre calls on you, as chair of the cabinet committee on poverty reduction, to uphold your party’s election promise to release, by the end of this year, a strategy to reduce poverty in Ontario. Such a strategy must include concrete measures to address the employment challenges faced by newcomers. In particular, we ask the government of Ontario to:

- **Strengthen employment standards** legislation to protect & enforce workers’ rights - particularly for those working in part time, contract, and other forms of precarious work..
- Create strong legislation that will mandate trade and professional regulatory bodies to **remove barriers to accreditation and employment for internationally trained and educated trades people and professionals.**

Please refer to the enclosed research report for newcomer testimonials and recommendations on poverty reduction. I have also enclosed a Shared Framework of Action from the Colour of Poverty Campaign, which brings together the voices and concerns of newcomer communities and service providers from across Ontario.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Tanya Chute Molina
Executive Director