



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NIAGARA, ON - Niagara Poverty Reduction Network launches Poverty Free Ontario Sign campaign

What is this provincial election about? There are many important issues to be dealt with and one that is of urgent concern is poverty. Approximately 1.7 million children, parents, and individuals in Ontario are living in poverty, the highest poverty rate in the province in the last 30 years. A few years ago many of these people never imagined they would be unemployed, losing their homes, applying for social assistance, and visiting food banks. Our shrinking social safety net, along with the recession, has created many poverty traps.

Niagara Poverty Reduction Network (NPRN) is pleased to be partnering with the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC) on a Poverty Free Ontario sign campaign. "We believe that some part of the election debate must be about the hunger and hardship that so many living in poverty experience daily basis," says Elisabeth Zimmermann, chair of NPRN. "We believe that this discussion must happen during this election not only for their right to live with some measure of health and dignity, but also because a poverty-free Ontario would be a healthier community for everyone."

Finding a balance between charity and justice is not easy. Food banks and other assistance programs provide many ways of helping people manage conditions of poverty a little better, but they do not address the root causes of poverty. The persistence of poverty across Ontario reflects a failure of collective responsibility to create basic conditions of health and well-being for all.

The Niagara Poverty Reduction Network encourages you to ask candidates in local debates, on your doorsteps, and through the media: *"If elected what would you and your party do in the next four years to end poverty in Ontario?"*

Lawn signs are available through the YWCA Niagara Region, Business Education Council, United Way of Niagara Falls and Greater Fort Erie and Bridges Community Health Centre in Fort Erie and Port Colborne. Visit the Niagara Poverty Reduction Network at www.wipeoutpoverty.ca to download an 8 ½ x 11 sign and an informational brochure.

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