



Halton District School Board

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Report Number: 08064

Date: May 5, 2008

INFORMATION FOR DECISION

TO: The Chair and Members of the
Halton District School Board

FROM: G. Tuck Kutarna, Trustee, Halton Hills Wards 3&4
Chair of the Board

RE: Poverty Reduction Strategies

RECOMMENDATION

WHEREAS the Government of Ontario has invited public comment on poverty reduction and has pledged to develop focused poverty reduction strategies that employ targets and indicators for poverty reduction, to be announced by the end of 2008;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada have guaranteed the Right to An Adequate Standard of Living as set out in the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;

AND WHEREAS the Government of Ontario recognizes social assistance as a fundamental component of the social safety net, and necessary to protect the dignity of all;

AND WHEREAS the Halton District School Board recognizes that children can only succeed in school if they come to school with basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing having been adequately met, and that the Halton District School Board is not funded to directly provide for these needs;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Halton District School Board authorize the Chair of the Board to write to the Premier of Ontario, the Honourable Ministers of Education, Community and Social Services, and Child and Youth Services; M.P.P.'s Ted Arnott, Ted Chudleigh, Ted McMeekin, Kevin Flynn and Joyce Savoline, with copies to all Municipal Councils, Halton Regional Council and the Chairs of other public school boards in Ontario through the Ontario Public School Boards Association (O.P.S.B.A.);

AND FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that the Chair's letter include a request on behalf of the Halton District School Board that the government's poverty reduction strategy include social assistance rates which are based on the actual cost of rent and other basic necessities in the community where the recipients reside.

Rationale:

Social Assistance rates are presently the same across Ontario, and are inadequate to meet basic needs in all parts of the Province.

A single adult on social assistance receives \$560.00 per month, which is based on \$349.00 per month for shelter, and \$211.00 for all other “basic needs”.

On June 4, 2007 MPP Ted McMeekin (Liberal MPP for Ancaster, Dundas, Aldershot, Flamborough) introduced Bill 235 “An Act to Establish the Social Assistance Rates Board” into the Ontario Legislature. The draft legislation was the collaborative work of Hamilton’s three Community Legal Clinics. Unfortunately, the Legislature rose on June 5, 2007 and so the Bill died on the paper.

Nevertheless, the intent of Bill 235 has been endorsed by numerous poverty reduction activist groups province-wide, including the Hamilton Poverty Reduction Roundtable, and Hamilton City Council.

The Bill’s drafters are asking that the government incorporate a mechanism such as the one proposed in Bill 235 to tie social assistance rates to recipients actual needs, determined annually and based on the local cost of the necessities which assistance is meant to provide.

When social assistance rates are inadequate, children of recipients come to school lacking the stability, resources and support they need to learn. Education is one of the most significant determinants of a child’s chances of escaping poverty. And yet the effects of an inadequate social safety net undermine a child’s ability to access the opportunity a public education provides.

Respectfully submitted,



*G. Tuck Kutarna, Trustee
Halton Hills, Wards 3&4, and
Chair of the Board*