

Minimum wage increased, but still not enough

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Guelph, Ontario – Premier Kathleen Wynne announced today an increase to the minimum wage, bringing it to \$11/hour effective June 1. She also promised to introduce legislation that will tie future increases to the cost of living. The Poverty Task Force joined the chorus of labour and community groups calling for an increase to the minimum wage and although pleased to hear it will be indexed annually to the cost of living, the PTF is disappointed that the rate remains low. “A small increase to the minimum wage is better than no increase, but this move should not be confused with an effective strategy to reduce poverty,” says Sheila Cranmer-Byng, Coordinator of the Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination.

“The provincial government decision to raise the minimum wage to \$11.00 an hour represents a lost opportunity to demonstrate real leadership in lifting people out of poverty,” says David Thornley, Co-Chair of the Poverty Task Force. “While it restores the lost purchasing power that the poorest paid workers have experienced since the last increase in 2010, it does nothing to raise the bar in meeting society’s obligations to ensure that people working full-time can meet their most basic living costs.”

The Guelph & Wellington Task Force on Poverty Elimination had called for a four stage increase to the minimum wage that would have lifted those working full-time for the minimum wage to the poverty line. It is not too late for the government to do the right thing. A growing body of research evidence makes the case that our refusal to lift workers out of poverty is costing us far more in increased health, social services, child welfare and policing costs than it would cost to eliminate poverty. We can and must do better.

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About the Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination: The Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination works collaboratively, informed by diverse voices of experience, to support local action and to advocate for system and policy change to address the root causes of poverty. The Poverty Task Force (PTF) focuses on four priorities – income security, housing security, food security, and access to affordable recreation. For more information, visit www.gwpoverty.ca.