

# IBVM Justice Alert

*Canadian Province, January 20, 2007*

## **“Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage to \$ 10.00 per hour.”**

**THE ISSUE:** Something is wrong when the ‘economy’ is doing better than most of the population! For three years, Frances Lankin, president of the United Way, has warned that Toronto is developing enclaves of extreme poverty and urban decay. Last year, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CPPA) received a generous donation to wake up people to the alarming rise of economic inequality in Canada. In November 2006 the CPPA launched its “Growing Gap Project” in an effort to get people talking and concerned that this is the central economic and social issue of our day. [Information gleaned from Carol Goar’s article on the CPPA’s findings- Toronto Star, Jan.10/07]

**BACKGROUND:** Since 2001, you, our readers have cooperated in repeated letter campaigns in an attempt to get our legislators to alleviate the glaring injustices burdening Canada’s poor families. Our letters have addressed the lack of affordable housing strategy, lack of pharmacare strategy, the lack of a national child care plan, the disarray of the present unemployment insurance program and finally, the failure of the government’s promise to eradicate child poverty by year 2000. Despite the pressure from dozens of faith-based justice coalitions across the country (and despite our own efforts) both Ottawa and the Ontario government have continually turned a deaf ear!

### **THE PRESENT SITUATION:**

- The top 20% of Canadian families hold 75% of the nation’s wealth and are rapidly accumulating more!
- The bottom 20% of Canadian families has no net wealth- their debts exceed their assets and they are sinking deeper into poverty.
- The middle 60% are struggling to hold their ground.
- But in the first 45 minutes of their working day on January 2, one hundred top corporate executives had already earned \$38,000! [Keep in mind that six and a half million Canadians are making less than \$20,000 in the entire year.]
- One million working poor in Ontario are struggling to survive on our present minimum wage, which government recently raised by a few cents to just over \$8.00 per hour. (What, in effect, was raised was people’s anger.)

It is obvious that there are many missing strategies that our governments must put in place to bring about justice for all. However, at this time, the Toronto Labour Council,

backed by numerous justice and faith coalitions, has decided to focus on the sorry state of the minimum wage. A few days ago, this body launched their 9 week “CAMPAIGN to INCREASE Ontario’s MINIMUM WAGE to \$10.00 PER HOUR”. The campaign will end two days after the Provincial Government reopens the legislature on March 19<sup>th</sup>. It is specifically calling us, the Public, to support Bill 150 (which proposes this raise) and to take action towards this end in the next nine weeks.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN:

1. Mail the attached letter (or write your own) to Premier Dalton McGuinty and send a copy to at least one or two others on the list. (A list of members forming the provincial “Standing Committee on Estimates” who will be debating Bill 150 is provided below.)
2. Try to attend one of the Town Hall meetings the campaign is sponsoring to invite public discussion about the importance of supporting the proposed bill. The meetings are being planned for Parkdale, Thorncliffe, Malvern, Etobicoke and other locations in the province. You can learn the time and place on website <http://www.fallingfortunes.ca/portal/>.
3. The leaders in the campaign, along with leaders and members of faith groups, are encouraged to attend a planning session at THE FRIENDS HOUSE, 20 Lowther St. (exit St. George subway station) March 21, 9 a.m. to 12.

Mail, e-mail or fax the following:

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty  
Premier, Province of Ontario  
Room 281, Legislative Bldg.,  
Queen's Park, ON M7A 1A1      Fax 416.325.9895

Honourable John Tory  
Leader of the Opposition, Government of Ontario  
Room 381, Legislative Bldg.  
Queens Park ON M7A 1A8      Fax 416.325.0491

Mr. Tim Hudak, MPP (Erie-Lincoln riding)  
\*\* Chair of Standing Committee on Estimates  
[tim.hudak@pc.ola.org](mailto:tim.hudak@pc.ola.org)

Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North)  
Vice-Chair of Standing Committee on Estimates  
[garfield.dunlop@pc.ola.org](mailto:garfield.dunlop@pc.ola.org)

Kim Craitor (Niagara Falls)  
Member of Standing Committee on Estimates  
[kcraitor.mpp@liberal.ola.org](mailto:kcraitor.mpp@liberal.ola.org)

Phil McNeely (Ottawa-Orléans)  
Member of Standing Committee on Estimates  
[pmcneely.mpp@liberal.ola.org](mailto:pmcneely.mpp@liberal.ola.org)

David Zimmer (Willowdale)  
Member of Standing Committee on Estimates  
[dzimmer.mpp@liberal.ola.org](mailto:dzimmer.mpp@liberal.ola.org)

Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey)  
Member of Standing Committee on Estimates  
[jim.wilson@pc.ola.org](mailto:jim.wilson@pc.ola.org)

Linda Jeffrey (Brampton Centre)  
Member of Standing Committee on Estimates  
[ljeffrey.mpp@liberal.ola.org](mailto:ljeffrey.mpp@liberal.ola.org)

Andrea Horwath (Hamilton East)  
Member of Standing Committee on Estimates  
[ahorwath-qp@ndp.on.ca](mailto:ahorwath-qp@ndp.on.ca)

Bob Delaney (Mississauga West)  
Member of Standing Committee on Estimates  
[bdelaney.mpp@liberal.ola.org](mailto:bdelaney.mpp@liberal.ola.org)

The Honourable Dalton McGuinty  
Premier, Government of Ontario  
Room 281 Legislative Bldg.  
Queen's Park, ON  
M7A 1A1

Dear Mr. Premier

I am deeply concerned that there are over one million working poor in Ontario. Their families are struggling to survive on the present minimum wage, which was recently raised to just over \$ 8.00 per hour.

While I realize there are several important strategies the federal government still has not put in place which could bring justice to Canada's working poor, I feel the province of Ontario could extend a significant hand up to our own poor families by lifting the minimum wage to the more just and realistic level of \$ 10.00 per hour.

Therefore, I support the Toronto Labour Council backed "Campaign to Raise the Minimum Wage to \$ 10.00 per hour". I will attend one of the many local town hall meetings scheduled for Toronto area to allow the public to discuss this issue. (I understand town hall meetings are also taking place in other cities of the province).

Mr. Premier, I believe - if your government passes Bill 150 (which proposes the above mentioned raise) after the legislature reconvenes on March 19<sup>th</sup> – all of us could proudly raise our heads knowing that our province's poor, our very neighbours, are at last being recognized and valued for the work they do every day. While I recognize the concerns of the business community, at the same time I am aware that other countries, and even Quebec and Newfoundland, have already introduced strategies that proved successful in reversing the growing gap between rich and poor in their populations. Cannot we be as sensitive to a justice issue as they have been?

Sincerely,

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cc. Honourable John Tory, Leader of the Opposition  
Members of the Standing Committee on Estimates