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**MCGUINITY GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES THREE PRIORITY PROGRAMS TO KICKSTART POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY**

March 17, 2008

The government's plan for a strong economy is centred around Ontario's greatest resource: its people. If Ontario is to succeed we need everyone at their best.

That's why investing in opportunities for low-income families to get ahead is so important.

The Cabinet Committee on Poverty Reduction, led by the Honourable Deb Matthews, will develop a focused poverty reduction strategy by the end of 2008. It will be built around the Ontario Child Benefit, and will include targets and indicators.

While we work to complete the strategy, we are taking these early steps immediately to ensure that we help all Ontarians reach their full potential.

**DENTAL CARE**

The government will be developing a plan to provide dental services to low-income Ontarians with an investment of \$135 million over three years, starting in 2008-09.

The government will work with Public Health Units, Community Health Centres, dentists and dental hygienists to deliver prevention and treatment services for low-income Ontarians, especially children.

This investment will also expand the Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT) program. CINOT currently provides urgent dental care services to children in low-income families from birth to Grade 8 or their fourteenth birthday, whichever is later. CINOT will now include children in low-income families until their eighteenth birthday.

The funding will be used to provide a range of prevention and treatment services.

**STUDENT NUTRITION**

The Student Nutrition Program helps to alleviate the impacts of poverty by giving children regardless of their socio-economic status the best opportunity to arrive in the classroom ready to learn. The program supports volunteers and community organizations in delivering nutritious meals and snacks to children and youth in schools and community settings across the province. The government will invest \$32 million over three years, doubling the funding. These programs are currently serving 400,000 kids across Ontario.

Currently, the ministry provides annual funding of \$8.5 million to the Student Nutrition Program with approximately half the schools in Ontario participating. A funding enhancement of \$9.4 million a year will bring the total annual allocation to \$17.9 million and will enable:

- Existing local programs to expand their services
- Additional schools and agencies to offer the program with a focus on low income communities.

In addition, a one-time funding grant of \$3.9 million for 2008-2009 will be necessary to support the purchase of equipment, non-perishable foods and other basic program supplies.

By increasing the funding available for the purchase of food, enhancing the capacity of the program's coordinators and providing one-time operating funds for the necessary program equipment and appliances, the government will strengthen the capacity for communities across the province to offer the Student Nutrition Program.

### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**

The government will provide a total of \$100 million to all 47 municipal service managers to repair existing housing stock. This investment will enable the repair of about 4,000 units, helping nearly 10,000 Ontarians. Funds will be distributed to service managers based on the number of units in their catchment area for use on those units in greatest need of repair.

The government will also expand the Ontario Strategic Infrastructure Financing Authority (OSIFA) to include loans to municipalities to undertake social housing capital repairs. Up to \$500 million from OSIFA will be allocated for municipalities to use to repair social housing, focusing on improving the energy efficiency of units. This could repair up to 20,000 units across the province.

The Social Housing Services Corporation will be receiving a million dollars to set up the Social Housing Asset Management Centre. The Centre will enable municipal service managers and social housing providers to have access to useful and consistent standards, tools and resources in order to successfully manage social housing properties in a cost-effective, strategic manner into the future.