



# *The Poverty Reduction Act, 2009*

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Public Policy 201: A Primer for Non-Profit Organizations  
The Role of Legislation in Reducing Poverty in Ontario  
Metcalf Foundation, March 23, 2009

## How can legislation help advance an issue?

- Put an issue on the political and legislative agenda
- Create structures to address or advance that issue
- Return the issue to the political and legislative agenda at set points

## The Limitations of Legislation: Law – what is it good for?

- Legislation is only one of many public policy tools
  - Regulations, budget, tax, appointments, etc.
- Legislation is often good at creating general frameworks or targeting specific problems
  - *Ontario Human Rights Code*
  - *Apology Act, Limitations Act, Negligence Act*

## The Limitations of Legislation - cont

- Legislation not great at compelling expenditure of government funds → budget, regulations
- Legislation does not ensure the continued existence of an entity or program
- Law Reform Commissions
  - *Ontario Law Reform Commission Act*
  - *Law Commission of Canada Act*
- Health and Social Programs
  - *Canada Health Act*

- Legislation may be easily circumvented
  - *Taxpayer Protection Act, 1999* → referendum
  - Balanced budget legislation
- Or simply ignored → Law Reform Commissions
- Or unenforceable → *Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act*

## What Bill 152 Does . . .

- Wholly procedural
- Does not require Govt to spend \$1 on poverty reduction measures
- Does require Govt to spend \$\$\$ on poverty reduction process

## Bill 152

- *Poverty Reduction Act, 2009*
- *An Act respecting a long-term strategy to reduce poverty in Ontario*
- Purpose: “to establish mechanisms to support a sustained long-term reduction of poverty in Ontario”.

## Bill 152’s Seven Principles

1. That there is untapped potential in Ontario's population that needs to be drawn upon by building and establishing supports for, and eliminating barriers to, full participation by all people in Ontario's economy and society.
2. That strong, healthy communities are an integral part of the poverty reduction strategy; their potential must be brought to bear on the reduction of poverty.
3. That not all groups of people share the same level of risk of poverty. The poverty reduction strategy must recognize the heightened risk among such groups as immigrants, single mothers, people with disabilities, aboriginal peoples and racialized groups.
4. That families be supported so that they can play a meaningful role in the reduction of poverty and in promoting opportunity.
5. That all people in Ontario, including those living in poverty, deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.
6. That Ontarians, especially people living in poverty, are to be involved in the reduction of poverty.
7. That a sustained commitment to work together to develop strong and healthy children, families and communities is required to effectively reduce poverty.

## Half-Full

- Requires Govt to have a Plan based on the principles contained in the Act
- Plan must be have a poverty reduction target
- Measuring
- Annual Report
- Consultation
- Review – every 5 years
- Publication – Target, Annual Report, Plan

## Half-Empty

- Wholly procedural → no minimum requirement
- No spending requirement
- No enforcement mechanism
- Public accountability
- Easily circumvented

## Key Dates

- Thursday, March 26, 2009 – Budget Day
- Friday, March 27, 2009 – Begin work for Budget 2010
- TBD – Bill 152 goes to Legislative Committee
  - Opportunity to strengthen the bill
- October 6, 2011 – Election Day

## The Beginning

Thank you.

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