

# POVERTY REPORT CARD SNAPSHOT FOR ACTION



Food Banks  
Canada

Banques  
alimentaires  
Canada



JOIN US AND HELP  
ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE

## ONTARIO



OVERALL GRADE

### REPORT CARD HIGHLIGHTS

Legislative progress:



Social assistance as a  
percentage of the poverty line:



30% or more of income  
on housing:



PROVINCIAL  
OVERVIEW

### CONTEXT

After winning a third consecutive majority in February 2025, the Ontario government's 2026 budget is, by its own measure, a status quo document. It offers no meaningful action on social assistance, housing affordability, or poverty reduction even as Ontario records the highest rate of inadequate government support in the country and an estimated 85,000 people are unhoused. Ontario has the fiscal capacity to act; it has consistently chosen not to.

### KEY FINDINGS

**Social assistance is not enough to live on:** Ontario Works rates have been frozen since 2018 and social assistance covers just 32.7% of the poverty line — the second lowest proportion in Canada. About 71% of support recipients say benefits are insufficient, the highest rate in the country.

**Homeless is becoming normal in Ontario:** Homelessness has grown nearly 8% since 2024, with approximately 85,000 people unhoused, including an estimated 23% who are youth and children. Projections suggest this will reach 300,000 by 2035 without intervention.

**Rising rents and eroding tenant protections:** Despite rent control nominally existing, average rents climbed 54.5% between 2014 and 2023 — more than three times the legally permitted rate — while units built after 2018 have no rent-control protections at all.

### SELECT POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **End the 8-year rate freeze and increase Ontario Works:** Restore Ontario Works rates to their inflation-adjusted value and raise the monthly earnings exemption from \$200 to \$600. Rate freezing has caused severe erosion of real income support. This is a key driver of housing instability and homelessness.
- **Restore full rent-control coverage across all rental units regardless of construction date :** The 2018 exemption for new builds has created a growing segment of the rental market with no basic protections, accelerating unaffordability.
- **Introduce a new poverty-reduction strategy with clear, enforceable targets:** Ontario's latest strategy expired without meaningful accountability, and the absence of targets has contributed directly to rising poverty rates among children, single-parent families, and working-age adults.