



United Way
Peterborough & District
Change starts here.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – April 9, 2024

United Way Peterborough & District Releases The Gap: Income (*In*)Adequacy Report 2024

PETERBOROUGH, ON (April 9, 2024) – In recognition of World Health Day on April 7, **United Way Peterborough & District** announced **The Gap: Income (*In*)Adequacy Report 2024**. This document builds on past Living Wage reports, but with a focus on the history of income adequacy in Ontario over the past 34 years, and the impact income has on public health. Using the 2023 living wage rate for comparison, The Gap shows how Ontario’s minimum wage rate and social safety net have changed over time.

“There is an unspoken covenant between various levels of government and their citizens, and that is to serve people, to preserve communities, and to ensure opportunity for all to experience the fullness of life and their potential,” stated Jim Russell, CEO of United Way Peterborough & District. “Built into this notion is the belief that there should be a minimum standard of living for all people. When the cost of living outpaces income available through a minimum wage or social assistance programs, this minimum standard is not upheld as people are not able to afford basic necessities. **Through this report, we are calling on readers to reflect, refresh, rethink, and renew how we understand adequate income as not something that is *earned*, but something that everyone in our community deserves access to.**”

“United Way Peterborough & District has previously reported on our local region’s Living Wage rate, as we believe in the value that adequate income brings to our entire community,” said Betsy Farrar, Manager of Community Impact. “This year’s report uses a living wage as a measure of cost of living to highlight the shortfalls of other income types against the cost of living. **Our research is highlighting how income rates such as minimum wage and social assistance are increasingly insufficient as the gap between these amounts and the cost of living widens year over year.**”

Elisha Rubacha, Community Impact Officer, presented the findings of the report. She noted that The Gap frequently discusses food insecurity, because it’s such a sensitive measure of poverty, and results in many preventable illnesses that could be avoided if incomes were higher. She pointed out that, “Maintaining poverty is expensive. For instance, **adults in severely food insecure households in Ontario will generate healthcare costs that are 121% higher than those in food secure households.**”



United Way
Peterborough & District
Change starts here.

Rubacha also emphasized that, **“within the 34-year period examined in the report, Ontario’s minimum wage was frozen *half* of the time.”** In Canada, over 60% of food-insecure households are reliant on wages, salaries, or self-employment as their main source of income, indicating that too many of today’s jobs offer insufficient wages. **“When even working people can no longer afford to eat properly, that illustrates a serious problem. Our social safety net similarly offers little protection from food insecurity, and in fact, has never been fully adequate to meet basic needs.”**

The report concludes by illustrating the positive impact of existing tax benefits (the Canada Child Benefit and the Guaranteed Income Supplement) that function like a basic income guarantee might, and presents some of the promising results from past Canadian basic income projects (Mincome, and the Ontario Basic Income Pilot).

United Way Peterborough & District believes in moving people from *Poverty to Possibility*. **Improving incomes is necessary, whether that’s through a basic income guarantee, a higher minimum wage, more certified living wage employers, or all of the above.** The suffering that results from poverty is preventable. We can choose to prevent it.

To this end, United Way Peterborough & District is planning a **Community Symposium on Healthy Incomes** to discuss the links between income and health, and to advance our local anti-poverty movement. More details will be announced in the coming month.

The Gap is available online at uwpeterborough.ca/our-research/ and in print at the United Way office.

For more information, please contact:

Betsy Farrar
Manager of Community Impact, United Way Peterborough & District
705-742-8839
bfarrar@uwpeterborough.ca

Jim Russell
CEO, United Way Peterborough & District
705-742-8839
jrussell@uwpeterborough.ca