

# UNDERFUNDED SOCIAL SERVICES

## KEY ISSUES

In the 1990s, the Harris Conservative government slashed social services budgets across the board, and downloaded massive responsibilities for provincial services to municipalities without the needed money to pay for them. These services included child care, social assistance and public housing. Cities are struggling to pay at least \$3 billion per year to cover these services. Despite having a surplus budget, the McGuinty government has not reversed this download and refuse to pay its bills.

- A decade of underfunding and under-resourcing has left many community agencies unable to meet their costs – for basic necessities like heat, supplies, and decent wages for frontline workers. The Liberals have made small reinvestments that in no way enable agencies to meeting growing demand.
- When it comes to child care, the Liberals were prepared to stand by and let child care centres close, and only committed to spending federal funding for child care after a huge lobby and pressure. Their “Best Start Program” from the last election was flawed and never would have provided a framework for a quality non-profit early learning and child care program.
- After years of neglect, the Liberals have re-invested in the Association for Community Living (ACL) sector following a huge lobby effort from workers, employers and families. Their modest reinvestments in social assistance rates do nothing to restore the cut-backs in social assistance or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) that occurred under the Harris government.

## THE PARTIES – REPORT CARD

### Conservatives

- Downloaded social service costs to cities without funding; slashed community social service budgets.
- Cut back social assistance and Ontario Disability Support Program rates.

### Liberals

- Have not reversed downloading of social services to cities; refuse to pay bills.
- Funds to Child Care only when lobbied; haven't met their 2003 promise.
- Funds to ACLs only when lobbied; only minor reinvestments in community social services.

### NDP

- Have developed a detailed plan for the province pay cost of all downloaded services.
- Call for real investment and laws to ensure non-profit child care gets the funds it needs.
- Continued to affirm its commitment to the importance of community-based social services to make Ontario communities strong and healthy.

### CUPE ONTARIO'S POSITION ...

**Only the NDP will ensure the province pays for the social services that were downloaded to cities and respects community social services as a vital support.**