

News Release

United Way Waterloo Region Communities

For Immediate Release – July 6, 2022

In an Open Letter to Premier Doug Ford, United Ways across Ontario call for action on toughest issues facing Ontarians

United Way leaders identify Housing Security, Income Security and Inclusive Employment, Inclusive Communities and Support for the Social Services Sector as social issues of focus.

Waterloo Region– United Way leaders from across Ontario addressed an [open letter](#) to Ontario Premier Doug Ford and his cabinet yesterday morning calling for close collaboration to alleviate a multitude of social issues plaguing the province. From Sault Ste. Marie and Ottawa to Hamilton and Windsor, the leaders recommended four issue areas to focus on together — Housing Security, Income Security and Inclusive Employment, Inclusive Communities and Support for the Social Services Sector — to address the unignorable hurdles to a strong and vibrant Ontario, especially through the current crisis of affordability.

Through shutdowns and since, Ontario’s United Ways have been working with elected leaders, integrating networks of agencies and cross-sector partnerships to identify priorities, escalate concerns and share resources to support those most disproportionately impacted by poverty — Indigenous, Black or racialized peoples, people with disabilities, those living in low-income neighbourhoods, 2SLGBTQ+ people, women, newcomers, seniors, and people experiencing homelessness.

Frontline partners at agencies funded by United Ways across the province are reporting record-high numbers of community members needing supports, and an increasing complexity of issues facing both urban and rural communities. In addition to meeting basic needs, public policy changes are necessary to address unaffordable housing, low-wage jobs, precarious employment, and mental health challenges to counteract the deepening poverty across the province. The leaders also warn that growing anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, and anti-Asian hate and Islamophobia further widens the poverty gaps and calls for concerted effort to build more inclusive communities.

United Ways across Ontario acknowledged positive steps made by the government through specific public policy like the Homelessness Prevention Program and the \$13.2 billion dollar child-care agreement with the federal government but encourage Premier

Ford and Ministers to do more. The letter recommends specific action such as expanding affordable housing options, establishing a living wage, hiring more addictions and mental health workers, improving access to services and initiatives focused on underserved, equity-deserving communities, and to work with the community services sector in a united way.

“We have been aware of the expanding economic divide and disparities in our region for quite some time”, said Joan Fisk, CEO of United Way Waterloo Region Communities. “The pandemic, inflation and global unrest have brought all these issues into sharp focus, and we realize we cannot keep providing temporary solutions. Poverty is a driving force that is connected to so many other complex social issues like a lack of affordable housing, food insecurity, mental health and addictions, lack of meaningful employment and inadequate income. These issues demand that we collaborate while developing the strategies required to act. We are all committed to working together with our provincial leaders to ensure there is a tangible plan that will allow members of our community to get the support they need when they need it”.

Read the full open letter at www.uwqt.org/openletter-actionforontario.

Digital Assets:

Please visit www.uwaywrc.ca/about-us/communications/ to download our digital assets and further information, including photos, CEO bio and photo, and other United Way materials.

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About United Way Waterloo Region Communities

United Way is the second largest funder of social service programs across the country, second only to government. Thanks to generous donors and partners, United Way is creating change on key social issues such as food security, mental health, and isolation in seniors by investing almost \$3.2 million in critical services to 209 agencies and programs across Waterloo Region in 2021.

For more information or for media interviews, please contact:

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