

# DUMPING ON THE DOWNTRODDEN

It would seem the Progressive Conservative government is attempting to spin gold out of straw when it comes to helping the most vulnerable in the province.

Soon after taking office, the government announced it was scrapping the basic Income program, a three-year pilot project being conducted in four communities across the province.

The program proposed to examine how people living on social assistance could benefit from a guaranteed income.

However, after promising during the campaign to continue the program, once in office Premier Doug Ford announced the innovative project would disappear. Adding salt to the wound, the government announced social assistance rates would be lower and the proposed increase to the minimum wage to \$15 on Jan. 1, 2019 would not happen.

Those promises to take more away from the less fortunate became reality recently when the government approved rolling back hard-won labour reforms that had been passed by the previous Liberal government.

Now the PCs are offering a revamped social assistance program, to as Lisa MacLeod, the minister of children, community and social services, said will provide a more streamlined approach to how people can access the programs.

The changes makes it harder for people to qualify for the Ontario Disability Support Program. The streamlined service will force people suffering from mental or physical disabilities off the program and will mean they would have to apply for Ontario Works, which provides less financial support. The monthly maximum for disability is \$1,169 compared to \$733 on social assistance, forcing people to find a job. In defence, the PC government said it is handling people with severe disabilities "with dignity."

There are also further changes to social assistance such as increasing the earnings exemption from \$200 a month to \$300.

The Liberals had proposed \$400. Those people on welfare will see their benefits cut from 75 cents for every additional dollar they earn rather than the current 50 cents. It will mean people on social assistance will become ineligible sooner.

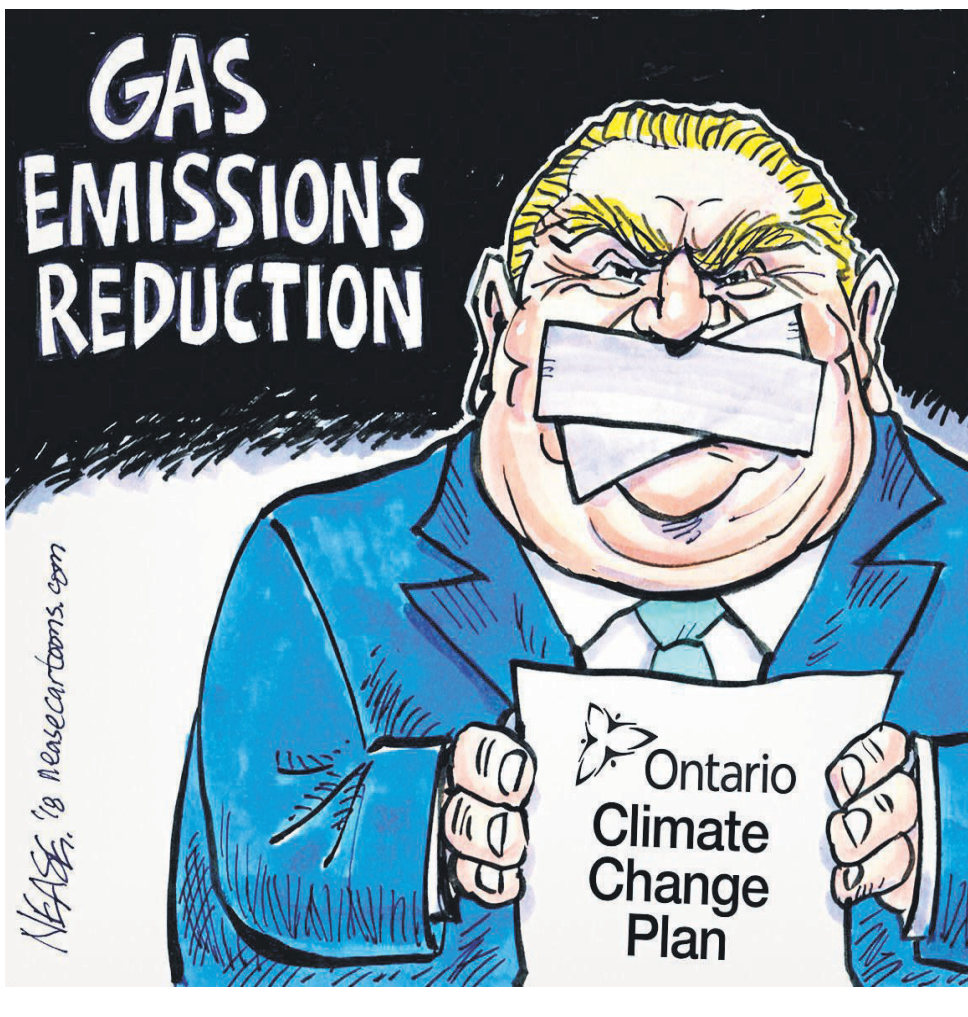
The PCs also touted how they will exempt low-income people from paying taxes, which in their minds will benefit them more than if they earned \$15 an hour. But since the majority of people scraping by on precarious work and other minimum-wage jobs barely earn enough to pay rent, food and clothing, they hardly make enough to pay taxes anyway.

No doubt the province's social assistance programs are in need of an overhaul.

Too many people continue to live below the poverty line, including in Halton.

But instead of using a hammer to continue to beat down people who are already bruised and battered, it is time to adopt meaningful programs - such as the basic income project - that would provide some light at the end of a long tunnel out of poverty.

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## DECEMBER'S GEMINIDS METEOR SHOWER

### CONSIDERED BEST SHOW OF THE YEAR, WRITES MARIO CARR



MARIO CARR  
Column

The Geminids Meteor Shower will peak Dec. 13 and 14.

It's often known as the best meteor shower of the year. However, frigid temperatures discourage many casual observers.

It's called the Geminids Meteor Shower because it looks as though shooting stars are coming from the Gemini constellation.

This year, you don't have to stay up all night to see the show. You could glimpse a few shooting stars at 9:30 p.m. on Dec. 13, as Gemini rises above the eastern horizon. If you wait a little longer, between 10 p.m. and 11

p.m., when the crescent moon sets, more shooting stars will be visible.

Here are December stargazing events, which are listed in the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers calendar. The 2019 calendar is currently on sale and available at the next meeting.

Dec. 14: Hamilton Amateur Astronomers meeting 7-9:30 p.m., Hamilton Spectator, 44 Frid St. Free admission, door prizes and everybody welcome. An optional food bank donation of non-perishable goods will be collected and appreciated. Francois van Heerden will discuss how to use video-assisted observing for astronomy public outreach in light-polluted areas. There will also be a Christmas Social.

Dec. 14: The Moon is near Mars in the evening sky.

Dec. 20: The Moon is in the Hyades star cluster.

Dec. 21: Winter officially begins with the winter solstice at 5:23 p.m. Mercury is also close to Jupiter, low in the morning sky.

Dec. 22: The Full Moon is called the Cold Moon.

Christmas Eve: The Moon is close to the Beehive star cluster in the evening sky.

For more information, see the Hamilton Amateur Astronomers website ([amateurastronomy.org](http://amateurastronomy.org)) or call 905-627-4323. The club offers a basic astronomy course for members.

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