

Regarding "Austerity budget short on compassion" Wed. March 28, 2012 (The Record)

I am a Registered Nurse and I work at a Community Health Centre in the Region of Waterloo. I read Carol Goar's column after Tuesday's provincial budget and I share her concern for those living below the poverty line- including seniors, persons with disabilities, the unemployed, and those living on inadequate social assistance. I am concerned that this budget will be damaging to Ontario's most vulnerable citizens because of the link between poverty and poor health.

As a community health nurse I see firsthand how poverty can negatively affect a person's health. Chronic disease, poor mental health, the inability to access health services- all of these are linked with low income. An increased rate of poverty leads to a population that is less healthy and this, in turn, increases costs on the healthcare system.

I agree with Carol Goar that most Ontarians accept the need for budget cuts in today's economic climate. However, by freezing social assistance payments, the provincial government is not only forcing people with nothing to spare to make do with less, it is also compromising their health and adding costs to the system. We need a commitment to provide social assistance rates that reflect the actual cost of living. Let's challenge the government to commit to policies that address our province's pressing health and social inequities. Let us not balance the budget at the expense of those already living in poverty.

Andrea Baumann
Member of the Community Health Nurses' Initiatives Group
Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario

Waterloo, ON
519-746-1680