



Status of MPP Visits to Do the Math

It Doesn't Add Up!

June 2010

Put Food in the Budget

Promote health and fight poverty

Acknowledgments

The Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO) wishes to acknowledge and thank The Stop Community Food Centre, our partner in the Put Food in the Budget Campaign (PFIB), for its leadership in developing the *Do the Math* on-line survey tool and web site (www.dothemath.thestop.org) and for permitting the use of *Do the Math* in the cross-community PFIB campaign. Thanks also to the PFIB Advisory Committee members who have guided the development and implementation of the campaign. All of us on the Committee and in communities across the province as well wish to express our gratitude to Mike Balkwill, SPNO Consulting Associate, for his expert coordinating and organizing work on the PFIB campaign.

Most importantly, SPNO sincerely thanks all of the local groups and individuals in communities across the province, including many people living on social assistance, who have participated in training and orientation sessions on *Do the Math* and are taking it to their communities and MPPs. This effort is proving to be a very educational experience for communities and for our political representatives, who ultimately must decide whether the disparity between need and support for people on social assistance will be reduced through policy action such as the Healthy Food Supplement.

Everyone who does the math agrees – ***it doesn't add up!***

It's time to ***change the math*** for Ontario's most vulnerable residents.

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Status Report on MPP Visits to Do the Math

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Introduction

The Put Food in the Budget (PFIB) Campaign coordinated by The Stop Community Food Centre and the Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO) has promoted Do the Math as an on-line survey tool to educate the public about the huge shortfall in monthly income that prevents people on social assistance from being able to eat healthily and to meet other essential costs of living. More than 5,000 Ontarians have completed the survey.

The PFIB Campaign is also working with people in local communities to take Do the Math to their Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs). Do the Math teams of local constituents, usually including people on Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits, have been making appointments with their MPPs to Do the Math and to discuss the results with them, all in aid of encouraging political support for the introduction of a \$100 per month Healthy Food Supplement for OW and ODSP recipients.

This report summarizes the results of these MPP visits to date and highlights of the discussions with MPPs on this issue.

Summary of MPP Visits

As of May 2010, Do the Math teams of local constituents had visited 47 MPPs, 30 Liberals, 11 Progressive Conservatives (PC) and 6 New Democrats (NDP). Of that number, 10 Liberals, 6 PCs and 5 NDP MPPs did complete the Do the Math survey. Several MPPs visited have indicated that they do intend to complete the survey and will send their results to the PFIB campaign. Several MPPs also stated that they would not complete the survey for the reason that they did not know what the actual costs were for items in the survey.

Appended to this report is a detailed account of the results of the visits to MPPs done so far by Do the Math teams.

Overall MPP Conclusions: *It Doesn't Add Up*

Overall as the table following indicates, MPPs that have completed the Do the Math survey to date estimate on average that it costs \$1,301 a month to meet the basic necessities of living. A person on OW receives a \$585 monthly benefit and a person on ODSP receives \$1042.

Using the MPP average cost of basic necessities of \$1,301 a month, the OW recipient would fall short by \$716 a month of meeting these basic living requirements and a person on ODSP would be \$259 short.

The estimated costs of monthly necessities do not vary significantly among the three parties, ranging from \$1264 for the PCs, almost the same as \$1281 for the Liberals and rising to \$1,386 for the NDP MPPs, a spread of only \$122 between the PC and the NDP estimated amount for the costs of monthly necessities.

While the MPPs' estimated monthly cost figures are lower than the average of \$1550 for the 5,000 on-line survey respondents, the MPPs' figures still do not add up in terms of adequacy for people on social assistance.

To date, our political representatives from all three parties at the provincial level responsible for setting social assistance rates recognize that current benefits provided by OW and ODSP do not meet the basic food, rent and other essential monthly living needs of people who are not in the labour market.

MPPs by Political Party	MPPs' Calculated Monthly Costs of Basic Necessities (Difference between OW and ODSP Monthly Benefit and MPPs' calculated Costs)	Average MPP Calculated Monthly Costs by Party (Average Shortfall of OW and ODSP Benefits by Party)
Liberal MPPs		\$1,281 (OW --\$696) (ODSP --\$239)
Sophia Aggelonitis Hamilton Mountain	\$1090 (OW -- \$505) (ODSP --\$48)	
Laura Albanese York-South Weston	\$1200 (OW --\$615) (ODSP --\$158)	
Leona Dombrowsky Prince Edward-Hastings	\$1157 (OW --\$572) (ODSP --\$115)	
Brad Duguid Scarborough Centre	\$1716 (OW --\$1131) (ODSP --\$674)	
John Gerretson Kingston & The Islands	\$1350 (OW --\$765) (ODSP --\$308)	
Helena Jaczek Oak Ridges-Markham	\$1,324 (OW --\$739)	

	(ODSP --\$282)	
Linda Jeffrey Brampton-Springdale	\$1345 (OW --\$760) (ODSP --\$303)	
Kuldip Kular Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale)	\$1144 (OW --\$559) (ODSP --\$102)	
Tony Ruprecht Davenport	\$1260 (OW --\$675) (ODSP --\$218)	
Monique Smith Nippissing	\$1221 (OW --\$636) (ODSP --\$179)	
PC MPPs		\$1,264 (OW --\$679) (ODSP --\$222)
Robert Bailey Sarnia-Lambton	\$987 (OW --\$402) (ODSP +\$55)	
Frank Klees Newmarket Aurora	\$1350 (OW --\$765) (ODSP --\$308)	
Norman Miller Parry Sound-Muskoka	\$1740 (OW --\$1155) (ODSP --\$698)	
Julia Munro York-Simcoe	\$1042 (OW --\$457) (ODSP -- \$0)	
Jerry Ouelette Oshawa	\$1012 (OW --\$427) (ODSP +\$30)	
Peter Shurman Thornhill	\$1450 (OW --\$865) (ODSP --\$408)	
NDP MPPs		\$1,386 (OW --\$801) (ODSP --\$344)
Cheri DiNovo High Park-Parkdale	\$1820 (OW --\$1235) (ODSP --\$778)	
Andrea Horwath Hamilton Centre	\$1396 (OW --\$811) (ODSP --\$354)	
Paul Miller Hamilton East-Stoney Creek	\$1418 (OW -- \$833) (ODSP --\$376)	
Michael Prue Beaches-East York	\$1425 (OW --\$840) (ODSP --\$383)	
Peter Tabuns	\$875	

Toronto-Danforth	(OW --\$290) (ODSP +\$167)	
ALL MPPs who have Done the Math to Date		\$1301 (OW --\$716) (ODSP --\$259)

Highlight Comments by MPP Survey Respondents

Among MPPs who did Do the Math with our teams, there was general agreement that current social assistance benefits were not enough to meet the monthly cost of living essentials.

Sophia Aggelonitis, Liberal MPP for Hamilton Mountain, took the exercise very seriously, actually researching the costs of essentials in Hamilton. Ms. Aggelonitis did indicate that she found a very cheap apartment in Hamilton for only \$480 a month rent, but after viewing it, she said, ***“I would never live there.”*** She tried shopping for a week on only \$50 and concluded, ***“It was impossible.”*** Her general conclusion was that, ***“\$100 per month is not a large enough increase for OW recipients.”***

Other Liberal MPPs who completed the survey agreed that social assistance rates were inadequate. Liberal MPPs Monique Smith, Nipissing, and Leona Dombrowski, Prince Edward-Hastings, also agreed that the numbers ***“do not add up”***. Ms. Dombrowski, Ontario’s Minister of Agriculture at the time she did the survey and now Minister of Education, concluded that ***“Being on social assistance would be a real challenge . . . it doesn’t leave them a lot.”***

Other important Liberal Cabinet Ministers have also acknowledged that current social assistance rates are not adequate:

- The Hon. Dwight Duncan, Finance Minister and MPP for Windsor-St. Clair, acknowledged that both OW and ODSP ***“fall short”*** and do not allow people ***“to function properly.”*** Asked whether the \$100/month Healthy Food Supplement was on the Government’s “radar”, Minister Duncan replied, ***“Everything is on the radar. It just comes back to how you pay for it.”***
- The Hon. Madeleine Meilleur, Minister of Community and Social Services and MPP for Ottawa Vanier, said that she understands that social assistance recipients do not get enough and that she ***“would love to add a \$100 a month”*** to their benefits but that ***“it is costly every time that we move on requests like this.”*** Although acknowledging the link that research shows exists between health and poverty, Mme. Meilleur said that the public supports the Government’s priorities on health, education and the economy and that social assistance is ***“not on its radar.”***
- The Hon. John Gerretsen, MPP for Kingston & The Islands and Minister of the Environment, acknowledged the consequences of low rates, saying,

“There is no doubt about it, the health consequences are humungous,” and commenting with respect to the proposed \$100 a month Healthy Food Supplement, ***“it is not outrageous. I’m not suggesting for a moment that it is too much.”***

- The Hon. Brad Duguid, MPP for Scarborough Centre and Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, agreed that current benefit rates are not enough and it would be ***“hard to have a good quality of life”*** while living on social assistance, although he thought ***“steady increases”*** over time would help reduce the disparity.

Other Liberal MPP survey respondents also had strong conclusions about the inadequacy of current benefits:

- Linda Jeffrey, MPP for Brampton-Springdale, said with respect to current benefit levels, ***“Do I think it’s enough? No. At the end of the day, it’s not enough to live on. It’s hard to live with dignity.”*** Still, she could not see the Healthy Food Supplement coming to the House for a vote.
- Jim Brownell, MPP for Stormont-Dundas-Chalottesburgh, expressed his strong support for the Healthy Food Supplement and asserted the inadequacy of current social assistance benefit levels, saying, ***“There was a period of approximately eight years with no increases in social assistance rates and people who live in poverty have just fallen so behind in debt and are still today playing ‘catch up’.”***
- Dr. Helena Jaczek, MPP for Oak Ridges-Markham, and former Medical Officer of Health for York Region, was also skeptical about the prospects of getting political support for the Healthy Food Supplement but acknowledged the current inadequacy of benefit levels, saying, ***“Given it has been demonstrated that \$215 is the amount required to eat healthily by the Health Food Basket research, there has to be a way to make this available to everyone.”***

Several PC MPPs who have done the survey agreed that current social assistance rates are not enough. The Hon. Robert Bailey, MPP for Sarnia-Lambton, who calculated a very low monthly cost of living for basic necessities at \$987, still concluded, ***“Obviously, the rates for Ontario Works are not enough, given the cost of living for a single person to live independently. The government has to move towards increasing Ontario Works rates over time as the economy improves.”*** The Hon. Norm Miller, PC MPP for Parry Sound-Muskoka, supported giving people the amount of money on which they can reasonably live and that the Healthy Food Supplement would be a step in that direction. Peter Shurman, MPP for Thornhill, expressed his support for the \$100/month Healthy Food Supplement and stated, ***“People who are victims of poverty through no fault of their own are at the short end of the stick in Ontario and we are not doing enough.”***

All NDP MPPs visited by Do the Math teams expressed their support for PFIB's Healthy Food Supplement proposal and they most often made the connection between low benefits and poor health, as expressed by Andrea Horvath, NDP Leader and MPP for Hamilton Centre, ***"Yes, of course, everyone knows that social assistance affects health."***

France Gelin, MPP for Nickel Belt and NDP Health critic, concluded, after doing the survey, ***"I remain convinced that it is impossible for a OW recipient in Nickel Belt to buy healthy food and pay for housing, never mind pay for transportation, clothing, personal products or a telephone! Nobody should have to choose between food or shelter."***

Cheri DiNovo, MPP for High Park-Parkdale, commented, ***"Raising the rates needs to be the main message here – just give people more – we want to have more money to live on! Drawing people out of poverty could actually be done quite simply by raising the rates."***

Both Michael Prue, NDP MPP for Beaches-East York, and Peter Tabuns, NDP MPP Toronto-Danforth, commented on how little money is left for all other essentials including food after paying the rent on a social assistance income. Both cautioned also that the Healthy Food Supplement is only the first step towards adequacy.

Additional Highlights of MPP Meetings

Although most MPPs that were visited did not complete the survey with the Do the Math teams, the teams were trained to report the findings to date of the Do the Math survey and to discuss these with their MPPs. These discussions were noted and proved to offer some interesting insights as well on where our political representatives are on the issue of supporting people on social assistance to be able to escape hunger and eat healthily.

Although not completing the survey, a number of MPPs acknowledged that benefit levels are not adequate to allow healthy living. David Caplan, Liberal MPP for Don Valley East and former Minister of Health, recognized that current benefit levels were inadequate even though inflationary increases of 2-3% had been made since 2003. Still, he commented, ***"It is clear that more needs to be done."*** Although they could not express support for the Healthy Food Supplement at this time, several Liberal MPPs did indicate that the costs of living did suggest the need for some significant increases at some time.

Frank Klees, PC MPP for Newmarket Aurora, also agreed that people on social assistance do not get a lot of income and that rent costs make it especially difficult. He agreed that people have a right to eat healthily. ***"I would be supportive of increasing the monthly benefits to a level that would allow people to afford food and shelter. With regards to the Campaign for the***

Healthy Food Supplement, I would be supportive of a \$100 healthy monthly food supplement in the context that the \$100 would be made available in a coupon that was specific to the provision of healthy food.”

Greg Sorbara, Liberal MPP for Vaughan and former Finance Minister, disagreed with food voucher systems, arguing that people on low incomes should not be monitored for their purchases. He stated that ***“the real issue overall is the resources that individuals and families require to meet all their basic living necessities, not just healthy food.”*** He went on to explain that ***“It is important to communicate to the majority of the working public that the quality of society and their own lives will improve if we improve the conditions of the most vulnerable among us.”***

Tim Hudak, PC MPP for Erie-Lincoln and recently elected PC Leader and Leader of the Opposition would not indicate whether he thought current benefit levels were adequate, although he did say that people in his riding were ***“clearly sympathetic to financially supporting persons with disabilities.”***

Conclusion

Do the Math teams continue to be trained and to make appointments with their local MPPs to do the survey with them and to discuss the results. While, with the exception of the NDP, few MPPs are expressing their direct support for the \$100 a month Healthy Food Supplement as a first step toward adequacy in social assistance benefits, most MPPs are hard pressed to justify current benefit levels or argue that people on social assistance receive enough to eat healthily and to meet their other basic costs of living over the course of the month.

It is also important to note that social assistance recipients have not had an increase in their real incomes since Premier Harris cut OW rates by 22% and froze ODSP rates in 1995. While the current Government repeatedly refers to an 11% rate increase since 2003, in fact, the 2% annual increases initiated then were cost of living adjustments according to the Government’s own budget document in 2007, generally matching the rate of inflation, until this year. Cost of living adjustments are meant to protect existing rates, they are not actual rate increases that improve the real incomes of recipients. In fact, there have been no real rate increases to social assistance in Ontario for 15 years, since Mr. Harris made his cuts in 1995.

Since Do the Math has been on-line and visits by Do the Math teams were started, there has also been a major change in access to the Special Diet Allowance (SDA). SDA allowed social assistance recipients with a range of medical conditions to get access to more income for medically necessary dietary reasons. The 2010 Budget has moved the program to the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care for redesign and administration, but the clear intent is to severely reduce the investment in the program, which will affect about 160,000 people. In

essence, the incomes of these individuals and families with medical conditions will likely be reduced from 5% to 15% if this program does not provide the same level of support as previously.

As more Ontarians Do the Math and come to the realization that current levels of income support to people outside the labour market are unhealthy to the recipients and to our communities, we will be looking to our elected political representatives in Ontario to show the leadership needed to ***change the math*** in order to eliminate hunger and improve the health of people receiving social assistance in Ontario. The \$100 a month Healthy Food Supplement would be a first important step in that direction.

Appendix

Liberal MPPs		
MPP Name Riding Completed <i>Do the Math</i> Survey ✓ Amount Calculated for Monthly Living Costs \$/mo. Shortfall of OW/ODSP Monthly Amounts (--\$)	MPP Conclusions/Comments	Issues Raised
Sophia Aggelonitis Hamilton Mountain <div style="text-align: center;">✓</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> \$1090 (OW -- \$505) (ODSP --\$48) </div>	After researching real costs in Hamilton, MPP Aggelonitis agreed that " \$100 per month is not a large enough increase for OW recipients. " She agreed to raise the issue with Minister Matthews. It would cost a lot but " <i>in any case, it was not [the community's] problem to find the money; it was a problem for her and the government to solve.</i> "	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Found a cheap apartment (\$480/mo) but would never live there herself. • Shopped for a week spending only \$50 – it was "<i>impossible</i>". • Questioned whether Internet could not be accessed through library but was unaware of time restrictions in library use of Internet.
Rick Bartolucci Sudbury <div style="text-align: center;"> Visited but did not complete survey (no data) </div>	Visited by several faith leaders, MPP Bartolucci stated that the Ontario Government had already done a lot on poverty reduction. MPP Bartolucci indicated familiarity with the Do the Math survey but did not say whether he had completed it or not. Although sympathetic to the issue of access to adequate food for people on social assistance, he would make no commitment to standing behind the Healthy Food Supplement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

	publicly. When asked how what the Government was doing has impacted the actual pocket books of people on social assistance, he said <i>“I don’t have that information at hand but would sent it”</i> to them.	
<p>Jim Brownell Stormont-Dundas- Charlottenburgh</p> <p>Visited but did not complete Survey</p> <p>(no data)</p>	<p>Asked whether he supported the \$100/mo. Healthy Food Supplement proposal of PFIB, MPP Brownell replied, <i>“It’s the very least we could do”</i> and that it was needed because <i>“there was a period of approximately eight years with no increases in social assistance rates and people who live in poverty have just fallen so behind in debt and are still today playing ‘catch up’.”</i> He stated that rates are below adequacy and countered the stereotypes of people social assistance, saying, <i>“it’s people we know; it’s people from our community and they are not just a bunch of people who are spending their money on tobacco products and alcohol.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>David Caplan Don Valley East</p> <p>Visited but did not complete Survey</p> <p>(no data)</p>	<p>Mr Caplan stated that the government has been increasing social assistance rates (2-3% per year), <i>“although it is clear that more needs to be done”</i>. Current economic climate makes it difficult to do more. He felt that \$1460 (the average cost of frugal living according to the Do the Math survey analysis) seemed like a lot. Mr. Caplan agreed that current social assistance rates are not adequate, but that they have been going up. He said that changes will have to be incremental, particularly over the next few years. Would not support the Healthy Food Supplement at this time.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the infrastructure-related stimulus spending and the new plan for full-day learning for 4-5 year olds as ways of alleviating some of the economic pressures households are facing. • Supports more community –based initiatives such as community gardens.
<p>Michael Chan Markham Unionville</p>	<p>Willing to talk to Minister Meilleur about the survey and the request for a Healthy Food Supplement. MPP Chan has indicated that he would get back to the Do</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poverty competed with other areas for government resources.

<p>Visited but did not complete survey</p> <p>(no data)</p>	<p>the Math team with regard to completing the survey but has not done so as of yet.</p>	
<p>Bruce Crozier Essex</p> <p>Visited but did not complete survey</p> <p>(no data)</p>	<p>MPP Crozier would not complete the Do the Math survey because <i>‘it is not a reality’</i> for him. That is, he is not the one who actually does the shopping and pays the bills in his household. Explained that he was a fiscal conservative and worries about increasing taxes for programs such as the Healthy Food Supplement and poverty measures must compete with many other interests, <i>“all fighting for a piece of the pie.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural poverty should also be a priority.
<p>Vic Dhillon Brampton West</p> <p>Visited but would not complete the survey</p> <p>(no data)</p>	<p><i>“unable to comment on whether the current social assistance rates are adequate for a life of health and dignity and unable to complete the survey because I am unfamiliar with the current market rates for food, clothing, transportation, shelter, toiletries, etc. as I do not make the household purchases in my household.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$100/mo Healthy Food Supplement is <i>“throwing money at the problem”</i> and may not be the best solution because <i>“an extra \$100 per month would only feed the alcohol and/or drug habits of the kind of people I see outside my office.”</i>
<p>Leona Dombrowsky Prince Edward-Hastings</p> <p>✓</p> <p>\$1157 (OW --\$572) (ODSP --\$115)</p>	<p><i>“Being on social assistance would be a real challenge” . . . current amounts “doesn’t leave them a lot”.</i></p> <p><i>“We need to do all we can to help individuals in need of social assistance.”</i></p> <p>Social assistance rates do not add up and she agreed to send a letter to the Minister of Community and Social Assistance raising our concerns (which was done on Oct. 21).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like to <i>“see everyone make more money”</i> but <i>“it’s about balances – with the economic downturn, if minimum wage is increased too much, people would lose jobs because companies could not afford it.”</i> • When people have the time (e.g. not working), <i>“thought they would be able to be more frugal”.</i>
	<p>MPP Duguid completed the Do the math survey,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government facing a huge deficit and

<p>Brad Duguid Scarborough Centre</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$1716 (OW --\$1131) (ODSP --\$674)</p>	<p>although he indicated that he did not actually know what the real costs were for the various items. He commented that the costs for the various items would be more if a person had children, which he knows for his own family experience. MPP Duguid said that current OW and ODSP rates are not enough and it would be “hard to have a good quality of life” on social assistance. He didn’t think the rates could be changed in the 2010 budget, although “steady increases” over time might help. Currently, “most money goes into healthcare and education and this is investing in the future.”</p>	<p>must deal with it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal government is retrenching making it more difficult on the province.
<p>Dwight Duncan Windsor-St. Clair</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Visited but did not complete survey</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(no data)</p>	<p>Although Finance Minister Duncan did not complete the Do the math survey, he did acknowledge that both OW and ODSP “fall short” and do not allow people “to function properly.” On the possibility of \$100/month for the Healthy Food Supplement being “on the radar”, Minister Duncan “Everything is on the radar. It just comes back to how you pay for it.” The Government sees full-day learning as one way to help struggling families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must address rules that restrict access to social assistance. • Must avoid closing child care centres.
<p>Kevin Flynn Oakville</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Visited but did not complete survey</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(no data)</p>	<p>[No report]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>John Gerretson Kingston & The Islands</p>	<p>“The rates are low” but the government decided to support families with children first. An additional \$100/month for the Healthy Food</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioned the necessity of Internet expenses and entertainment. • Expressed concern about eh cost of a

<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$1350 (OW --\$765) (ODSP --\$308)</p>	<p>Supplement <i>“is not outrageous. I’m not suggesting for a moment that it’s too much”</i> and <i>“there is no doubt about it, the health consequences are humongous.”</i></p> <p>He would speak to Minister Matthews and his MPP colleagues about more money for food for social assistance recipients.</p>	<p>Healthy Food Supplement.</p>
<p>Helena Jaczek Oak Ridges-Markham</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$1,324 (OW --\$739) (ODSP --\$282)</p>	<p>Dr. Jaczek commented that <i>“individuals would do without, out of necessity.”</i> They would likely not be able to afford any of these items due to the fact that other basic items had already taken the monthly total to well over the amount allotted on SA or ODSP. She agreed that the reality of living on such a meager amount each month, severely limited people’s choices where even essentials were concerned.</p> <p>Regarding the amount available for food, Dr. Jaczek said, <i>“given it has been demonstrated that \$215 is the amount required to eat healthily by the Health Food Basket research, there has to be a way to make this available to everyone.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high cost of rent is central to the shortfall problem on OW. It would be extremely difficult to even find a single person accommodation or bachelor apartment in her riding for \$600/mo. • Most people on OW would understandably forego regular dental care and that that would have necessary health implications and costs down the road. • Strongly supports of a full review of the Social Assistance System, which will likely have to occur before something like the Healthy Food Supplement is considered, although the Do the Math team pointed out that the HFS is only the first step to adequacy in social assistance benefits. • Current deficit makes it hard to make the case for increases to social assistance.
<p>Linda Jeffrey Brampton-Springdale</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p>	<p>Re current rates <i>“Do I think it’s enough? No. At the end of the day, it’s not enough to live on. It’s hard to live with dignity.”</i></p> <p>Re the Healthy Food Supplement, <i>“hypothetically, I think it’s a good idea . . . but it’s not going to be put to a vote.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One thing won’t make the difference, need improvements in education, housing another areas as well as income. • Concerned about the cost of the Healthy Food Supplement given the recession.

<p style="text-align: center;">\$1345 (OW --\$760) (ODSP --\$303)</p>		
<p>Kuldip Kular Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$1,144 (OW --\$559) (ODSP --\$102)</p>	<p>Dr. Kular has lived in poverty both in his home country and when he first came to Canada. He is aware that people have not recovered from the Harris cuts in the 1990s and that the rates are inadequate and that healthy diets ensure sustainability of the healthcare system. It is hard to explain this to the taxpayer, however, and there are many competing priorities for limited resources. The Government wants to <i>“ensure that things like healthcare and education are still available to people even if other things are not.”</i> <i>“Poverty wil always exist – it is impossible for some people to ever lift themselves out of poverty.”</i> Dr. Kular did commit to discussing the Healthy Food Supplement with the Finance Minister before the budget.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>Deb Matthews London North Centre</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(no data reported yet)</p>	<p>[No report at this time]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>Ted McMeekin Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Westdale,</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Completed the survey but did not report the results</p>	<p>MPP McMeekin agreed that <i>“\$100 a month was not enough to add to OW and ODSP”</i> but he could not sign onto the Healthy Food Supplement campaign until there had been a proper review of rates via the Social Assistance Review.</p>	

(no data)		
<p>Madeleine Meilleur Ottawa Vanier</p> <p>Visited but did not complete survey</p> <p>(no data)</p>	<p>Minister Meilleur said that it was not necessary for her to Do the Math survey because she was very familiar with the issues facing people on social assistance. She understands that recipients do not get enough and she “would love to add a \$100 a month” to their benefits but that “it is costly every time that we move on requests like this.” The huge Government deficit precludes such action plus social assistance is not “on the public radar” while health and education remain the primary public concerns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>Reza Moridi Richmond Hill</p> <p>Visited but did not complete survey</p> <p>(no data)</p>	<p>“Rent is a major item, costing \$800-\$900 for a small apartment.” Poverty will take a “very long time to address.” Mr. Moridi did suggest that social assistance should be indexed to the rate of inflation. Also agreed that immediate financial situation should be addressed while larger systemic issues of poverty are being worked out. He indicated that he would need to learn more about the Healthy Food Supplement before he could say whether he supported it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One solution to the rent affordability problem may be to legalize basement apartments.
<p>Sandra Pupatello Windsor West</p> <p>Visited but did not complete survey</p> <p>(no data)</p>	<p>[No report at this time]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>Yasir Naqvi</p>	<p>MPP Naqvi is very aware that improvements need to be made to social assistance, including raising the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rates should not be talked about in isolation but should be part of a review of

<p>Ottawa-Centre</p> <p>Visited and did not complete the survey but indicated that he would do so</p> <p>(no data)</p>	<p>rates. He agreed that social assistance rates are too low. Although reluctant to commit, MPP Naqvi agreed to support the 100 per month healthy Food Supplement.</p>	<p>the whole social assistance system, including changing the punitive rules.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 50% clawback on earned income should especially be eliminated.
<p>Tony Ruprecht Davenport</p> <p>✓</p> <p>\$1260 (OW --\$675) (ODSP --\$218)</p>	<p>Mr. Ruprecht concluded that social assistance rates do not add up and that a single person living in Davenport in fact needs a minimum of \$1260 per month to live a healthy life and participate in with dignity in the community.</p>	
<p>Monique Smith Nipissing</p> <p>✓</p> <p>\$1221 (OW --\$636) (ODSP --\$179)</p>	<p><i>“It’s no surprise. My calculation was a lot more than the allowances provided.”</i> Social assistance rates <i>“do not add up.”</i> Agreed to write a letter to Minister Meilleur voicing the groups; concern about inadequate social assistance rates and recommendations for improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not see access to the Internet as a necessity given. • Acknowledged that costs in the north are higher because of transportation. • Concerned about the cost of OW and ODSP increases given that they are open programs.
<p>Greg Sorbara Vaughan</p> <p>Visited -- has not yet completed survey but</p>	<p>Mr. Sorbara said that there was a <i>“market attractiveness”</i> to the \$100/month Healthy Food Supplement as a first step towards adequacy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The real issue is the <i>“overall level of resources that individuals and families require to meet all their basic living necessities, not just healthy food.”</i> • <i>“It is important to communicate to the</i>

<p>agreed to do it & send to us</p> <p>(no data)</p>		<p><i>majority of the working public that the quality of society and their own lives will improve if we improve the conditions of the most vulnerable among us."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any increase to incomes need not be monitored for whether it is spent on food (i.e. not a voucher type program)
<p>Kathleen Wynne Don Valley West</p> <p>Visited but did not complete survey</p> <p>(no data)</p>	<p>[No report at this time]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Progressive Conservatives MPPs		
MPP Name Riding Completed <i>Do the Math</i> Survey ✓ Amount Calculated for Monthly Living Costs \$/mo. Shortfall of OW/ODSP Monthly Amounts (--\$)	MPP Conclusions/Comments	Issues Raised

<p>Ted Arnott Wellington-Halton Hills</p> <p>Not yet completed but would</p> <p>(no data)</p>	<p>Supported the need for a supplement that would be spent in local communities.</p>	
<p>Robert Bailey Sarnia-Lambton</p> <p>✓</p> <p>\$987 (OW --\$402) (ODSP +\$55)</p>	<p>After doing the survey, MPP Bob Bailey concluded: <i>“Obviously the rates for Ontario Works are not enough, given the cost of living for a single person to live independently.”</i> <i>“The government has to move towards increasing Ontario Works rates over time as the economy improves.”</i> <i>“Instead of the wasted money on EHealth and their spending scandals, the government should have put this money towards programs for disadvantaged people.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“Housing is a big part of the puzzle. If we could address housing costs this could help a lot.”</i>
<p>Ernie Hardeman Oxford</p> <p>Visited but did not complete the survey</p> <p>(no data)</p>	<p>Mr. Hardeman started the survey but did not conclude it when he found that there was not enough money to live on.</p> <p>Could not support a \$100/mo. Healthy Food Supplement – no guarantee that would be used for healthy food choices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising OW to amount needed to live was not a solution – people on OW are able to manage by sharing housing or getting help from family and friends.
<p>Tim Hudak Erie-Lincoln</p> <p>Visited but would not complete the survey</p>	<p>Mr. Hudak would not support the Healthy Food Supplement at the meeting, although he would email a formal response later. He prefers to tear down barriers that keep people from getting into work than adjusting benefits. He did say that people in his riding are <i>“clearly sympathetic to financially supporting persons with</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Assistance portfolio should be moved from MCSS to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

(no data)	disabilities. “	
<p>Frank Klees Newmarket Aurora</p> <p>✓</p> <p>\$1350 (OW --\$765) (ODSP --\$308)</p>	<p>Acknowledged that people on social assistance do not get a lot of income and noted that the cost of rent takes up most of their benefit. MPP Klees agreed that people on social assistance have a right to eat healthily.</p> <p><i>“I would be supportive of increasing the monthly benefits to a level that would allow people to afford food and shelter. With regards to the Campaign for the Healthy Food Supplement, I would be supportive of a \$100 healthy monthly food supplement in the context that the \$100 would be made available in a coupon that was specific to the provision of healthy food.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would prefer a food voucher system to make sure that people use the extra assistance on food.
<p>Norman Miller Parry Sound-Muskoka</p> <p>✓</p> <p>\$1740 (OW --\$1155) (ODSP --\$698)</p>	<p>Upon completing the survey, Mr. Miller acknowledged that social assistance rates do not add up. He saw he would have to trim his costs by, for example, reducing his food budget. Mr. Miller acknowledged it would be difficult to live on the rate one receives on Ontario Works or ODSP. He expressed support for giving people an amount of money on which they can reasonably live, and for a Healthy Food Supplement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the Healthy Food Supplement will help in the short term, longer-term solutions are required. • Mr. Miller expressed his view that education is key to preventing the need for social assistance, that skills development is the best way to guarantee adequate incomes.
<p>Julia Munro York-Simcoe</p> <p>✓</p> <p>\$1042 (OW --\$457) (ODSP \$0)</p>	<p>MPP Munro acknowledged that <i>“nothing much had been done about social assistance rates since the mid-1990s and that things could always be improved.”</i></p> <p>Supported a review of the social assistance system.</p>	

John O'Toole Durham Visited but did not complete the survey (no data)	[No report at this time]	•
Elizabeth Witmer Kitchener-Waterloo Visited but did not complete the survey (no data)	Receptive to the idea of a \$100 healthy Food Supplement and agreed that these monies would be spent directly in the local economy.	• Feels that there should be something done about the restrictions on the personal assets of OW and ODSP recipients.

NDP MPPs		
MPP Name Riding Completed <i>Do the Math</i> Survey ✓ Amount Calculated for Monthly Living Costs \$/mo. Shortfall of OW/ODSP Monthly Amounts (--\$)	MPP Conclusions/Comments	Issues Raised
Cheri DiNovo High Park-Parkdale	Supports the Healthy Food Supplement -- <i>“Raising the rates needs to be the main message here – just give people more – we want people to have more money</i>	• Must also implement minimum wage increases more quickly and create more affordable housing through policies like

<p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$1820 (OW --\$1235) (ODSP --\$778)</p>	<p><i>to live on! Drawing people out of poverty could actually be done quite simply by raising the rates.”</i> <i>“We’re eroding the middle class while the wealthy are getting wealthier. The HST tax will hit poor people the worst in this Province when it is implemented. When the government gives away money in tax cuts to the rich, then we are left without money needed to fund social services.”</i></p>	<p>inclusionary zoning (Her Private member’s Bill)</p>
<p>France Gelinas Nickel Belt</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(No data reported yet)</p>	<p><i>“After Doing the Math I remained convinced that it is impossible for a OW recipient in Nickel Belt to buy healthy food and pay for housing, never mind pay for transportation, clothing, personal products or a telephone! Nobody should have to choose between food or shelter.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>Andrea Horwath Hamilton Centre</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$1396 (OW --\$811) (ODSP --\$354)</p>	<p>When asked if she would support an immediate increase of \$100 per month to single adults on Social Assistance – <i>“Yes, of course. Everyone knows that Social Assistance affects health.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing some of the rules instituted by Harris such as liquefying assets before qualifying for OW, the spouse in the house rule etc., Ms. Horvath pointed out that we can change such rules by regulation not legislation.
<p>Paul Miller Hamilton East-Stoney Creek</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$1418</p>	<p>Supports the Healthy Food Supplement. Strong advocate for an Ontario seniors pension – might <i>“divert some from needing to be on OW.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did question whether <i>“those people couldn’t possibly afford to have a pet</i> “. • Some unfortunate suggestions that people take advantage of food banks.

<p>(OW -- \$833) (ODSP --\$376)</p>		
<p>Michael Prue Beaches-East York</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$1425 (OW --\$840) (ODSP --\$383)</p>	<p>“After you fill out the amount for rent, there isn’t a lot left to give you much of a life.” \$100/mo Healthy Food Supplement is “only a stepping stone to what is really needed to bring equity to social assistance.” As NDP Poverty critic, he would ask the Party leader to ask a question in the House about the Food Supplement and rates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After rent and food nothing left -- “no essentials like the internet, no pets, no personal grooming and hygiene costs and no room for any entertainment.”
<p>Peter Tabuns Toronto-Danforth</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">\$875 (OW --\$290) (ODSP -- +167)</p>	<p>Indicated he did not complete survey because after allowing for rent “there would be very little left to allocate to other categories.” OW recipients could not be able to live a healthy, dignified life on current rates. Supported the Healthy Food Supplement but “it should be emphasized that the \$100 supplement is only a step in the right direction – it is not an adequate solution.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asserted health link referring to U of T medical policy research “which states that eliminating poverty would be the financial equivalent of eradicating cancer.”

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