

PUT FOOD IN THE BUDGET and Reduce Reliance on Overburdened Food Banks and Meal Programs across Ontario

It is increasingly obvious that the Volunteer Sector in Ontario, not our government, is shouldering the bulk of responsibility for our neighbours in need.

Daily, volunteers at the 450 food banks in Ontario encounter firsthand the increasing needs and growing reliance on emergency food programs across Ontario. With a 28% increase in food bank use from 2008 – 2010 and rising food prices looming in 2011, three things will happen.

- The number of people on low and fixed income seeking emergency assistance from the food banks will increase yet again.
- Higher food prices will cut into everyone's incomes and ability to give and consequently, food and cash donations will decrease yet again, and
- Even donations from those who can maintain their donation level will, in effect, be less because the purchasing power of the donations will decrease, yet again.

We must insist that the Ontario Government resolutely address the hunger crisis in Ontario and assume full responsibility for issues of basic need. **To quote the OAFB contribution in the HUNGER COUNT 2010 Report:**

"We need change. We need our governments to step up and provide effective social programs that allow families and individuals to live with health and dignity. We need politicians to be bold and make well-reasoned decisions for the long-term good of our citizens. We need help, because Ontario's food banks cannot – and should not – have to shoulder this responsibility forever."

We are writing to you as a group of concerned citizens, volunteers, individuals marginalized by income, community workers, health professionals and others who are part of the cross-provincial **PUT FOOD IN THE BUDGET CAMPAIGN** which is active in 30 communities across Ontario.

We need your support in our ASK of the provincial government to:

- **Introduce immediately, a \$100 Healthy Food Supplement (HFS) for every adult in Ontario receiving social assistance,**
- **Set social assistance rates based on the real cost of housing, food and the personal expenses necessary to live a life of health and dignity.**

Fully 45% of food bank visitors in Ontario rely on social assistance as their primary or only source of income. The \$100 Healthy Food Supplement would make a very real difference in their lives. It would

also help reduce some of the demand on our food banks that are desperately trying to meet the needs of countless others on low or fixed incomes who are not social assistance recipients.

If you feel that it is inappropriate for volunteers in our food banks and meal program to bear the burden of responsibility for hunger in our communities, please add your voice to ours and support the PUT FOOD IN THE BUDGET CAMPAIGN in any or ALL of the following ways:

- **Go to our website www.putfoodinthebudget.ca** and find out how you can add your voice to the request for the immediate implementation of a \$100/month Healthy Food Supplement for all adults on Social Assistance.

- **Sign the attached endorsement form and send it to:**

Put Food in the Budget Campaign
c/o Yvonne Kelly
York Region Food Network
510 Penrose St. Newmarket, ON
L3Y 1A2

- **Ask your Board of Directors** to sign the attached endorsement form and send it to the address above.

- **Send a copy of your Endorsement Page to your Local MPP** to signify your concerns and your plea for the \$100/month Healthy Food Supplement. And/or write a letter to your MPP requesting the same.

- **Call Yvonne at York Region Food Network** (905)967-0428 Ext 205 to find out more.
Or email at yvonnek@yrfn.ca

**Read more about this campaign and quotes from volunteers working on the front-lines in food banks and meal programs, in our Background Sheet.

We look forward to hearing from you and working together to bring about much needed change!