

ENDORSEMENT BY EMERGENCY FOOD PROVIDERS

As providers of emergency food programs, both food banks and meal programs across Ontario, we call on the Government of Ontario to recognize the rapidly increasing demand for emergency food that is a result of the grossly inadequate incomes of those who access our programs.

We also call on our Government to recognize that the majority of our programs and services are made possible by volunteers who are experiencing the burden of providing for peoples' basic necessities with rapidly dwindling resources.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that the Volunteer Sector in our province, not our government, is shouldering the bulk of responsibility where our neighbors in need are concerned.

With the promise of increased food prices we expect the following to happen:

- Another spike in the number of people on low and fixed incomes who will be seeking emergency assistance from our food banks and meal programs and
- A decline in food and cash donations as higher food prices will cut into everyone's incomes and ability to give.

To that end, and for the following reasons, We Choose to Endorse an immediate increase of \$100 per month for all adults on Social Assistance

- 45% of individuals who access our Food Banks in Ontario are on social assistance.
- The purchasing power of social assistance benefits is now 60% of what it was 15 years ago, when social assistance levels for individuals was reduced by 22% and the cost of nutritious eating has continued to increase every year since then
- Inadequate benefit levels lead to monthly cycles of chronic hunger among recipients creating health consequences with both personal and economic costs to us all
- Food bank use in Ontario increased by 28% from 2008-2010 forcing many food banks to reduce the amount of food available to those it serves. Food banks found themselves having to make special appeals to the wider community and corporate sector to try and keep up with the need. In 2010 close to 60% of food banks reported buying more food than in previous years.
- The number of meal programs supported by food banks increased by 25% in 2010.
- The basics of food and shelter are out of reach on current assistance levels, forcing people who are on assistance to make impossible choices between paying rent and buying food.

As volunteers and citizens who care about our neighbors we call on the government of Ontario to immediately introduce a \$100.00 per month Healthy Food Supplement for all adults on social assistance as a first step toward meeting basic needs and reducing the impossible demand on our emergency food system. We know the Healthy Food Supplement will make a very real difference in the lives of those relying on social assistance and it will reduce some of the current demand on our food banks who are striving to meet the needs of countless others on low or fixed incomes. There will always be a role for volunteers but there are limits and we believe it is unreasonable for charitable responses alone to be expected to replace adequate income.

Name _____

Emergency Food Program or Organization _____

Contact Information _____

