

Hello Avaaz Administrators,

We would like to bring attention to the truth about Canada. Hon. Monique Begin, the former Minister of National Health & Welfare of Canada, writes that for years we have bragged that the United Nations deemed us "the best country in the world in which to live". But that was back in the 1960s and since then Canada has dropped in the ranks. And yet our image and our reputation, marches forward and blinds us to the growing problems we do have in Canada. Canada is the ninth richest country in the world - it is so wealthy that it manages to mask the reality of poverty. While our country is one of the world's biggest spenders in health care, we have one of the worst records in providing an effective social safety net. [The Canadian Facts Social Determinants of Health](#) Our costs for treatment of chronic disease are on the increase because we are not spending an adequate amount on health promotion, disease prevention and on the alleviation of poverty.

[The PUT FOOD IN THE BUDGET CAMPAIGN](#) represents 30 communities across Ontario that promote the implementation of a \$100 [Healthy Food Supplement](#) for all adults on social assistance in Ontario. The Supplement will serve as a down payment in closing the monthly income gap. Right now individuals who are on social assistance receive less monthly income than they did in 1995 when rates were cut by 22%. As a result, it is impossible for people to afford rent - most are paying well above 50%, some 70-90% of their monthly income on rent leaving little to nothing for buying food. And this continues in a country as prosperous and as proud as Canada, as people grow complacent and comfortable with the institutionalization of food banks and emergency food programs which have become the acceptable way to feed those in poverty. A very undignified, inefficient and inequitable approach.

10,000 + Ontarians and 50 MPPs of all political parties have completed the ['Do the Math' Budget Survey](#) which calculates the monthly living costs for a single individual. The average monthly budget arrived at was \$1,350. Important to note, based on current costs of living and the unreasonably high cost of housing, the poverty line for a single individual is approximately \$1,600/month. An individual on social assistance receives \$592 per month. Once rent is paid, there is little if anything left, forcing thousands of Ontarians to rely on already overburdened food banks.

The basic needs allowance is set far below actual market costs. This negligence has created a widespread food insecurity crisis and increase in chronic illness related to poor nutrition. These issues are a cost to society, whereas putting money in the hands of low-income individuals will immediately benefit our communities and keep many from succumbing to poor health. ("[How paying people's way out of poverty can help us all](#)" [Globe & Mail](#))

The government has created its [Social Assistance Review](#) to evaluate the true cost of living in communities across Ontario and we are asking them to establish a new benchmark for income

adequacy in setting benefit rates. In the meantime, individuals living in deep poverty cannot afford to wait any longer to have a place to live and enough money to purchase healthy food.

[The PUT FOOD IN THE BUDGET CAMPAIGN](#) is in partnership with [Association of Local Public Health Agencies](#), [Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition \(ISARC\)](#), and [Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario](#).

We would like Avaaz's support to call on the Government of Ontario to commit immediately to a \$100 Healthy Food Supplement for all adults on Social Assistance to address the growing crisis of deep poverty that is becoming more urgent with each passing day.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to hearing back from you about your decision.

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