

Put Food in the Budget

Promote health and fight poverty

If nutritious food is essential for good health, and of course it is, then a fighting poverty is the best medicine money can buy.

The [PUT FOOD IN THE BUDGET CAMPAIGN](#) represents 30 communities across Ontario that promotes 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 gap of food deficiency while reducing the negative health effects of poverty.

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

Over the past two years, more than 10,000 Ontarians and 50 MPPs of all three political stripes, have completed the [Do the Math Budget Survey](#), calculating the total monthly costs for a single individual. The average that they arrived at was \$1,350 per month. The poverty line for a single individual is at \$19,000/year or approximately \$1,600/month. Most people on social assistance receive \$592 per month. Once rent is paid, there is little if nothing left for food, forcing thousands of Ontarians to rely on already overburdened food banks.

The existence of widespread food insecurity and chronic illness related to poor nutrition is the result of our society's collective negligence and a failure of public policy. Single individuals and single parents have been left out of the Ontario reduction strategies to date, and they continue to exist in "deep poverty", many 60% below the poverty line. There is no current formula for establishing social assistance benefit levels and the basic needs allowance is set far below actual market costs. We are pleased 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.***

To make the economic case, one Globe and Mail editorial put it this way: ***"Putting money in the hands of low-income people who will spend it in their communities is an idea with remarkable wide consensus."*** One strategy that can reduce poverty, save health care dollars and stimulate local economies – hardly an idea to dismiss so readily, and yet here we are.

To this end:

We 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.

We call on municipalities to send a strong message to the provincial government – stating that social assistance rates need to be increased because the health & economic costs of not reducing poverty are adding up.

We advocate for:

- Adequate incomes that will enable all Ontarians to purchase their own food and live with dignity.
- A \$100 Healthy Food Supplement as a first step towards closing the income gap for people on social assistance while also reducing the negative health effects and related costs of poverty

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