

Put Food in the Budget

Promote health and fight poverty

Doing the Math with Ontario MPPs *It Doesn't Add Up!*

More than 5,000 Ontarians have completed the Do the Math survey to date and the results have shown the huge shortfall between meeting the basic necessities of life and monthly income available on social assistance that prevents recipients from being able to live with health and dignity.

Do the Math teams of community leaders including people on social assistance are visiting their MPPs to encourage them to Do the Math and to support the \$100 a month Healthy Food Supplement being promoted by the Put Food in the Budget Campaign (www.putfoodinthebudget.ca).

As of April 2010, 40 MPPs have been visited. Just under half have completed the survey.¹ The results are telling:

- MPPs that have completed the Do the Math survey to date estimate on average that it costs \$1,314 a month to meet the basic necessities of living.
- Using the MPP average cost for basic necessities, the OW recipient would fall \$729 a month short of meeting his/her basic living requirements and a person on ODSP would be \$272 short.
- The estimated costs of monthly necessities do not vary significantly among the three parties, ranging from \$1279 for the PCs to \$1289 for the Liberals and rising to \$1,386 for the NDP MPPs, a difference of just over \$100.

Whether completing the Do the Math survey or not, our MPPs recognize that:

- Current social assistance benefit levels are not adequate to meet the basic food, rent and other essential monthly living needs.

Both OW and ODSP ***“fall short and do not allow people to function properly.”***

The Hon. Dwight Duncan, Finance Minister and MPP for Winsor-St. Clair

“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’.”

Jim Brownell, MPP for Stormont-Dundas-Chalottesburgh

“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

¹ Do the Math teams have visited 25 Liberals, nine Progressive Conservatives and six NDP Members. Nine Liberals, four PCs and five NDP MPPs have completed the Do the math survey to date.

transportation, clothing, personal products or a telephone! Nobody should have to choose between food or shelter.”

France Gelinias, NDP MPP for Nickel Belt

“I would be supportive of increasing the monthly benefits to a level that would allow people to afford food and shelter.”

Frank Klees, PC MPP for Newmarket Aurora

“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.”

Robert Bailey, PC MPP for Sarnia-Lambton

- Inadequate income contributes to poor health conditions for people on social assistance.

“There is no doubt about it, the health consequences are humungous,”

The Hon. John Gerretsen, MPP for Kingston & The Islands and Minister of the Environment

“Yes, of course, everyone knows that social assistance affects health.”

Andrea Horvath, NDP Leader and MPP for Hamilton Centre

- The \$100/month Healthy Food Supplement would be a step towards enabling Ontario’s most vulnerable residents to live with health and dignity.

“\$100 per month is not a large enough increase for OW recipients.”

Sophia Aggelonitis, Liberal MPP for Hamilton Mountain

“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.”

Dr. Helena Jaczek, Liberal MPP for Oak Ridges-Markham, and former Medical Officer of Health for York Region

“The real issue overall is the resources that individuals and families require to meet all their basic living necessities, not just healthy food. 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.”

Greg Sorbara, Liberal MPP for Vaughan and former Finance Minister,

Everyone who does the math agrees – ***it doesn’t add up!*** It’s time to ***change the math*** for Ontario’s most vulnerable residents.

<p>For further information contact: Peter Clutterbuck Social Planning Network of Ontario pclutterbuck@spno.ca (416) 653-7947 or (416) 738-3228</p>	<p>www.povertywatchontario.ca www.putfoodinthebudget.ca www.dothemath.thestop.org</p> <p style="text-align: right;">April 14, 2010</p>
---	--