

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF FOOD BANKS

Ontario Election 2018 Report Card

**A SUMMARY OF PARTY STANCES ON ISSUES
AFFECTING FOOD BANK CLIENTS**



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About the OAFB

The Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB) is the province's leading provider of emergency food support to frontline hunger-relief agencies, and the leader in province-wide hunger research. Our mission is to strengthen communities by providing food banks with food, resources, and solutions that address both short and long-term food insecurity.

Last year, the Ontario food bank network provided food and support to more than 499,000 adults, seniors, and children facing hunger. Through 129 direct member food banks over 1,100 hunger-relief agencies, inclusive of breakfast clubs, school meal programs, community food centres, and emergency shelters, the OAFB distributed the equivalent of over five million meals to families in need.

Introduction

Last year alone, Ontario's food banks were visited more than 2.8 million times by almost half a million individuals living with hunger. While there are many circumstances that might result in someone needing to access a food bank, the primary reason is that these adults, children, and families simply do not have enough income to afford their most basic needs.

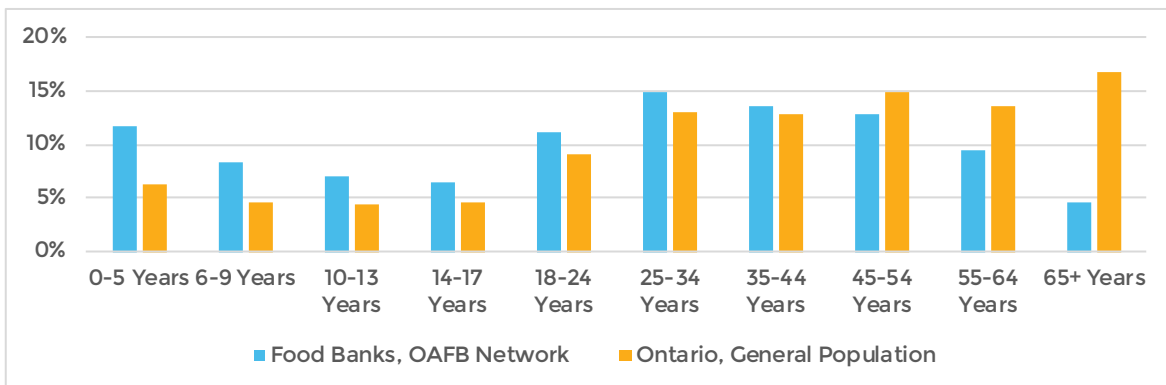
Ontario's next provincial election will be taking place on June 7th, 2018. Elections often bring to the forefront a number of important issues, with each political party sharing their ideas on how these challenges might be addressed. While hunger and poverty are certainly complex, the OAFB has identified three key areas where the Government of Ontario can implement impactful change in addressing these issues. These areas are: income security, affordable housing, and the rising cost of living.

The following report provides an overview of food bank use in Ontario, as well as touches on what each party has proposed under the above three areas in their election platforms. The Ontario Association of Food Banks would welcome the opportunity to share its recommendations for change with each party candidate, as well as to work alongside the newly elected Government of Ontario following the election.

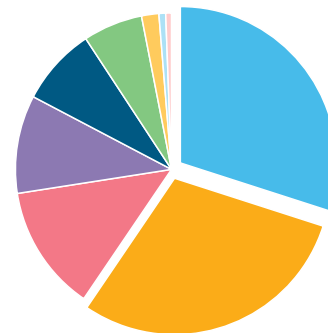
Demographics

Last year, over 499,400 people visited a food bank in Ontario, including 164,000 children. These adults and families are primarily rental or social housing tenants who have less than \$100 left each month after paying basic expenses.

Age Distribution, Food Banks Vs General population



Primary Source of Income	
Provincial or Private Disability Support	30.1%
Social Assistance	29.7%
No Income	13.1%
Other	10.2%
Job Income	8.1%
Old-Age Pension	6.2%
Employment Insurance	1.8%
Student Loans or Scholarships	0.7%
Student Loan	0.6%

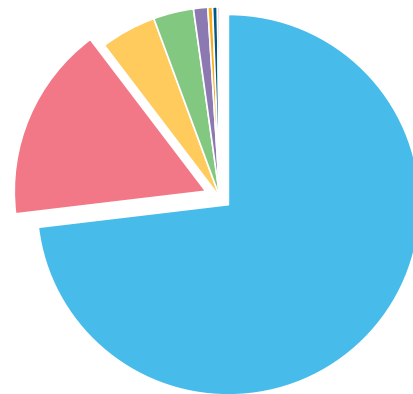


Almost 60% of food bank clients rely on some form of social assistance.

Housing Type

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, for housing to be considered affordable it should require no more than 30 per cent of a household's before-tax income. Food bank clients, however, spend more than 70 per cent of their income on rent or housing. This leaves very little for other necessities like prescription medication, childcare, heat, hydro, and food.

Housing Type	
Private Rental	73.1%
Social Housing	16.6%
Own Home	4.7%
With Family/ Friends	3.4%
Emergency Shelter	1.2%
Band Owned	0.4%
On the Street	0.4%
Youth Home	0.2%



Rental and social housing tenants make up nearly 90% of food bank clients.



Reason for Visiting

There are many reasons as to why someone might visit a food bank, including low wages, seasonal employment, a recent job loss, delays in receiving social assistance, or illness. Ultimately, however, adults and families that visit a food bank are doing so because they have insufficient income to afford all of their most basic expenses.

Most Common Reasons for Visiting	
Benefit/Social Assistance Changes	29.7%
Low Wages/Not Enough Hours	15.9%
Relocation (Immigration/Moving)	9.8%
Unexpected Expense	8.2%
Sickness/Medical Expenses	8.0%
Unexpected Housing Expense	7.1%
Unemployment/ Recent Job Loss	6.6%
Homelessness	4.8%
Debt	3.9%

Food banks in Ontario work hard to ensure that adults and children in need have access to nutritious food and services throughout the year. However, these efforts cannot replace an adequate social safety net that addresses poverty and helps to ensure that families do not reach the point of having to make impossible choices between their most basic needs. The following section touches on what each party has said to date about how they might address some of the root causes of hunger and poverty in our province.

Income Assistance & Employment

	Liberal Party	Progressive Conservatives	New Democratic Party	Green Party
Social Assistance	<p>Increase limits on cash and liquid assets for those receiving Ontario Works (OW), and eliminate limits for those receiving Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits.¹</p> <p>Limits on tax-free savings accounts or RRSPs will be eliminated.²</p> <p>Increase OW and ODSP rates by 3% annually.³</p> <p>Establish flat rate structure and Market Basket Measure</p>	<p>Yet to be announced</p>	<p>Establish a new flat rate structure that ensures benefits reflect the cost of basics like food and shelter, through a Social Assistance Review Committee.⁴</p> <p>Develop a minimum income standard over the next decade.⁵</p> <p>Increase OW rates by 5% - 10%, and increase ODSP 5% annually. Future increases will be based on income adequacy and set by an independent panel.⁶</p>	<p>Increase ODSP and OW payments to rates that match the low-income measure.</p> <p>Increase asset limits for OW and ODSP recipients, with the amount indexed to inflation.⁷</p> <p>Modernize OW's eligibility requirements and end the claw back of employment earnings.⁸</p>

	Liberal Party	Progressive Conservatives	New Democratic Party	Green Party
Minimum Wage	Increase minimum wage to \$15. ⁹	Maintain \$14 minimum wage. Eliminate provincial taxes for those earning less than \$30,000 per year. ¹⁰	Increase the minimum wage to \$15 for everyone - including students, bartenders and servers - before indexing it to inflation. ¹¹	Increase the minimum wage to \$15. Support both implementing living wages and lowering taxes for small businesses. ¹²
Worker Protections & Good Jobs	Invest \$935 million over three years in its 'Good Jobs and Growth' plan. ¹³ Paid sick days for every worker. ¹⁴ At least three weeks' vacation after five years with the same employer. ¹⁵ Invest \$63 million into the Ontario Training Bank. ¹⁶	Yet to be announced	Make it easier to join or form unions. ¹⁷ Card-based union certification, and first-contract arbitration. ¹⁸ Provide three weeks' vacation for full-time employees. ¹⁹ Make regular updates to workplace safety rules and WSIB rates and coverage. ²⁰	Invest in apprenticeships programs, re-tooling the Ontario manufacturing cluster, and incentive for businesses to provide youth with job experience. ²¹ Close the loop holes that can lead to precarious work. ²² Promote democracy in unions and workplaces. ²³

	Liberal Party	Progressive Conservatives	New Democratic Party	Green Party
Retirement & Pension	<p>Increase support available through the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund.²⁴</p> <p>Lay the groundwork for further reform that protects Ontario pension plans and beneficiaries.²⁵</p>	<p>Yet to be announced</p>	<p>Increase the Pension Benefit Guarantee Fund guaranteed amount to \$3,000 per month, and expand coverage by reducing barriers for workers to join existing pension plans.²⁶</p> <p>Push the federal government for greater protection of pensions during insolvency.²⁷</p>	<p>Require all company pension plans to be fully funded to meet their obligations in the event of bankruptcy.</p> <p>Eliminate pension fund deficits within 5 years.²⁸</p>
Basic Income	<p>Continue Ontario's Basic Income Pilot.²⁹</p>	<p>Continue Ontario's Basic Income Pilot.³⁰</p>	<p>Continue Ontario's Basic Income Pilot.³¹</p>	<p>Continue Ontario's Basic Income Pilot.³²</p>

Affordable Housing

	Liberal Party	Progressive Conservatives	New Democratic Party	Green Party
Portable Housing Benefit	<p>Cost match the National Housing Benefit and invest an additional \$200 million over three years for the provincial portion of the National Housing Strategy.³³</p> <p>The investment includes an affordable housing benefit and the construction of new housing units.³⁴</p>	<p>Yet to be announced</p>	<p>Committed to funding the province's one-third share, alongside the one-third contributions of the municipal and federal governments.³⁵</p> <p>Maintain rent-geared-to-income and rent supplements.³⁶</p>	<p>Work with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to expedite the announced portable housing benefit that will assist women fleeing violence.³⁷</p> <p>Support the development of Canada's National Housing Strategy.³⁸</p>

	Liberal Party	Progressive Conservatives	New Democratic Party	Green Party
Social Housing	<p>Invest \$3 million in the co-op housing sector to seed co-op bid development.</p> <p>Invest \$547 million over five years for repairs and retrofits to help support energy efficiency and long-term sustainability of social housing buildings.³⁹</p>	<p>Yet to be announced</p>	<p>Invest \$3 million in the co-op housing sector to seed co-op bid development.⁴⁰</p> <p>Build 65,000 new affordable homes, including non-profit and co-op housing.⁴¹</p> <p>Build 30,000 new supportive housing units.⁴²</p>	<p>Provide funding for municipalities to renovate deteriorating social housing stock and introduce new social housing units.⁴³</p> <p>Work with the federal government to increase support for proposed and existing social non-profit and co-operative housing.⁴⁴</p>
Inclusionary Zoning	<p>As of April 2018, inclusionary zoning allows municipalities to require developers to include affordable housing units in residential developments.⁴⁵</p>	<p>Yet to be announced</p>	<p>Overhaul the Inclusionary Zoning regulations, including increasing the percentage of affordable homes required and bringing rental properties under the regulations.⁴⁶</p>	<p>Improve inclusionary zoning legislation, mandating that developers include at least 1 new unit of affordable housing for every 5 new houses or condos, including purpose-built rentals.⁴⁷</p>

	Liberal Party	Progressive Conservatives	New Democratic Party	Green Party
Cost of Market Housing	<p>Extend rent control to all units and building new supply by providing public land to build affordable and rental housing.</p> <p>Invest in a Cooperative Housing Development Fund that will help to increase fairness in the housing market by creating mixed-income communities.⁴⁸</p>	<p>Create more of a supply, cut regulations, and protect the buyer.⁴⁹</p>	<p>Impose a Housing Speculations Tax on foreign and domestic speculators who do not pay taxes in Ontario. These taxes will be reinvested into affordable housing.⁵⁰</p> <p>Introduce legislation that includes predictable rent controls that limit the use above-guideline increases to 'renovict' people from their homes, and a rent registry so tenants can know how much a landlord has charged in the past.⁵¹</p>	<p>Put a tax on vacant property. Add a surtax on quick turnaround sales to reduce speculation.⁵²</p> <p>Expand the Non-Resident Speculation Tax (NRST) in the Greater Golden Horseshoe (GGH).⁵³</p>

Cost of Living

	Liberal Party	Progressive Conservatives	New Democratic Party	Green Party
Prescription Drugs	<p>Reimburse adults and families up to 80% (between \$400 - \$700 annually) for prescription drugs.⁵⁴</p> <p>Expanding OHIP+ (prescription drug coverage) to include everyone over 65 years of age.⁵⁵</p>	Yet to be announced	Universal prescription medication plan/ pharmacare by 2020. ⁵⁶	<p>Push for a federally funded Pharmacare program, and in the absence of a federal program, extend a provincially funded Pharmacare program to provide all Ontarians with access to medicine.⁵⁷</p>
Dental Care	Reimburse 80% of eligible dental expenses each year (between \$400 - \$700 annually). ⁵⁸	Free dental care for 100,000 low-income senior citizens. ⁵⁹	Dental care for everyone, regardless of age, income, employment, or health status. ⁶⁰	A universal dental care program for all Ontarians. ⁶¹

	Liberal Party	Progressive Conservatives	New Democratic Party	Green Party
Childcare	<p>Free preschool for children aged 2.5 years to kindergarten.⁶²</p> <p>45,000 new licensed child care spaces, and subsidies for low and middle income families.⁶³</p> <p>A wage grid for the child care sector to improve compensation and training.⁶⁴</p>	<p>Tax rebate program, which would reimburse families with 26% to 75% of their child care costs, depending on household income (up to a maximum of \$6,750 annually).⁶⁵</p>	<p>Free child care for households under \$40,000, and average \$12-a-day child care for those who earn more.⁶⁶</p> <p>Expand the number of not-for-profit, licensed, affordable child care spaces in Ontario by 202,000 spaces (a 51% increase).⁶⁷</p> <p>Increase wages for ECEs.⁶⁸</p>	<p>Phasing in funding for a comprehensive program for early childhood education and care to support free daycare for working parents with children under age three, support for stay-at-home parents, and additional ECE supports.⁶⁹</p> <p>Increase funding for licensed child care spaces.⁷⁰</p>
Hydro	<p>Cut residential electricity bills as of July 1st, 2017 by 25% on average, and up to 40% or 50% for eligible rural and low-income families.⁷¹</p>	<p>Cut hydro rates by 12%.⁷²</p>	<p>Cut hydro bills by 30% and return Hydro One to public ownership.⁷³</p>	<p>Support renewable energy generation.⁷⁴</p> <p>Reduce hydro rates by importing less expensive green hydro from neighbouring provinces.⁷⁵</p>

	Liberal Party	Progressive Conservatives	New Democratic Party	Green Party
Student Debt	<p>As of fall 2017, free or low tuition for 225,000 students from low and middle income families.⁷⁶</p> <p>Reduction to the amount a parent or a spouse is expected to contribute to their child's/partner's education.⁷⁷</p>	<p>Yet to be announced.</p>	<p>Students that qualify for OSAP will receive a non-repayable grant instead of a loan.⁷⁸</p> <p>Student loan interest owed to the province by any student or past student will be wiped out.⁷⁹</p>	<p>Phase in fully public tuition for all Ontario residents attending public colleges, trade institutions, and universities.⁸⁰</p> <p>Interest-free student loans for students with financial needs.⁸¹</p>

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Hunger is a solvable issue

The Ontario Association of Food Banks believes that hunger and poverty are solvable issues, but that this cannot be accomplished without the support of the provincial government. As detailed in Hunger Report 2017, the OAFB would like to put forward the following recommendations on how this might be accomplished:

1. Improve income security through immediate increases to Ontario's social assistance rates.

Over 70 per cent of those that access food banks cite social assistance as their primary source of income. The Ontario Association of Food Banks strongly supports the action plan outlined by the Security Reform Working Group's report "Income Security: A Roadmap for Change". This plan includes an immediate increase to social assistance rates, improved support for people with disabilities, and income support for children.

2. Implement a portable housing benefit for low-income Ontarians.

Housing is considered affordable when it does not exceed 30 per cent of a household's annual income. The average food bank client, however, spends more than 70 per cent of their annual income on rent or housing. A portable housing benefit that closes this gap will go a long way in helping

to ensure that adults and families do not have to choose between a home and other necessities, like food. It is also our hope that the provincial government will fully support the National Housing Strategy and leverage the opportunities it provides to invest in affordable housing in Ontario.

3. Continue the Basic Income Pilot.

In 2016, the Government of Ontario announced a pilot program that would assess the viability of a basic or guaranteed income for Ontario. This three-year program launched in 2017 in four communities across the province, with many participants reporting less stress and improved health since its start. While we do not yet know the outcome of the pilot, the Ontario Association of Food Banks is hopeful that investigation into this possible solution will continue throughout the duration of the pilot's planned term, and used as a foundation for building informed policies and programs.

Moving Forward

The Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB) is hopeful that the Government of Ontario will continue to invest in programs that address the root causes of hunger and poverty in our province. Through immediate investments in income security and social assistance, affordable housing, and programs that eliminate having to make impossible choices between basic necessities, we can improve quality of life in Ontario and ultimately reduce the need for food banks in the future.

Information under the Election Platform summary was gathered from the following sources:

Ontario Liberal Party Platform:

- Sousa, Charles, “Budget 2018: A Plan for Care and Opportunity.” Toronto: Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2018.
- Ministry of Housing, “Ontario Paving the Way for More Affordable Housing: Municipalities Can Now Require Affordable Units in New Residential Developments.” Government of Ontario, April 11, 2018.

Ontario PC Party Platform:

- Bueckert, Kate. “PC Leader Doug Ford pledges to cut hydro bills by 12% if elected.” CBC News. April 27, 2018.
- Ford, Doug. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/fordnation/>
- Monsebraaten, Laurie. “Ontario’s basic income experiment would continue under Doug Ford.” Toronto Star. April 24, 2018.
- Pfeffer, Amanda. “Ford promises tax credit for minimum wage earners.” CBC News. April 16, 2018.

Ontario NDP Platform:

- Ontario New Democratic Party, “Change for the Better.” 2018.

Ontario Green Party Platform:

- Ontario Green Party, “Green Vision: People Powered Change.” 2018.

Endnotes

1. Sousa, Charles, "Budget 2018: A Plan for Care and Opportunity," p. 40.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ontario New Democratic Party, "Change for the Better," p. 63.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ontario Green Party, "Green Vision: People Powered Change," p. 29
8. Ibid.
9. Sousa, Charles, "Budget 2018: A Plan for Care and Opportunity," p. 107.
10. Pfeffer, Amanda. "Ford promises tax credit for minimum wage earners." CBC News.
11. Ontario New Democratic Party, "Change for the Better," p. 72
12. Ontario Green Party, "Green Vision: People Powered Change," p. 24
13. Sousa, Charles, "Budget 2018: A Plan for Care and Opportunity," p. 59
14. Ibid., 107.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., 64.
17. Ontario New Democratic Party, "Change for the Better," p. 72
18. Ibid., 71.
19. Ibid., 72.
20. Ibid., 73.
21. Ontario Green Party, "Green Vision: People Powered Change," p. 21
22. Ibid., 30.
23. Ibid., 30.
24. Sousa, Charles, "Budget 2018: A Plan for Care and Opportunity," p. 109
25. Ibid., 110

26. Ontario New Democratic Party, "Change for the Better," p. 50
27. Ibid., 50.
28. Ontario Green Party, "Green Vision: People Powered Change," p. 30.
29. Sousa, Charles, "Budget 2018: A Plan for Care and Opportunity," p. 42.
30. Monsebraaten, Laurie. "Ontario's basic income experiment would continue under Doug Ford." Toronto Star.
31. Ontario New Democratic Party, "Change for the Better," p. 63
32. Ontario Green Party, "Green Vision: People Powered Change," p. 29.
33. Sousa, Charles, "Budget 2018: A Plan for Care and Opportunity," p. 220.
34. Ibid., 275.
35. Ontario New Democratic Party, "Change for the Better," p. 47
36. Ibid., 47.
37. Ontario Green Party, "Green Vision: People Powered Change," p. 34
38. Ibid.
39. Sousa, Charles, "Budget 2018: A Plan for Care and Opportunity," p. 44.
40. Ontario New Democratic Party, "Change for the Better," p. 47
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., 33
43. Ontario Green Party, "Green Vision: People Powered Change," p. 34
44. Ibid.
45. Ministry of Housing, "Ontario Paving the Way for More Affordable Housing." Government of Ontario.
46. Ontario New Democratic Party, "Change for the Better," p. 47
47. Ontario Green Party, "Green Vision: People Powered Change," p. 33
48. Sousa, Charles, "Budget 2018: A Plan for Care and Opportunity," p. 44
49. Ford, Doug. Twitter post. May 7, 2018. 7:20 PM. <https://twitter.com/fordnation/status/993631716043624449>
50. Ontario New Democratic Party, "Change for the Better," p. 48
51. Ibid., 49
52. Ontario Green Party, "Green Vision: People Powered Change," p. 33
53. Ibid.,

54. Sousa, Charles, "Budget 2018: A Plan for Care and Opportunity," p. 12
55. Ibid., 11
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57. Ontario Green Party, "Green Vision: People Powered Change," p. 48
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59. Ford, Doug. Twitter Post. May 12 2018. 3:27 PM. <https://twitter.com/fordnation/status/995384918308864000>
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61. Ontario Green Party, "Green Vision: People Powered Change," p. 48
62. Sousa, Charles, "Budget 2018: A Plan for Care and Opportunity," p. 21
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65. Farooqui, Salmaan. "PCs announce tax rebate to cover up to three-quarters of all child care costs." Toronto Star.
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67. Ibid., 13
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70. Ibid., 30
71. Sousa, Charles, "Budget 2018: A Plan for Care and Opportunity," p. 112
72. Bueckert, Kate. "PC Leader Doug Ford pledges to cut hydro bills by 12% if elected." CBC News.
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74. Ontario Green Party, "Green Vision: People Powered Change," p. 87
75. Ibid.
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77. Ibid., 68
78. Ontario New Democratic Party, "Change for the Better," p. 41
79. Ibid.
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