

# **2020 Ontario Pre-Budget Submission**

**Prepared for the Standing Committee on Finance  
and Economic Affairs**



## About Feed Ontario

Feed Ontario (formerly Ontario Association of Food Banks) is a network of 1,200 direct and affiliate hunger-relief agencies and programs that are united in their work to address and prevent hunger and poverty.

In the last year alone, our network served over 510,000 adults, children, and seniors who visited our services more than three million times. This submission has been formally endorsed by 43 organizations across Ontario (see Appendix).

## Submission

Feed Ontario would like to put forward the following recommendations for the 2020 Ontario budget:

### 1. Close the gap between Ontario’s social assistance rates and the poverty line

Ontario’s poverty line (or Market Basket Measure) is, on average, \$20,057 per year for a single person; however, Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program provide only \$8,796 or \$14,028 per year, respectively.<sup>1</sup> This means that program participants experience a shortfall between \$5,640 - \$12,948 (or \$470 to \$1,079 per month) when trying to balance their income against the cost of even their most basic necessities.

What’s more, this shortfall is growing, as the income provided by Ontario Works and ODSP has not been maintained alongside inflation. In 2018, the monthly income gap of Ontario Works, for example, fell \$877 below the poverty line – one year later, it now falls \$908 below the poverty line.

Feed Ontario requests that the Government of Ontario include increased support for Ontario Works and ODSP recipients in its 2020 budget. Further, it requests the development of a social assistance research commission to advise on social assistance rates and policies, as outlined in Bill 60.<sup>2</sup>

| Market Basket Measure to Social Assistance Income<br>(Monthly expenses/ income – indexed to 2019 dollars) |         |         |       |                    |                 |
|---|---------|---------|-------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Geography   | MBM     | ODSP    | OW    | Short Fall<br>ODSP | Shortfall<br>OW |
| Rural Areas   | \$1,639 | \$1,169 | \$733 | -\$470             | -\$906          |
| Small population  | \$1,630 | \$1,169 | \$733 | -\$461             | -\$897          |
| Medium population   | \$1,528 | \$1,169 | \$733 | -\$359             | -\$795          |
| Large urban   | \$1,646 | \$1,169 | \$733 | -\$477             | -\$913          |
| Ottawa – Gatineau   | \$1,790 | \$1,169 | \$733 | -\$621             | -\$1,057        |
| Hamilton  | \$1,655 | \$1,169 | \$733 | -\$486             | -\$922          |
| Toronto   | \$1,812 | \$1,169 | \$733 | -\$643             | -\$1,079        |

## 2. Retain the current definition of ‘disability’ under the Ontario Disability Support Program

In Ontario, 1 in 3 individuals who access food banks indicate ODSP as their primary source of income. If the definition of ‘disability’ is narrowed to exclude episodic illness, it is likely that many of these individuals will no longer qualify for this support and, consequently, fall into deeper levels poverty.

Further, as stated by 80 health care and service groups in a letter provided to MCCSS in fall 2019, reducing eligibility will result in worse health outcomes for those currently accessing ODSP, and come at a greater cost to the province through increased stress on Ontario’s health care system.<sup>3</sup>

| Conditions that can Result in an Episodic Disability |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| • Anxiety  | • Cancer                         |
| • Arthritis  | • Crohn’s Disease                |
| • Bipolar Disorder                                   | • Multiple Sclerosis             |
| • Lupus  | • Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder |
| • Parkinson’s Disease                                | • Epilepsy                       |
| • Diabetes   | • Depression                     |

Feed Ontario requests that the provincial government retain its current definition of disability, ensuring that Ontarians, when faced with debilitating illness, are able to access the support they need.

## 3. Retain the clawback on earned income under Ontario Works and ODSP at 50 percent

| Sample Net Monthly Income of Ontario Works Recipient that is Working Part-Time |   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | Current Clawback Rate<br>(50% after earning exemption of \$200) | Increased Clawback Rate<br>(75% after earning exemption of \$300) |
| Hours Worked   | 23  | 23  |
| <b>After Tax income</b><br>(with LIFT credit)                                  | <b>\$1,242</b>  | <b>\$1,242</b>  |
| Max. OW Support  | \$733   | \$733   |
| Clawback   | -\$521  | -\$707  |
| <b>Remaining OW Support</b>  | <b>\$212</b>  | <b>\$26</b>   |
| <b>Net Monthly Income</b>  | <b>\$1,454</b>  | <b>\$1,269</b>  |

Feed Ontario commends the provincial government’s decision to cancel increasing clawbacks under the social assistance programs.

As the provincial government continues to evaluate Ontario Works and ODSP, Feed Ontario requests that current clawback rates are maintained or decreased. This will ensure clawbacks do not act as a disincentive to work or create further barriers for individuals working towards financial stability.

<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from:

[https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/tab/t4\\_5-eng.cfm](https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/ref/dict/tab/t4_5-eng.cfm);

<https://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/directives/index.aspx#ow>

<https://www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/en/mcsc/programs/social/odsp/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ola.org/en/legislative-business/bills/parliament-42/session-1/bill-60>

<sup>3</sup> <https://defendisability.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/letter-to-hon.-min-smith-on-odsp.pdf>

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## Appendix

This submission has been formally endorsed by:

| <b>Representative</b> | <b>Position</b>           | <b>Food Bank</b>                          | <b>City/ Town</b>               |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Laura Fisher          | President                 | Bobcaygeon Helps                          | Bobcaygeon                      |
| JoAnne Sytsma         | Chair, Board of Directors | Brockville & Area Food Bank               | Brockville                      |
| Robin Bailey          | Executive Director        | Burlington Food Bank                      | Burlington                      |
| Carol Greenwood       | Chair, Board of Directors | Central Food Network                      | Wilberforce                     |
| Brenda Leclair        | Executive director        | Chatham Outreach For Hunger               | Chatham                         |
| Carole Fuhrer         | Executive Director        | Community Care of West Niagara            | Town of Lincoln, Beamsville     |
| Neil Hetherington     | Chief Executive Officer   | Daily Bread Food Bank                     | Toronto                         |
| Andrew Nixon          | Coordinator               | Good Happenings Food Bank                 | South River                     |
| Pauline Cripps        | Administrator             | Guelph Food Bank                          | Guelph                          |
| Karen Leatherbarrow   | Chair, Board of Directors | Hagersville Food Bank                     | Hagersville                     |
| Joanne Santucci       | Executive Director        | Hamilton Food Share                       | Hamilton                        |
| Wendy Oegahmagabow    | Executive Director        | Harvest Share Community Food Program      | Parry Sound                     |
| Robert Lefebvre       | Accountant - Volunteer    | Hawkesbury Central Food Bank              | Hawkesbury                      |
| Joan Clarkson         | Coordinator               | Helping Hand Food Bank                    | Tillsonburg                     |
| Cathy Ashby           | Executive Director        | House of Lazarus                          | Mountain                        |
| Heather Kirby         | General Manager           | Kawartha Lakes Food Source                | City of Kawartha Lakes, Lindsay |
| Tammy Parent          | Manager                   | Lanark County Food Bank - The Hunger Stop | Carleton Place                  |
| Marnie Hall           | Executive Director        | Manitoulin Family Resources               | Mindemoya                       |
| Wayne Reid            | President                 | Mattawa and Area Food Bank                | Mattawa                         |
| Judy Poulin           | Executive Director        | Newmarket Food Pantry                     | Newmarket                       |
| Kim Cucoch            | President                 | North Frontenac Food Bank                 | Sharbot Lake                    |
| Ryan Noble            | Executive Director        | North York Harvest Food Bank              | Toronto                         |
| Heather Hayes         | Executive Director        | Orangeville Food Bank                     | Orangeville                     |
| Michael Maidment      | Chief Executive Officer   | Ottawa Food Bank                          | Ottawa                          |

|                     |   |   |                                  |
|---------------------|---|---|----------------------------------|
| Dan Irwin           | Executive Director                      | Partners in Mission Food Bank                                 | Kingston                         |
| Volker Kromm        | Executive Director                      | Regional Food Distribution Association (RFDA)                 | Thunder Bay                      |
| Doug Brookes        | President                               | Renfrew & District Food Bank                                  | Renfrew                          |
| Rasheeda Qureshi    | Executive Director                      | Seva Food Bank  | Mississauga                      |
| Anne-Marie Foucault | Family Services                         | Society of St. Vincent de Paul<br>Goderich                    | Goderich                         |
| Victoria England    | Food Security Programs Coordinator      | Southern Frontenac Community Services Corp. Food Bank         | Sydenham                         |
| Wendi Campbell      | Chief Executive Officer                 | The Food Bank of Waterloo Region                              | Kitchener                        |
| David Bradbury      | Vice President                          | The Good Shepherd Food Bank of Alliston                       | Alliston                         |
| Myles Vanni         | Executive Director                      | The Inn of the Good Shepherd                                  | Sarnia                           |
| Meghan Nicholls     | Executive Director                      | The Mississauga Food Bank                                     | Mississauga                      |
| Alice Wannan        | Community and Family Services Director  | The Salvation Army Community Services                         | Owen Sound                       |
| April Greenwood     | Community Ministries Coordinator        | The Salvation Army Family Services                            | Norwich                          |
| Abigail Mills       | Director                                | The Salvation Army Food Bank                                  | Napanee                          |
| Anne Watters        | Community & Family Services Manager     | The Salvation Army Fort Erie                                  | Fort Erie                        |
| William Ratelband   | Community & Family Services Coordinator | The Salvation Army Paris Food Bank                            | Brantford & Paris                |
| Lorraine Shea       | Assistant Executive Director            | The Salvation Army Strathroy                                  | Strathroy                        |
| Chris Peacock       | Executive Director                      | The Sharing Place Food Centre                                 | Orillia                          |
| Linda Downey        | President                               | The Storehouse Wellington & District                          | Wellington, Prince Edward County |
| June Muir           | Chief Executive Officer                 | Windsor & Essex Food Bank Association/ Unemployed Help Centre | Windsor and Essex County         |