



2022 Ontario Pre-Budget Submission

Submitted February 11th, 2022 to:

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy

Minister of Finance
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About Feed Ontario

Feed Ontario is a network of 1,200 direct and affiliate food banks and hunger-relief agencies across the province. In the last year alone, Ontario's food bank network has served more than 592,300 low-income Ontarians who accessed our services over 3.6 million times.

While food banks are working hard to meet the increasing demand for our services, this demand outpacing the capacity and infrastructure of our network.

Investments into key food insecurity and poverty reduction measures are essential to both reducing this escalating demand.

Ontario's Income Security & Affordability Crisis

As detailed in Feed Ontario's recently released 2021 Hunger Report, over 592,300 people accessed emergency food support last year, visiting services more than 3.6 million times. This is an increase of ten percent and twelve percent respectively over the previous year, making it the largest single-year increase since the 2008 economic crisis. This represents one in twenty-seven Ontarians having visited a food bank in 2020-21 to address hunger.

While COVID-19 has played an undeniable role in this increase, year-over-year food bank data shows that the pandemic only accelerated a growing income insecurity and affordability crisis in Ontario. Between 2013 and 2016, overall food bank use was on the decline; however, since 2017, food bank use has steadily increased each year. Further, an analysis of recent food bank visits shows that, despite improvements to the economy, this trend is not reversing, with food bank visits in September 2021 being 32 percent higher than the September average for 2017 - 2019.

To prevent further exacerbating hunger and poverty in the coming year, Feed Ontario requests critical and much-needed investments in the existing provincial social safety net. This includes, at minimum, an inflationary increase to Ontario's social assistance rates; incremental investments in affordable and supportive housing; and improvements to Ontario's labour laws that ensure safe and secure jobs that pay a living wage.

Recommendations for the 2022 Ontario Budget

In order to reduce poverty and address Ontario's insecurity and affordability issues, Feed Ontario would like to put forward the following for inclusion in the next provincial budget:

1. At minimum, make an inflationary increase of 4.9% to the financial support provided through Ontario Works and the Ontario Disability Support Program.

Ontario's social assistance rates have remained frozen since 2018 and yet the cost of living, including rent, hydro, utilities, gas, and food has continued to increase. With nearly 400,000 food bank visitors citing social assistance as their primary source of income, raising OW and ODSP rates with inflation, at minimum, is essential in preventing social assistance recipients from falling deeper into poverty.

In order to reduce poverty, Feed Ontario recommends that the provincial government take a more aggressive stance by bringing social assistance rates in alignment with the Market Basket Measure, ensuring recipients are able to obtain their basic necessities, such as housing and food, each month.

2. Increase the investments being made into affordable and supportive housing so that people and families in Ontario do not have to choose between paying rent or having enough food to eat.

Nearly 90% of those who access food banks are rental or social housing tenants who spend the majority of their monthly income on rent, leaving very little for all other expenses. In a recent survey that Feed Ontario conducted with 300 food bank visitors from across the province, it was found that over 60% of respondents had less than \$100 left after paying their housing costs each month.

Addressing Ontario's high housing costs is essential to reducing poverty and preventing more Ontarians from having to turn to food banks for support. Feed Ontario asks the Province to commit to the recommendations detailed by the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association, including:¹

- Expanding the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit to reach 311,000 Ontarian households
- Investing in the construction of 69,000 new affordable rental homes over the next 10 years
- Building 30,000 new supportive housing units over the next 10 years; and

¹ Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association. (2018). An Affordable Housing Plan for Ontario. Retrieved from: https://onpha.on.ca/Content/Advocacy_and_research/Advocacy/Affordable_housing_plan/An_Affordable_Housing_Plan_for_Ontario.aspx

- Allocating a dedicated fund in 2022-23 that will be aimed solely at bringing existing community housing units into a state of good repair

3. Improve Ontario's Labour Laws to ensure workers have access to safe and stable employment that pays a living wage.

In the four years leading up to the pandemic, there was a 44% increase in the proportion of working Ontarians turning to food banks for support. This increase is primarily being driven by the rise in precarious employment and low-wage jobs that fall below what is needed for today's cost of living.

Ontario workers need access to quality employment opportunities that provide a stable, living wage. Further, working Ontarians need access to essential supports, including paid sick days and affordable childcare. In order to reduce poverty and ensure fewer people need to turn to food banks for support, Feed Ontario asks the provincial government to:

- Increase the number of provincially legislated sick days from three to five and make them a permanent provision beyond the pandemic. This will ensure that workers do not have to choose between earning enough income or following public health requirements.
- Make childcare more affordable by retaining current top-ups to the Ontario Child Care Tax Credit and utilizing the federal government's childcare investments to build a high quality childcare system.

Feed Ontario believes that the provincial government shares its vision of ending hunger and poverty in Ontario and that together we can build a healthier more equitable province for everyone who calls it home.

Endorsements

On behalf of the 135 Feed Ontario food bank members listed below, we urge the Province to include the investments detailed in this submission in the 2022 Ontario Budget:

Acton	Acton Foodshare
Ailsa Craig	Ailsa Craig & Area Foodbank & Thrift Store
Alliston	The Good Shepherd Food Bank of Alliston
Aurora	Aurora Food Pantry
Bancroft	North Hastings Community Cupboard
Barrie	Barrie Food Bank
Barry's Bay	Madawaska Valley Food Bank
Beamsville	Community Care of West Niagara
Beaverton	Brock Community Food Bank
Belleville	Gleaners Food Bank Quinte Inc.
Belleville	Quinte Region Food Sharing Shelter
Blenheim	The Salvation Army Chatham-Kent Ministries
Blind River	Blind River Emergency Food Bank
Bobcaygeon	Bobcaygeon Helps Food Bank
Bolton	Caledon Community Services - The Exchange
Bracebridge	The Salvation Army Bracebridge Community and Family Services
Bradford	Helping Hand Food Bank - Bradford
Brampton	Knights Table
Brantford	Community Resource Service - Brantford Food Bank
Brockville	Brockville & Area Food Bank
Burk's Falls,	Burk's Falls and District Food Bank
Burlington	Burlington Food Bank
Caledonia	Caledonia & District Food Bank
Cambridge	Cambridge Self Help Food Bank

Campbellford	Campbellford Fare Share Food Bank
Carleton Place	Lanark County Food Bank-The Hunger Stop
Cayuga	Cayuga Food Bank
Chatham	Chatham Outreach for Hunger
Cobalt	Cobalt Coleman Latchford & Area Food Bank
Cobourg	Northumberland County Food 4 All
Cobourg	Northumberland Fare Share Food Bank
Cochrane	Cochrane Regional Food Bank
Collingwood	Salvation Army Collingwood Food Bank
Concord	The Food Bank of York Region
Cornwall	The Agape Centre
Drayton	Drayton Food Bank
Dunnville	Salvation Army Community & Family Services Dunnville
Eganville	Eganville and District Community Food Bank
Elliot Lake	Elliot Lake Emergency Food Bank Inc.
Erin	East Wellington Community Services
Fergus	Centre Wellington Food Bank
Fonthill	Pelham Cares Inc
Fort Erie	The Salvation Army Fort Erie Community Family Services
Fort Frances	The Salvation Army Family Services
Gananoque	Gananoque Food Bank
Georgetown	Georgetown Bread Basket
Goderich	St. Vincent de Paul - Goderich
Grimsby	GBF Community Services
Guelph	Guelph Food Bank
Hagersville	Hagersville Food Bank
Hanover	The Salvation Army Hanover Food Bank
Hastings	Hastings/Roseneath Ministerial Food Bank

Hawkesbury	Hawkesbury Central Food Bank
Huntsville	The Salvation Army Huntsville Food Bank & Family Services
Ingersoll	The Salvation Army CFS & TS
Jarvis	Jarvis Caring Cupboard
Kanata	Kanata Food Cupboard
Kingston	Partners in Mission Food Bank
Kirkland Lake	The Salvation Army Kirkland Lake Foodbank
Kitchener	The Food Bank of Waterloo Region
Lanark	Lanark Highlands Food Pantry and Thrift Store
Lindsay	Kawartha Lakes Food Source
Listowel	The Salvation Army Community & Family Services Listowel
London	London Food Bank
L'Original	Banque alimentaire L'Original Food Bank
Mattawa	Mattawa and Area Food Bank
Meaford	Meaford Food Bank and Outreach
Midland	The Midland Salvation Army Food Bank
Milton	The Salvation Army/Khi Community Milton
Mindemoya	Manitoulin Family Resources
Minden	Minden Community food Centre
Mississauga	The Mississauga Food Bank
South Mountain	House of Lazarus Matilda Resource Centre Inc.
Napanee	The Salvation Army Napanee
Newcastle	Clarington East Food Bank
Newmarket	Newmarket Food Pantry
Niagara Falls	Project SHARE
Niagara-on-the-Lake	Newark Neighbours Food Bank & Thrift Shop
North Bay	North Bay Food Bank
Norwich	The Salvation Army Norwich

Oakville	Kerr Street Mission
Orangeville	Orangeville Food Bank - Caring for the Community
Orillia	The Sharing Place Food Centre
Oshawa	Feed the Need in Durham
Gloucester	Ottawa Food Bank
Owen Sound	The Salvation Army Owen Sound
Palmerston	Palmerston Community Food Bank
Paris	The Salvation Army
Parry Sound	Harvest Share Community Food Program
Pembroke	St. Joseph's Food Bank
Perth	The Table Community Food Centre
Peterborough	Kawartha Food Share
Port Colborne	Port Cares Reach Out Centre
Port Elgin	Saugeen Shores Community Food Bank
Prescott	Food For All Food Bank Serving South Grenville Area Inc.
Renfrew	Renfrew and District Food Bank.
Richmond Hill	Richmond Hill Community Food Bank
Ridgetown	The Salvation Army Chatham-Kent Ministries
Sarnia	The Inn of the Good Shepherd
Sault Ste Marie	The Salvation Army
Seeleys Bay	ROLL Aid Centre
Sharbot Lake	North Frontenac Food Bank
Simcoe	Simcoe Caring Cupboard
Smiths Falls	Smiths Falls Community Food Bank
Smithville	West Lincoln Community Care
South River	Good Happenings Food Bank
St. Catharines	Community Care St. Catharines & Thorold
St. Marys	The Salvation Army St. Marys Food Bank

St. Thomas	St. Thomas Elgin Food Bank
Stoney Creek	Hamilton Food Share
Stratford	Stratford House of Blessing
Strathroy	Salvation Army - Strathroy
Greater Sudbury	Banque d'aliments Sudbury Food Bank
Sutton West	Georgina Community Food Pantry
Sydenham	South Frontenac Community Services Corporation
Thunder Bay	Regional Food Distribution Association of Northwestern Ontario
Tillsonburg	Helping Hand Food Bank Tillsonburg
Toronto	Daily Bread Food Bank
Toronto	North York Harvest Food Bank
Trenton	Trenton Care and Share Food Bank
Uxbridge	Uxbridge Loaves & Fishes Food Bank
Walkerton	Walkerton & District Food Bank
Wallaceburg	The Salvation Army Chatham-Kent Ministries
Warkworth	7 Hills Community Pantry
Wasaga Beach	Wasaga Beach Ministerial Food Bank
Waterdown	FoodwithGrace Waterdown Foodbank
Waterford	Waterford & District Food Cupboard
Welland	The Hope Centre
Warton	Bruce Peninsula Community Food Bank
Wikwemikong	Wikwemikong Food Bank
Wilberforce	Central Food Network
Winchester	Community Food Share Winchester & Morrisburg
Windsor	Unemployed Help Centre of Windsor Inc.
Wingham	North Huron Food share
Woodstock	The Salvation Army Woodstock