



## “Half a life is better than no life at all...”

These are the words of Barbara, a 62 year old Toronto woman who has been using food banks on and off for the last four years.

Barbara’s background is in education. However, in the mid-1990s, funding for educational assistants evaporated. As a single mom with two kids, Barbara had to find a way of supporting herself and her children. She found work at a second hand store for minimum wage. In 1999, while at work, she injured her back and ended up receiving Worker’s Compensation for a short period of time. Eventually, Barbara’s employers wanted her to return, despite her persistent injury. Barbara felt compelled to keep her job and was willing to gradually increase her hours. Unfortunately, her employers increased the pressure for her to return on a full-time basis. Physically, Barbara was unable to do this.

Barbara ended up applying for Employment Insurance (EI) benefits. Needing resources in the short-term, she applied for and received Ontario Works (OW) for the first time in her life. Once her EI ended in 2002, she managed to start working again as a home care worker. The physical nature of being a home care worker (e.g. moving patients up and down stairs) aggravated her injury and forced her out of work again. So despite her best efforts to work, Barbara went back on OW in 2004.

Now Barbara lives in subsidized housing paying \$138 in rent. This month she received \$401 from OW. With this money she is able to afford \$80 a month on groceries. In November 2005, she applied for the Ontario Disability Support Plan. She recently received a letter rejecting her application and is now in the process of appealing this rejection. Due to the lack of consistent support since her work injury in 1999, Barbara feels she has been robbed and is only leading half a life.

### Hunger by the Numbers

*Adults going hungry at least once a week*

2006	46%
2005	43%
1995	15%

*Children going hungry at least once a week*

2006	23%
2005	22%
1995	11%

*How often clients need more food than available at a food bank*

All of the time	23%
Most of the time	25%

*Length of time using a food bank*

1 year or less	56%
1-3 years	24%
3 years or more	20%

*Disability*

% who ONLY started to use a food bank after reporting a disability/illness.	65%
Food bank clients reporting a disability: in 2006	49%
in 1995	30%
Of those reporting a disability, the % receiving disability benefits: in 2006	45%
in 1995	93%