

Who's ready to fight hunger June 12?



Daily Bread recognizes that hunger in Ontario is usually the result of poverty and lack of income. Currently, Daily Bread member agencies see approximately 60,000 visits per month. While food banks can help people in the short term, long term solutions are needed if we are to make a dent in the need for food banks in our communities.

These long term solutions include policy initiatives that help people with low income meet their basic needs, such as being able to afford both food and rent. Long term solutions also help people get back on their feet and remove barriers to employment, and do not trap people in a cycle of poverty.

The initiatives listed below are policies that Daily Bread has supported in order to improve the circumstances of people living with low income. When reviewing the various Ontario provincial political parties' platforms, see which party these initiatives most closely connect with.

Initiatives that Daily Bread has shown support for include:

- Continued investment in the Ontario Child Benefit, so it can continue to help families with children keep up with the rising costs of living such as food, and so fewer children will go hungry.
- Continuing to increase rate levels in Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program, and paying extra attention to improving the economic circumstances of single adults receiving Ontario Works. Single adults continue to have a proportionally low level of assistance compared to other households. They also are the largest household group requiring food bank assistance.
- Policy initiatives that reduce barriers to employment. These include the expansion of health care supports for the working poor, reductions in clawbacks of employment income for people receiving social assistance, income-tested benefits that are paid whether someone is receiving social assistance or working and increasing the minimum wage.
- The creation of an Ontario Housing Benefit, so low income Ontarians can better afford their rent. Daily Bread and its coalition partners have provided one potential model for a housing benefit. Another option might include an expanded property tax credit targeted to low income households.
- Simplifying the social assistance system in Ontario. The present system has a complex web of rules and regulations, making it difficult for clients to navigate the system and access benefits they need. One example is streamlining employment benefits within social assistance programs. This can help reduce complexity in the system, and make it easier for clients to know more about what employment benefits are available to them.

When it comes to reducing poverty and hunger, evidence has shown good policy works. Let's make sure in this provincial election, poverty reduction stays a priority.

| Issue | Liberal | NDP | Progressive Conservative |
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| Poverty Reduction Strategy | <p>We will release the second five year Poverty Reduction Strategy within 60 days of being elected, building on our success in pulling 47,000 children out of poverty in the first three years of the PRS.</p> | | |
| Social Assistance | <p>In the 2014 budget we announced a 1% increase in OW and ODSP, with a further top-up for single adults receiving OW. We will continue our work on rate increases with a primary focus on single people on Ontario Works and making the system work better for our clients.</p> <p>In April, we announced that Ontario Liberals would not merge Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program, having heard significant concern from the community. Instead, we will work hard to improve both programs.</p> <p>We will also continue with various service-oriented improvements to social assistance, such as phasing in a reloadable debit card for unbanked clients and help with income tax preparation, to make sure that our clients reap the full benefit of income-support programs without turning to predatory payday lenders or cheque-cashing services.</p> | <p>New Democrats recognize that OW and ODSP still do not reflect the actual cost of living, including the cost of shelter, energy, and nutritious food, which is rising ever faster. We will implement a 1% increase to OW and ODSP.</p> <p>We will also continue to implement recommendations from the Review of Social Assistance that Ontarians agree are the right way forward.</p> | <p>We will merge the Ontario Disability Support Program and Ontario Works into one program focused on ability, while respecting the distinct needs of people with disabilities. This will streamline administration, freeing up caseworkers' time to focus more on clients.</p> <p>We'll ensure that people with disabilities have access to the full range of employment programs offered in Ontario, as recommended by Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh. The Commission for the Review of Social Services in Ontario found that the current division of supports "has the effect of stigmatizing people with disabilities as unable to work and fosters low employment expectations." (Brighter Prospects, 2012.)</p> <p>We will also eliminate hundreds of unnecessary rules that bog down the social assistance system, so that it is easy to understand and focuses on helping people find work.</p> |
| Ontario Child Benefit | <p>As announced in the 2014 Budget, we will help low-income families by increasing the Ontario Child Benefit to \$1,310 in July and tying increases to the rate of inflation.</p> | <p>We will increase the Ontario Child Benefit to \$1,310 in July. Following that increase, an NDP government will index the Ontario Child Benefit to inflation.</p> | |

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| Reduce Barriers to Employment | <p>We raised the minimum wage to \$11/hour in May and future increases will be tied to the Ontario rate of inflation.</p> <p>As announced in the 2014 Budget, we will build on our ongoing progress on dental coverage by introducing vision, mental health, assistive devices, and prescription drug benefits for all low-income kids.</p> | <p>An NDP government will raise the minimum wage to \$12 per hour by 2016 and index the minimum wage to inflation.</p> <p>Expanded dental benefits for an additional 100,000 kids from modest income families.</p> | <p>We will move quickly to connect employers to people with disabilities to develop more opportunities and to reduce barriers that exist in the workplace.</p> |
| Housing/ Housing Benefit | <p>As announced in the 2014 Budget, we will contribute \$80.1 million annually over 5 years (over \$400 million total) to the Investment in Affordable Housing program. We will also increase funding for housing by expanding the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative.</p> | <p>An NDP government will start by providing over \$400 million over five years as part of the extended Investment in Affordable Housing program.</p> <p>An NDP government will also enhance tenant protection by enforcing building standards and maintenance rules. We will provide \$2 million in additional annual funding to help municipalities enforce inspections to ensure landlords respect their commitments to tenants.</p> | |
| Other | <p>Recognizing the importance of a great start in life, we will be expanding our very successful Student Nutrition Program to over 50,000 more children throughout our communities.</p> | <p>Increased funding for school nutrition programs from \$20 million per year to \$35 million per year.</p> <p>We will keep day care spaces open in communities by providing \$100 million in emergency relief funding, as well as ongoing annual mitigation funding to ensure no communities lose childcare spaces. We will also index childcare funding to inflation, ensuring that overall funding increases each year as costs rise.</p> | <p>Our Million Jobs Plan will help the disabled, the young, the poor, and the vulnerable.</p> <p>We will expand post-secondary education for people with disabilities, so they can develop job-ready skills.</p> |