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CRISIS: FOOD BANK CLIENT VISITS QUADRUPLE SINCE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Daily Bread Food Bank sees close to 270,000 visits in the month of March – the highest in 40-year history.

Toronto, ON – There is a food insecurity crisis in Toronto. With record-high rates of inflation, rising rents, and stagnating incomes, Torontonians are struggling more and more to put food on the table.

Pre-pandemic, Daily Bread member food banks saw about 65,000 client visits per month. **This number has now quadrupled to close to 270,000 client visits for the month of March – a new record and the worst month in Daily Bread’s 40-year history.** Additionally, we are now seeing over 12,000 *new* people access emergency food services per month – this is six times more than pre-COVID numbers.

Daily Bread Food Bank and its network of 128 member agencies are calling on the Government of Ontario to take immediate action to help address this growing food insecurity crisis. We are recommending an emergency top-up to social assistance, as was provided during the pandemic, tied to the duration of this unprecedented food inflation, to assist low-income families and individuals with the high cost of groceries.

“Let me be extremely clear,” says Neil Hetherington, CEO, Daily Bread Food Bank. “It is the government’s duty to ensure that every person in this city, in this country, can realize their right to food. This is not something that can be outsourced to charities. We are at a breaking point and need action now.”

Food banks across the city continue to see a large proportion of clients who rely on fixed incomes. These are individuals relying on below-poverty-line income supports, in a time when the cost of living only continues to rise. A single individual today on Ontario Works receives \$733 per month, the same amount as in 2018, despite inflation having increased by 16.6% in that time. More and more, we are also seeing employed people making use of emergency food services. In fact, the proportion of food bank clients with employment as their primary income source doubled in the last year, from 16% to 33%.

“We continue to legislate people into poverty in this province,” says Neil Hetherington, CEO, Daily Bread Food Bank. “We simply cannot go on this way. Today we are raising the alarm and will continue to do so. We will not stand silently while our neighbours go hungry. We demand action now.”

Key Stats:

- After paying for rent and utilities, food bank clients have a median of \$8.01 left per person, per day for food and all other necessities. This is a drop from last year’s median of \$9.17 per day.
- Food inflation is currently 10.6 percent, the seventh consecutive month of double-digit increases.ⁱ
- Rent prices have increased by 21% in Toronto compared to last year, with the average cost of a newly listed 1-bedroom at \$2,500.ⁱⁱ
- Currently in Ontario, the maximum ODSP rate for a single individual is \$1,228 per month and \$733 for Ontario Works (OW) – well below Toronto’s official poverty line of \$2,060 per month.
- Individuals relying on social assistance are living in deep poverty and do not have the basics needed to live a dignified life.

[Click here](#) to watch Daily Bread Food Bank's official announcement and call to action.

To learn more about Daily Bread Food Bank, visit dailybread.ca

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ⁱ <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=1810000403>

ⁱⁱ <https://rentals.ca/national-rent-report#rentalsca-data>