



2021 Ontario Pre-Budget Submission

Submitted February 11th, 2021 to:

The Honourable Peter Bethlenfalvy
Minister of Finance
c/o Budget Secretariat
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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 537,000 low-income Ontarians who accessed our services over 3.2 million times.

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

Investments into key food insecurity and poverty reduction measures are essential to both reducing this escalating demand and supporting Ontario's COVID-19 recovery.

Impact of COVID-19 and the Cost of Poverty

As detailed in our [2020 Hunger Report](#), COVID-19 made it increasingly more difficult for low-income Ontarians to close the gap between income and expenses.

Many visitors to our food banks reported incurring increased debt to help pay for monthly necessities, as well as choosing to go without food in order to pay their bills. Further, 50 percent of visitors surveyed reported that they are worried about facing eviction or defaulting on their mortgage in the next two to six months. As shared by one visitor, "I didn't immediately qualify for CERB and had to wait a month and a half for reevaluation of the benefit. I lived off savings until then, but now I can't get caught up."

What makes this particularly concerning is that as the pandemic continues, it will progressively put more stress on low-income and vulnerable people as they continue to run out of savings, incur larger debts, and live with increased stress and anxiety as they work to stretch each dollar even further. Not only does this immediately impact health and wellbeing, but will make it even more difficult for individuals to get back on their feet once the pandemic is over.

In 2019, Feed Ontario released a report on the [Cost of Poverty in Ontario](#), finding that investments in poverty reduction have the potential to **save the Province up to \$33 Billion per year**. We encourage you to review the findings of this report, including how investing in people not only improves individual health and wellbeing but will stimulate the local economy and support Ontario's COVID-19 recovery effort.

Recommendations for the 2021 Ontario Budget

In order to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and reduce poverty in our province, Feed Ontario recommends the following inclusions in the 2021 Budget:

1. Develop a rent relief program for low-income tenants who are facing large rent arrears or eviction due to COVID-19

Near 90% of those who access food banks are rental or social housing tenants who spend the majority of their monthly income on rent. Due to COVID-19, thousands of people have been unable to earn or access the income needed to afford this monthly necessity.

As a result, the current health crisis is on the verge of creating a rapid influx in homelessness and deepening the province's housing crisis. In order to prevent this outcome, it is essential that the Provincial Government implement an immediate rent relief program, as well as address Ontario's deficit in affordable housing.

2. Align Ontario's social assistance rates with the national standard set by CERB

In Ontario, 2 out of 3 people that access food banks are social assistance recipients. COVID-19 has further exposed the significant gaps in our province's social safety net and the significant challenges within these current programs.

CERB, which was developed in alignment with Canada's Market Basket Measure, recognized the minimum income needed by any Canadian to meet their most basic necessities. Ontario Work and ODSP, however, fall short of this standard by more than 63 percent and 41 percent respectively.

Feed Ontario asks that Province align its social assistance rates with CERB or the local Market Basket Measure, as well as invest in program improvements that ensure Ontario's social assistance supports are accessible to those that need them.

This includes: simplifying rules and eligibility criteria for program applicants and recipients; automatically enrolling recipients for income support top-ups, such as the emergency benefit, or credits; the elimination of financial penalties and claw backs on earned income; and passing Bill 60: Social Assistance Research Commission.

3. Invest in a strong workforce so that Ontarians are able to earn enough income to afford today's cost of living.

Over the last four years, the proportion of employed adults accessing food banks have grown by 44 percent. This is largely due to the rise in precarious work, which makes it increasingly more difficult for hard working Ontarians to earn enough income for today's cost of living.

In order to stabilize the economy and strengthen Ontario's workforce, Feed Ontario asks that the Province invest in labour laws that put people first. This includes the reinstatement of paid sick days, equal pay for equal work, increasing minimum wage and sustaining it annually alongside inflation, and expanding the criteria and support available through the Low Income Families Tax Credit (LIFT).

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.

This submission has been endorsed by the following organizations:

City/ Town:	Organization
Acton	Acton Foodshare
Ailsa Craig	Ailsa Craig & Area Foodbank & Thrift Store
Alliston	The Good Shepherd Food Bank of Alliston Inc
Aurora	Aurora Food Pantry

Bancroft	North Hastings Community Cupboard
Barrie	Barrie Food Bank
Barrys Bay	Madawaska Valley Food Bank
Beamsville	Community Care of West Niagara
Beaverton	Brock Community Food Bank
Belleville	Quinte Region Food Share Shelter
Belleville	Gleaners Food Bank Quinte Inc.
Blenheim	The Salvation Army Blenheim
Blind River	Blind River Emergency Food Bank
Bobcaygeon	Bobcaygeon Helps Food Bank
Bolton	Caledon Community Services - The Exchange
Bracebridge	The Salvation Army Bracebridge Community Church
Brampton	Knights Table
Brantford	Brantford Food Bank - Community Resource Service
Brockville	Brockville and 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	The Salvation Army - Collingwood Community and Family Services
Concord	The Food Bank of York Region
Cornwall	The Agape Centre
Drayton	Drayton Food Bank
Dunnville	The Salvation Army Dunnville Community & Family Services
Eganville	Eganville District and 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
Gananoque	Gananoque Food Bank
Georgetown	Georgetown Bread Basket
Goderich	St. Vincent de Paul Food bank - Goderich
Grimsby	GBF Community Services
Guelph	Guelph Food Bank
Hagersville	Hagersville Food Bank
Hamilton	Greater Hamilton Food Share
Hanover	TSA Hanover Food Bank
Hastings	Hastings & Roseneath Ministerial Food Bank

Hawkesbury	Hawkesbury Central Food Bank
Huntsville	The Salvation Army Huntsville
Ingersoll	The Salvation Army Community & Family Services and Food Bank
Kanata	Kanata Food Cupboard
Kingston	Partners in Mission Food Bank
Kirkland Lake	The Salvation Army
Kitchener	The Food Bank of Waterloo Region
Lanark	Lanark Highlands Food Pantry
Lindsay	Kawartha Lakes Food Source
Listowel	The Salvation Army Community & Family Services
London	London Food Bank
L'Orignal	Banque Alimentaire de L'Orignal et Friperie
Mattawa	Mattawa and Area Food Bank
Meaford	Meaford Food Bank and Outreach
Midland	The Salvation Army Midland Food Bank
Milton	The Salvation Army Khi Community-Milton
Mindemoya	Manitoulin Family Resources Food Bank
Minden	Minden Community Food Centre
Mississauga	The Mississauga Food Bank
Mountain	House of Lazarus
Nanticoke	Jarvis Caring Cupboard
Napanee	The Salvation Army Napanee
Newcastle	Clarington East Food Bank
Newmarket	Newmarket Food Pantry
Niagara Falls	Project SHARE
North Bay	North Bay Food Bank
Norwich	Norwich Salvation Army
Oakville	Kerr Street Community Services
Orangeville	The Orangeville Food Bank
Orillia	The Sharing Place Food Centre
Oshawa	Feed the Need in Durham
Ottawa	Ottawa Food Bank
Owen Sound	The Salvation Army
Palmerston	Palmerston Community Food Bank
West	The Salvation Army Paris Food Bank
Parry Sound	Harvest Share Community Food Programs
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	South Grenville Food Bank
Renfrew	Renfrew and District Food Bank
Ridgetown	The Salvation Army Ridgetown
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	the 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
Stratford	Stratford House of Blessing
Strathroy	The Salvation Army Community & Family Services Strathroy
Sudbury	Banque d'aliments Sudbury Food Bank
Sydenham	Southern Frontenac Community Services Corporation
Thunder Bay	Regional Food Distribution Association
Tillsonburg	Helping Hand Food Bank
Toronto	Daily Bread Food Bank
Toronto	North York Harvest Food Bank
Trenton	Care & Share Food Bank Trenton
Uxbridge	Uxbridge Loaves & Fishes Food Bank
Walkerton	Walkerton & District Food Bank
Wallaceburg	The Salvation Army Wallaceburg
Warkworth	7 Hills Community Pantry
Wasaga Beach	Wasaga Beach Ministerial Food Bank
Waterdown	Food With Grace, Waterdown Food Bank
Waterford	Waterford & District Food Cupboard
Welland	The Hope Centre
Wiaraton	The Salvation Army Wiaraton
Wilberforce	Central Food Network
Winchester	Community Food Share
Windsor	Windsor Essex Food Bank Association
Wingham	North Huron Community Foodshare
Woodstock	The Salvation Army Woodstock