

# Pay the Rent and Feed the Kids



## **Ontario Social Assistance Summer 2003 MPP Lobby Kit**

Pay the Rent and Feed the Kids  
Summer Lobby  
July, 2003.



It is now mid-summer and election fever is in the air. If the media reports are to be believed, we can expect a provincial election in late September. That means the rest of this summer is critical to ensuring the goal of increasing social assistance rates is heard by our provincial politicians.

**We need you to say loudly and clearly that the shelter allowance component of social assistance needs to be raised so that people in Ontario can afford to pay their rent and feed their kids!!**

We are asking you, as a constituent, as a group working on poverty related issues in your community to meet with provincial candidates this summer. By meeting with candidates face to face we can ensure raising the rates is recognized as an important election issue.

Everyone's time and resource are limited. Recognizing that all the polls suggest we may be facing a Liberal government after the election, we have decided to strategically focus on sitting Liberal incumbents and candidates for the summer lobby. The package is written with that in mind, however we would not dissuade anyone from meeting with members of the other two parties as well. The Liberal policy on social assistance is still very open-ended, and we firmly believe that a collective effort to raise the issues with them this summer will have a significant impact on their policy once the election is over.

You will find in the enclosed package:

- Tips for meeting with politicians;
- A fact sheet on social assistance;
- The provincial demands of the Pay the Rent and Feed the Kids campaign;
- Where the three parties currently stand on social assistance;
- Suggested questions for your MPP;
- Possible responses your MPP may have and how to answer them;
- Current maximum OW rates;
- An evaluation report sheet to send back to us
- A backgrounder on poverty that links our issues with the broader income security agenda.

If you need any additional support, contact Tracy MacIntosh at 416-203-0050 X289 or e-mail [lobby@paytherent.ca](mailto:lobby@paytherent.ca). Please e-mail or fax the evaluation report back as soon as possible after your meeting. We look forward to hearing.

**THANK YOU FOR TAKING AN INTEREST IN LOBBYING FOR  
PAY THE RENT AND FEED THE KIDS!**

## **Tips for Meeting with Politicians**

### ***Who Will Go?***

Form a group of two to four people— there is strength in numbers, but too many people can be overwhelming. A group might include:

- a staff person or volunteer of your faith group, community organization, food bank etc. who can speak knowledgeably about social assistance and poverty issues
- concerned members of the local community (remember, politicians are more responsive to residents in their *own* riding)
- a person on social assistance
- it may be helpful to have a local businessperson who may be of the same party as the candidate you are meeting with

### ***Arrange a Meeting:***

- Call their office and arrange an appointment. You'll need to be persistent, charming, and be able to convince the candidate/politician's staff that you have a constituency behind you that cares about this issue.
- Call the day before a scheduled meeting to confirm the time and place (MPPs' schedules often change with little warning). Let them know who will be attending the meeting.
- It is worthwhile to get to know the staff who work for the politician. One of the responsibilities of an MPP's Executive Assistant is to recommend to their boss the value of meeting with certain people, so be courteous to them and make sure they know who you are.

### ***Be Prepared:***

- Anticipate questions and arguments that the politician may bring forth and be prepared to respond (some possible responses and rebuttals are included in the package).
- Gather information about your MPP through newspapers, other community members, etc. What is your MPP's stand on poverty and social assistance?
- Fact sheets about social assistance are available at [www.paytherent.ca](http://www.paytherent.ca). You should familiarize yourself with these, as they can provide helpful information for your meeting.
- Meet with your group in advance of the meeting. Decide which points need to be covered and who will say what. Be prepared in case the meeting is shortened.
- On the day of your presentation meet with your presentation group at least 15 minutes early in case there are any last minute details that need to be discussed.

### ***The Meeting:***

- Arrive early. Expect your MPP to be late.
- Be clear about why you are there and what you want from them. Also, don't try to cover too much ground. Confine your discussion to a specific issue (i.e. raising the shelter allowance).
- Be assertive, rather than aggressive. Avoid complaining. Focus on possible solutions.
- Go to the meeting prepared to listen as well as talk.
- Bring copies of any fact sheets or handouts used in your presentation to leave with the politician.
- If the politician favours your position, ask for their help in persuading the government and their political party. Try to get a commitment from the politician.
- Don't forget to thank the politician for their time (and support if they give it).

### ***Follow-Up:***

- It is a good idea to follow up a meeting with a letter summarizing the content of the meeting, as well as any agreed-upon next steps, and thank the politician for meeting with you. Keep in touch with the politician's staff during the election period and after.

**\*\* For more information or support, contact [lobby@paytherent.ca](mailto:lobby@paytherent.ca)**

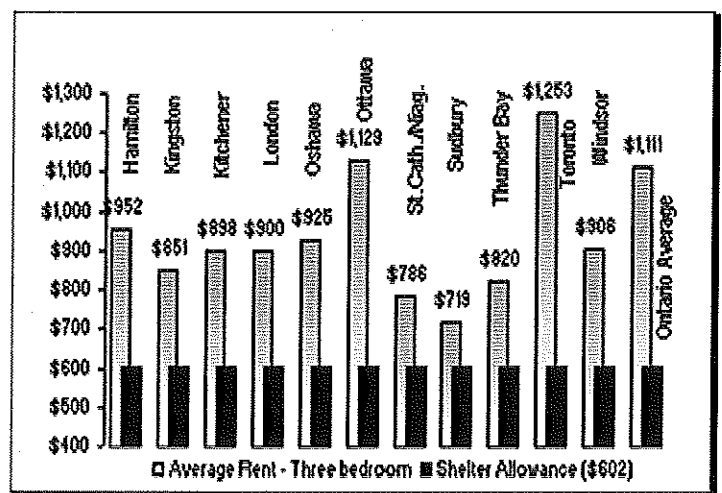
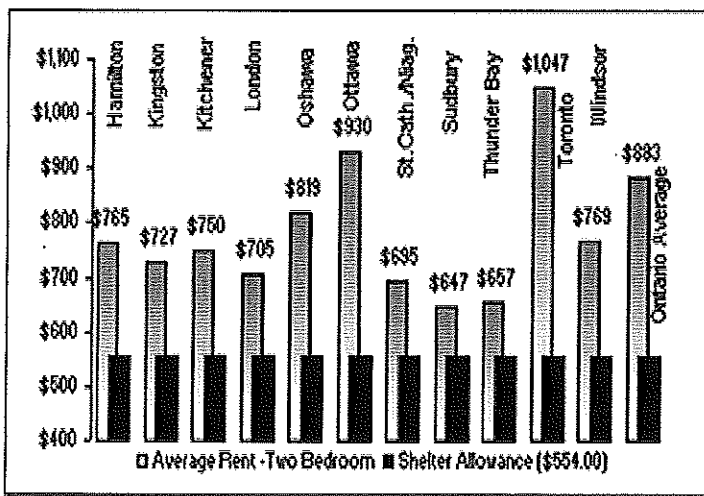
## Why Are Social Assistance Rates an Issue?

- Social assistance rates were last raised over a decade ago (April 1993); in the same period seniors pensions have been adjusted 40 times to inflation;
- In 1995 the Conservative government cut welfare rates 21.6%.

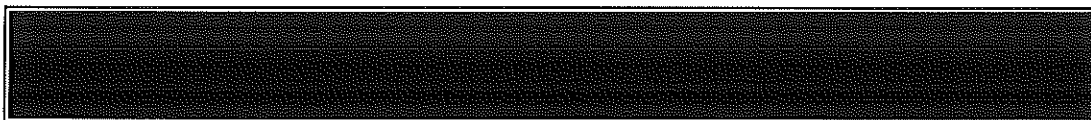
### *The cost of living has risen substantially since 1995:*

- Inflation has increased prices by 15.8% since 1995, making the real value of the Conservative cut over 37% in 2003;
- Housing costs have increased even faster than inflation: in Ontario the average price of a two-bedroom apartment has increased by 24% over the same period; 16% of the increase has come since 1998, when the Conservative government introduced the "Tenant Protection Act," which deregulated the price of private rental housing in Ontario;

### Average Rent vs. Shelter Allowance, Ontario and Selected Cities (2002)



- The adequacy of welfare incomes has declined dramatically. 10 years ago, benefits were between 55% and 80% of what was needed to reach the poverty line;
- Now, benefits for single persons (\$520/mos) are only 1/3 of the poverty line. For a single parent with one child (\$957/mos) and other families with children benefits are little more than about 1/2 of the poverty line.



### **Background on social assistance and poverty in Ontario:**

- There were 403,283 beneficiaries receiving Ontario Works assistance in September 2002; 175,000 (43%) were children;
- Ontario's social assistance caseload is 51% ODSP (195,685 cases) and 49% OW (188,864 cases);
- The budget for social assistance is just over \$4.5 billion out of a total provincial budget of about \$65 billion;
- Children under age 18 are one of the single largest groups of welfare beneficiaries (at almost a quarter-million -- 246,159). About 45% of OW beneficiaries are children;
- Most beneficiaries of OW are lone parent families (207,209 parents and dependents = 53% of beneficiaries). 90,120 on OW are single persons;
- 95% of all Ontario Works beneficiaries are tenants – 82% of these OW tenants rent in the private market and only 18% live in subsidized units;
- Statistics from 2000 show 390,000 children in Ontario live in poverty (measured by the LICO); the 14.4% child poverty rate in 2000 is considerably higher than the 11.4% rate at the peak of the last economic boom in 1989;
- In 2002, an average of 295,228 people visited food banks each month in Ontario – an increase of 7% over the previous year;
- 121,000 children visited food banks each month in Ontario in 2002.

### **What Action has Pay the Rent and Feed the Kids Recommended?**

- "Bridge the shelter gap" by raising the shelter allowance component of social assistance to reflect the average cost of rent in each Ontario community, as defined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.



### Current Maximum Welfare Rates in Ontario

Household Size	Basic Needs Allowance (\$)	Shelter Allowance (\$)	Total (\$)
Single	195.00	325.00	520.00
Two Adults	390.00	511.00	901.00
One Adult/One Child (12yrs and younger)	446.00	511.00	957.00
One Adult/One Child (13yrs and older)	486.00	511.00	997.00
One Adult/Two Children (12yrs and younger)	532.00	554.00	1,086.00
One Adult/Two Children (13yrs and older)	608.00	554.00	1,162.00
One Adult/Three Children (12 yrs and younger)	632.00	602.00	1,234.00
One Adult/Three Children (13yrs and older)	744.00	602.00	1,346.00
Two Adults/One Child (12yrs and younger)	476.00	554.00	1,030.00
Two Adults/One Child (13yrs and older)	512.00	554.00	1,066.00
Two Adults/Two Children (12yrs and younger)	576.00	602.00	1,178.00
Two Adults/Two Children (13yrs and older)	648.00	602.00	1,250.00
Two Adults/Three Children (12yrs and younger)	676.00	649.00	1,325.00
Two Adults/Three Children (13yrs and older)	784.00	649.00	1,433.00

## **MPP Evaluation Report**

**Please fax or e-mail this evaluation to:**

Tracy MacIntosh

Fax: 416-203-0049

E-mail: [lobby@paytherent.ca](mailto:lobby@paytherent.ca)

**Name of MPP:**

**Constituency:**

**Date of Meeting:**

**Members Present on Behalf of the Pay the Rent and Feed the Kids Coalition:**

**Main issues/points discussed:**

**What was your MPP's response (including to the suggested questions, if asked)?**

**What actions is s/he willing to take?**

**Is any follow-up necessary? (further information, another meeting, etc) Any additional comments?**