



York Region Pay the Rent & Feed the Kids Campaign
C/O Community Legal Clinic of York Region
21 Dunlop Street, Suite 200
Richmond Hill, Ontario L4C 2M6

Mr. Denis Kelly, Regional Clerk
Corporate and Legal Services Department
York Region Administration Building
17250 Yonge Street, 4th Floor
Newmarket, ON L3Y 6Z1
Fax: 905-895-3031

Dear Mr. Kelly,

The Community legal Clinic of York Region and York Region Food Network have joined together to form a **York Region Coalition for the Pay the Rent and Feed the Kids Campaign**. This York Region group is part of a larger coalition from across Ontario that has organized to **educate** and to **lobby** for an increase to the shelter allowance portion of the Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Programs.

Too many people in our community are forced to choose between paying the rent and eating, and for those with children, the ultimate choice is often between paying the rent and feeding the kids. Inadequate shelter allowance rates are leading to increased hunger and homelessness. Here in York Region, we hope to mobilize community members, public figures and anti-poverty advocates to voice their opinions on these issues in an effort to challenge the provincial government to raise social assistance rates to reflect the actual cost of living.

The solutions we propose are:

- Raise the Shelter Allowance portion of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program benefits to average rent level.
- Return the basic needs portion of these benefits to 1994 levels.
- Index social assistance benefits to the cost of living.
- Expand rent-geared-to-income programs that provide affordable housing.

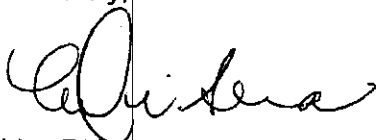
In York Region, the campaign is currently endorsed by *The Community Legal Clinic of York Region, York Region Food Network, York Region Alliance to End Homelessness, York Support Services Network and the Access to ODSP Campaign*. In Toronto, some of the current campaign endorsers include: *Toronto City Council, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, Homelessness Action Group, Ontario Association of Food Banks, and Toronto Disaster Relief Committee*.

Please find attached, some of the resources that have been developed for the campaign. Further information about this campaign can be found at www.paytherent.ca

We are requesting that York Region Council endorse the York Region Pay the Rent and Feed the Kids campaign. Our committee would be pleased to make a deputation to the Community Services and Housing Committee on September 10th if this would be appropriate. We look forward to the support of our elected regional representatives as this campaign continues to gain momentum across the province.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this very important issue. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself, or Jane Thurber at the Community Legal Clinic of York Region (905) 508-5018, extension 223.

Sincerely,



Lisa DiSera
Executive Director, York Region Food Network
905-967-0428



Pay the Rent AND Feed the Kids

Too many people in York Region are forced to choose between paying the rent and eating, and for those with children, the ultimate choice is often between **paying the rent or feeding the kids**. People living on social assistance use almost all of their income to cover housing costs. Very little money is left over for groceries, utilities, clothing, medicine, transportation and other necessities. In York Region this had led to an increased use of crisis supports like food banks and emergency shelters, and the need is rising!

- 1 in 5 children in York Region lives in poverty.
- In York Region, 40% of renter households pay more than 30% of their income on housing. 34.5% of single parent families in York Region pay more than 50% of their income on rent.
- In York Region, the waiting list for social housing is close to 5000.
- In York Region, over 3000 individuals a month visit local food banks; 45% are children.
- In 1995 the province slashed social assistance benefits by 21.6%. That cut, combined with a 12.8% increase to the cost of living since 1995 has left people on social assistance with a monthly struggle to try and make ends meet.

You do the math!

A single parent with two children receives a welfare cheque of \$1,086.00.

The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in York Region is \$953.00.

The **Pay the Rent AND Feed the Kids** campaign is an effort to educate the community and challenge the provincial government to raise social assistance rates to reflect the actual cost of living.

The solutions that the York Region Coalition proposes are:

- Raise the shelter allowance portion of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program benefits to average rent levels;
- Return the basic needs portion of these benefits to 1994 levels;
- Index social assistance benefits to the cost of living;
- Expand rent-geared-to-income and other affordable housing programs.

York Region Food Network and the Community Legal Clinic of York Region are partners in the **York Region Pay the Rent and Feed the Kids Coalition**. The Coalition is seeking endorsements for the campaign from interested groups and organizations who can work with us to highlight the need for adequate income support.

If you want more information about the campaign, or would like to receive a poster, petition and information package, please contact the Community Legal Clinic of York Region at 905-508-5018, toll free 1-888-365-5226.



Pay the Rent And Feed the Kids Fact Sheet

Welfare is failing York Region families:

- 1 in 5 children in York Region is living in poverty. ~*Canadian Council on Social Development*
- Over 3000 individuals a month are using food banks in York Region; 45% are children. ~*York Region Food Network, 2002*
- Of the 403,283 beneficiaries receiving Ontario Works assistance in September 2002, 175,000 (43%) were children. ~*Ministry of Community, Family and Children Services*
- a single parent with 2 children on welfare receives a yearly income of \$13,032 - \$6,203 below the Fraser Institute's poverty line, the most conservative measure of poverty available;
- a couple with 2 children receives \$14,316 - \$8,207 below the Fraser Institute poverty line.

Welfare recipients are struggling to pay the rent:

- Welfare rates were cut 21.6% in 1995, but average rents have increased by 26% from 1995 to 2002 ~*Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation*
- The government of Ontario stopped building affordable public housing in 1995, and then eliminated rent controls in 1998.
- The waiting list for social housing in York Region is close to 5000 ~*York Region Community Services and Housing*
- 40% of renter households pay more than 30% of their income on housing ~*York Region Community Services and Housing*
- The shelter allowance component of welfare is meant to pay the rent, but a single parent with 2 children receives just \$554 while the average York Region rent on a two-bedroom apartment is \$953; two parent families with 2 children receive \$602 while the average York Region rent on a three-bedroom apartment is \$1128.

Poverty costs us all:

- A new study in the British Medical Journal shows that children who grow up poor are at greater risk for **obesity, heart disease and diabetes** than adults who smoke, drink and eat unhealthy foods, putting undue financial stress on the health care system.

Solution: A Basic Income to cover Basic Needs:

- Raise the shelter allowance to reflect the actual cost of housing;
- Increase the basic needs portion of social assistance payments to 1994 levels;
- Index benefits to the cost of living;
- Expand rent-geared-to-income programs that provide affordable housing.

**Why must families be forced to choose between
paying the rent or feeding their children?**