

*Social Planning Network of Ontario*

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## **Interim Report on MPP Visits to Do the Math**

***It Doesn't Add Up!***

**December 4, 2009**

## **Acknowledgments**

The Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO) wishes to acknowledge and thank The Stop Community Food Centre, our partner in the Put Food in the Budget Campaign (PFIB), for its leadership in developing the *Do the Math* on-line survey tool and web site ([www.dothemath.thestop.org](http://www.dothemath.thestop.org)) and for permitting the use of *Do the Math* in the cross-community PFIB campaign. Thanks also to the PFIB Advisory Committee members who have guided the development and implementation of the campaign. All of us on the Committee and in communities across the province as well wish to express our gratitude to Mike Balkwill, SPNO Consulting Associate, for his expert organizing work on the PFIB campaign.

A special thanks also to the 25 in 5 Hamilton Network for Poverty Reduction for its tremendous work in organizing the event in Hamilton on December 4, 2009 to mark the first year of Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy and for making this opportunity available for release of this interim report on MPP visits to *Do the Math*.

Most importantly, SPNO sincerely thanks all of the local groups and individuals in communities across the province that have participated in training and orientation sessions on *Do the Math* and have begun to take it to their communities and MPPs. This effort is proving to be a very educational experience for communities and for our political representatives, who ultimately must decide whether the disparity between need and support for people on social assistance will be reduced through policy action such as the Healthy Food Supplement.

Peter Clutterbuck  
Community Planning Consultant  
Social Planning Network of Ontario  
[www.spno.ca](http://www.spno.ca)  
[www.povertyatchontario.ca](http://www.povertyatchontario.ca)

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## **Interim Report on MPP Visits to Do the Math**

### ***It Doesn't Add Up!***

#### **Introduction**

The Put Food in the Budget (PFIB) Campaign coordinated by The Stop Community Food Centre and the Social Planning Network of Ontario (SPNO) has promoted Do the Math as an on-line survey tool to educate the public about the huge shortfall in monthly income that prevents people on social assistance from being able to eat healthily and to meet other essential costs of living. More than 3,000 Ontarians have completed the survey and the results have been reported.

The PFIB Campaign is also working with people in local communities to take Do the Math to their Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs). Do the Math teams of local constituents, usually including people on Ontario Works (OW) or Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits, have been making appointments with their MPPs to Do the Math and to discuss the results with them, all in aid of encouraging political support for the introduction of a \$100 per month Healthy Food Supplement for OW and ODSP recipients.

This report summarizes the results of these MPP visits to date and highlights of the discussions with MPPs on this issue.

#### **Summary of MPP Visits**

As of November 30, 2009, Do the Math teams of local constituents had visited 27 MPPs, 14 Liberals, eight Progressive Conservatives (PC) and five New Democrats (NDP). Of that number, seven Liberals, two PCs and five NDP MPPs did complete the Do the Math survey. Three MPPs (one Liberal and two PCs) indicated that they would complete the survey and send their results to the Do the Math team. Two MPPs (one Liberal and one PC) expressly stated that they would not complete the survey on the grounds that they did not know what the actual costs were for items in the survey. Another PC MPP started the survey with the Do the Math team but did not complete it because he realized that there was not enough money provided by current social assistance rates to live on.

Appended to this report is a detailed account of the results of the visits to MPPs done so far by Do the Math teams.

### **Overall MPP Conclusions: It Doesn't Add Up**

Overall as the table following indicates, MPPs that have completed the Do the Math survey to date estimate on average that it costs \$1,315 a month to meet the basic necessities of living. Currently, a person on OW receives a \$572 monthly benefit and a person on ODSP receives \$1020.

Using the MPP average cost of basic necessities of \$1,315 a month, the OW recipient would fall \$743 a month short of meeting these basic requirements and a person on ODSP would be \$295 short.

The estimated costs of monthly necessities do not vary significantly between the PC and NDP MPPs, although only two PC MPPs did the survey. The Liberal MPPs show a slightly lower cost of basic monthly necessities, but still at an average \$1,250 per month, a person on OW would be \$678 short of meeting the basic necessities of life and a person on ODSP would be \$230 short a month.

While the MPPs' estimated monthly cost figures are lower than the average figures for on-line survey respondents, clearly they still do not add up in terms of adequacy.

***To date, our political representatives from all three parties at the provincial level responsible for setting social assistance rates recognize that current benefits provided by OW and ODSP do not meet the basic food, rent and other essential monthly living needs of people who are not in the labour market.***

<b>MPPs by Political Party</b>	<b>MPPs' Calculated Monthly Costs of Basic Necessities</b>  (Difference between OW and ODSP Monthly Benefit and MPPs' calculated Costs)	<b>Average MPP Calculated Monthly Costs by Party</b>  (Average Shortfall of OW and ODSP Benefits by Party)
<b>Liberal MPPs</b>		<b>\$1,250</b> (OW --\$678) (ODSP --\$230)
Sophia Aggelonitis Hamilton Mountain	\$1090 (OW -- \$518) (ODSP --\$70)	
Leona Dombrowsky Prince Edward-Hastings	\$1157 (OW --\$585) (ODSP --\$137)	
John Gerretson Kingston & The Islands	\$1350 (OW --\$778) (ODSP --\$330)	
Helena Jaczek Oak Ridges-Markham	\$1,324 (OW --\$752) (ODSP --\$304)	
Linda Jeffrey Brampton-Springdale	\$1345 (OW --\$773) (ODSP --\$326)	
Tony Ruprecht Davenport	\$1260 (OW --\$688) (ODSP --\$240)	
Monique Smith Nippissing	\$1221 (OW --\$649) (ODSP --\$201)	
<b>PC MPPs</b>		
Robert Bailey Sarnia-Lambton	\$987 (OW --\$415) (ODSP +\$33)	
Norman Miller Parry Sound-Muskoka	\$1740 (OW --\$1168) (ODSP --\$720)	
<b>NDP MPPs</b>		<b>\$1,386</b> (OW --\$814) (ODSP --\$366)
Cheri DiNovo High Park-Parkdale	\$1820 (OW --\$1248)	

	(ODSP --\$800)	
Andrea Horwath Hamilton Centre	\$1396 (OW --\$824) (ODSP --\$376)	
Paul Miller Hamilton East- Stoney Creek	\$1418 (OW -- \$846) (ODSP --\$398)	
Michael Prue Beaches-East York	\$1425 (OW --\$853) (ODSP --\$405)	
Peter Tabuns Toronto-Danforth	\$875 (OW --\$303) (ODSP +\$145)	
<b>ALL MPPs who Did the Math</b>		<b>\$1315 (OW --\$743) (ODSP --\$295)</b>

### **Highlight Comments by MPP Survey Respondents**

Among MPPs who did Do the Math with our teams, there was general agreement that current social assistance benefits were not enough to meet the monthly cost of living essentials.

Sophia Aggelonitis, Liberal MPP for Hamilton Mountain, took the exercise very seriously, actually researching the costs of essentials in Hamilton. Ms. Aggelonitis did indicate that she found a very cheap apartment in Hamilton for only \$480 a month rent, but after viewing it, she said, ***“I would never live there.”*** She tried shopping for a week on only \$50 and concluded, ***“it was impossible.”*** Her general conclusion was that, ***“\$100 per month is not a large enough increase for OW recipients.”***

Other Liberal MPPs who completed the survey agreed that social assistance rates were inadequate. Liberal MPPs Monique Smith, Nipissing, and Leona Dombrowski, Prince Edward-Hastings, also agreed that the numbers ***“do not add up”***. Ms. Dombrowski, also Ontario’s Minister of Agriculture, concluded following completion of the survey that ***“Being on social assistance would be a real challenge . . . it doesn’t leave them a lot.”*** Ms. Dombrowski agreed to write a letter to Minister of Community and Social service Madeleine Meilleur raising the concerns of the Do the Math team that visited her.

Two other Liberal MPP survey respondents also had strong conclusions about the inadequacy of current benefits. The Hon. John Gerretsen, MPP for Kingston & The Islands, acknowledged the consequences of low rates, saying, ***“There is no doubt about it, the health consequences are humungous,”*** and commenting with respect to the proposed \$100 a month Healthy Food Supplement, ***“it is not outrageous. I’m not suggesting for a moment that it is***

**too much.”** The Hon. Linda Jeffrey, MPP for Brampton-Springdale, said with respect to current benefit levels, **“Do I think it’s enough? No. At the end of the day, it’s not enough to live on. It’s hard to live with dignity.”** Still, she could not see the Healthy Food Supplement coming to the House for a vote.

One Liberal MPP survey respondent with a direct professional background in the public health field was also skeptical about the prospects of the Healthy Food Supplement. Still, Dr. Helena Jaczek, MPP for Oak Ridges-Markham, and former Medical Officer of Health for York Region, acknowledged, **“Given it has been demonstrated that \$215 is the amount required to eat healthily by the Health Food Basket research, there has to be a way to make this available to everyone.”**

Both PC MPPs who have done the survey to date have agreed that current social assistance rates are not enough. The Hon. Robert Bailey, MPP for Sarnia-Lambton, who calculated a very low monthly cost of living for basic necessities at \$987, still concluded, **“Obviously, the rates for Ontario Works are not enough, given the cost of living for a single person to live independently. The government has to move towards increasing Ontario Works rates over time as the economy improves.”** The Hon. Norm Miller, PC MPP for Parry Sound-Muskoka, supported giving people the amount of money on which they can reasonably live and that the Healthy Food Supplement would be a step in that direction.

The five NDP MPPs who completed the Do the Math survey support PFIB’s Healthy Food Supplement proposal and most often made the connection between low benefits and poor health, as expressed by Andrea Horvath, NDP Leader and MPP for Hamilton Centre, **“Yes, of course, everyone knows that social assistance affects health.”** Both Michael Prue, NDP MPP for Beaches-East York, and Peter Tabuns, NDP MPP Toronto-Danforth, commented on how little money is left for all other essentials including food after paying the rent on a social assistance income. Both cautioned also that the Healthy Food Supplement is only the first step towards adequacy.

### **Additional Highlights of MPP Meetings**

Although most MPPs that were visited did not complete the survey with the Do the Math teams, the teams were trained to report the findings to date of the Do the Math survey and to discuss these with their MPPs. These discussions were noted and proved to offer some interesting insights as well on where our political representatives are on the issue of supporting people on social assistance to be able to escape hunger and eat healthily.

Although not completing the survey, a number of MPPs acknowledged that benefit levels are not adequate to allow healthy living. David Caplan, Liberal MPP for Don Valley East and former Minister of Health, recognized that current

benefit levels were inadequate even though inflationary increases of 2-3% had been made since 2003. Still, he commented, ***“It is clear that more needs to be done.”*** Although they could not express support for the Healthy Food Supplement at this time, several Liberal MPPs did indicate that the costs of living did suggest the need for some significant increases at some time.

Frank Klees, PC MPP for Newmarket Aurora also agreed that people on social assistance do not get a lot of income and that rent costs make it especially difficult. He agreed that people have a right to eat healthily, although he preferred food voucher systems so that people would have to buy food with this form of assistance.

Greg Sorbara, Liberal MPP for Vaughan and former Finance Minister, disagreed with food voucher systems, arguing that people at low income levels should not be monitored for their purchases. He stated that ***“the real issue overall is the resources that individuals and families require to meet all their basic living necessities, not just healthy food.”*** He went on to explain that ***“It is important to communicate to the majority of the working public that the quality of society and their own lives will improve if we improve the conditions of the most vulnerable among us.”***

Tim Hudak, PC MPP for Erie-Lincoln and recently elected PC Leader and Leader of the Opposition would not indicate whether he thought current benefit levels were adequate, although he did say that people in his riding were ***“clearly sympathetic to financially supporting persons with disabilities.”***

Two MPPs who would not complete the Do the Math survey offered no comment about whether social assistance benefits are currently adequate or not, claiming that they were not aware of the costs of basic everyday items necessary for living in their communities.

## **Conclusion**

Do the Math teams continue to be trained and to make appointments with their local MPPs to do the survey with them and to discuss the results. While, with the exception of the NDP, few MPPs are expressing their direct support for the \$100 a month Healthy Food Supplement as a first step toward adequacy in social assistance benefits, most MPPs are hard pressed to justify current benefit levels or argue that people on social assistance receive enough to eat healthily and to meet their other basic costs of living over the course of the month.

As more Ontarians Do the Math and come to the same realization, we will be looking to our elected political representatives in Ontario to show the leadership needed to eliminate hunger and improve the health of people receiving social assistance in Ontario. The \$100 a month Healthy Food Supplement would be a first important step in that direction.



## Appendix

Liberal MPPs		
MPP Name Riding  Completed <i>Do the Math</i> Survey    ✓  Amount Calculated for Monthly Living Costs \$/mo.  Shortfall of OW/ODSP Monthly Amounts (--\$)	MPP Conclusions/Comments	Issues Raised
Sophia Aggelonitis Hamilton Mountain  ✓  \$1090 (OW -- \$518) (ODSP --\$70)	After researching real costs in Hamilton, MPP Aggelonitis agreed that ” <b><i>\$100 per month is not a large enough increase for OW recipients.</i></b> ” She agreed to raise the issue with Minister Matthews. It would cost a lot but <b><i>“in any case, it was not [the community’s] problem to find the money; it was a problem for her and the government to solve.”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Found a cheap apartment (\$480/mo) but would never live there herself.</li> <li>• Shopped for a week spending only \$50 – it was <b><i>“impossible”</i></b>.</li> <li>• Questioned whether Internet could not be accessed through library but was unaware of time restrictions in library use of Internet.</li> </ul>
David Caplan Don Valley East  Visited but did not complete Survey	Mr Caplan stated that the government has been increasing social assistance rates (2-3% per year), <b><i>“although it is clear that more needs to be done”</i></b> . Current economic climate makes it difficult to do more. He felt that \$1460 (the average cost of frugal living according to the Do the Math survey analysis) seemed like a lot. Mr. Caplan agreed that current social assistance rates are not adequate, but that they have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports the infrastructure-related stimulus spending and the new plan for full-day learning for 4-5 year olds as ways of alleviating some of the economic pressures households are facing.</li> <li>• Supports more community –based initiatives such as community gardens.</li> </ul>

<p><b>(no data)</b></p>	<p>been going up. He said that changes will have to be incremental, particularly over the next few years. Would not support the Healthy Food Supplement at this time.</p>	
<p>Michael Chan Markham Unionville</p> <p><b>Visited but did not complete survey</b></p> <p><b>(no data)</b></p>	<p>Willing to talk to Minister Meilleur about the survey and the request for a Healthy Food Supplement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poverty competed with other areas for government resources.</li> </ul>
<p>Vic Dhillon Brampton West</p> <p><b>Visited but would not complete the survey</b></p> <p><b>(no data)</b></p>	<p><i>“unable to comment on whether the current social assistance rates are adequate for a life of health and dignity and unable to complete the survey because I am unfamiliar with the current market rates for food, clothing, transportation, shelter, toiletries, etc. as I do not make the household purchases in my household.”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$100/mo Healthy Food Supplement is <i>“throwing money at the problem”</i> and may not be the best solution because <i>“an extra \$100 per month would only feed the alcohol and/or drug habits of the kind of people I see outside my office.”</i></li> </ul>
<p>Leona Dombrowsky Prince Edward-Hastings</p> <p>✓</p> <p><b>\$1157</b> <b>(OW --\$585)</b> <b>(ODSP --\$137)</b></p>	<p><i>“Being on social assistance would be a real challenge” . . . current amounts “doesn’t leave them a lot”.</i></p> <p><i>“We need to do all we can to help individuals in need of social assistance.”</i></p> <p>Social assistance rates do not add up and she agreed to send a letter to the Minister of Community and Social Assistance raising our concerns (which was done on Oct. 21).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would like to <i>“see everyone make more money”</i> but <i>“it’s about balances – with the economic downturn, if minimum wage is increased too much, people would lose jobs because companies could not afford it.”</i></li> <li>• When people have the time (e.g. not working), <i>“thought they would be able to be more frugal”.</i></li> </ul>
<p>John Gerretson</p>	<p><i>“The rates are low”</i> but the government decided to support families with children first.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Questioned the necessity of Internet expenses and entertainment.</li> </ul>

<p>Kingston &amp; The Islands</p> <p>✓</p> <p>\$1350 (OW --\$778) (ODSP --\$330)</p>	<p>An additional \$100/month for the Healthy Food Supplement <b><i>“is not outrageous. I’m not suggesting for a moment that it’s too much”</i></b> and <b><i>“there is no doubt about it, the health consequences are humongous.”</i></b></p> <p>He would speak to Minister Matthews and his MPP colleagues about more money for food for social assistance recipients.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expressed concern about the cost of a Healthy Food Supplement.</li> </ul>
<p>Linda Jeffrey Brampton-Springdale</p> <p>✓</p> <p>\$1345 (OW --\$773) (ODSP --\$326)</p>	<p>Re current rates <b><i>“Do I think it’s enough? No. At the end of the day, it’s not enough to live on. It’s hard to live with dignity.”</i></b></p> <p>Re the Healthy Food Supplement, <b><i>“hypothetically, I think it’s a good idea . . . but it’s not going to be put to a vote.”</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One thing won’t make the difference, need improvements in education, housing another areas as well as income.</li> <li>Concerned about the cost of the Healthy Food Supplement given the recession.</li> </ul>
<p>Kevin Flynn Oakville</p> <p>Visited but did not complete survey</p> <p>(no data)</p>	<p>[Awaiting report]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>
<p>Helena Jaczek Oak Ridges-Markham</p> <p>✓</p> <p>\$1,324</p>	<p>Dr. Jaczek commented that <b><i>“individuals would do without, out of necessity.”</i></b> They would likely not be able to afford any of these items due to the fact that other basic items had already taken the monthly total to well over the amount allotted on SA or ODSP. She agreed that the reality of living on such a meager amount each month, severely limited people’s choices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The high cost of rent is central to the shortfall problem on OW. It would be extremely difficult to even find a single person accommodation or bachelor apartment in her riding for \$600/mo.</li> <li>Most people on OW would understandably forego regular dental</li> </ul>

<p>(OW --\$752) (ODSP --\$304)</p>	<p>where even essentials were concerned.</p> <p>Regarding the amount available for food, Dr. Jaczek said, <b><i>“given it has been demonstrated that \$215 is the amount required to eat healthily by the Health Food Basket research, there has to be a way to make this available to everyone.”</i></b></p>	<p>care and that that would have necessary health implications and costs down the road.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strongly supports of a full review of the Social Assistance System, which will likely have to occur before something like the Healthy Food Supplement is considered, although the Do the Math team pointed out that the HFS is only the first step to adequacy in social assistance benefits.</li> <li>• Current deficit makes it hard to make the case for increases to social assistance.</li> </ul>
<p>Ted McMeekin Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Westdale,</p> <p><b>Completed the survey but did not report the results</b></p> <p><b>(no data)</b></p>	<p>MPP McMeekin agreed that <b><i>“\$100 a month was not enough to add to OW and ODSP”</i></b> but he could not sign onto the Healthy Food Supplement campaign until there had been a proper review of rates via the Social Assistance Review.</p>	
<p>Reza Moridi Richmond Hill</p> <p><b>Visited but did not complete survey</b></p> <p><b>(no data)</b></p>	<p><b><i>“Rent is a major item, costing \$800-\$900 for a small apartment.”</i></b></p> <p>Poverty will take a <b><i>“very long time to address.”</i></b></p> <p>Mr. Moridi did suggest that social assistance should be indexed to the rate of inflation. Also agreed that immediate financial situation should be addressed while larger systemic issues of poverty are being worked out. He indicated that he would need to learn more about the Healthy Food Supplement before he could say whether he supported it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One solution to the rent affordability problem may be to legalize basement apartments.</li> </ul>

<p>Tony Ruprecht Davenport</p> <p>✓</p> <p><b>\$1260</b> <b>(OW --\$688)</b> <b>(ODSP --\$240)</b></p>	<p>Mr. Ruprecht concluded that social assistance rates do not add up and that a single person living in Davenport in fact needs a minimum of \$1260 per month to live a healthy life and participate in with dignity in the community.</p>	
<p>Monique Smith Nippissing</p> <p>✓</p> <p><b>\$1221</b> <b>(OW --\$649)</b> <b>(ODSP --\$201)</b></p>	<p><b><i>“It’s no surprise. My calculation was a lot more than the allowances provided.”</i></b> Social assistance rates <b><i>“do not add up.”</i></b> Agreed to write a letter to Minister Meilleur voicing the groups; concern about inadequate social assistance rates and recommendations for improvement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did not see access to the Internet as a necessity given.</li> <li>• Acknowledged that costs in the north are higher because of transportation.</li> <li>• Concerned about the cost of OW and ODSP increases given that they are open programs.</li> </ul>
<p>Greg Sorbara Vaughan</p> <p><b>Visited -- has not yet completed survey but agreed to do it &amp; send to us</b></p> <p><b>(no data)</b></p>	<p>Mr. Sorbara said that there was a <b><i>“market attractiveness”</i></b> to the \$100/month Healthy Food Supplement as a first step towards adequacy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The real issue is the <b><i>“overall level of resources that individuals and families require to meet all their basic living necessities, not just healthy food.”</i></b></li> <li>• <b><i>“It is important to communicate to the majority of the working public that the quality of society and their own lives will improve if we improve the conditions of the most vulnerable among us.”</i></b></li> <li>• Any increase to incomes need not be monitored for whether it is spent on food (i.e. not a voucher type program)</li> </ul>

**Progressive Conservatives MPPs**

<b>MPP Name Riding</b>  <b>Completed <i>Do the Math</i> Survey</b> ✓  <b>Amount Calculated for Monthly Living Costs \$/mo.</b>  <b>Shortfall of OW/ODSP Monthly Amounts (--\$)</b>	<b>MPP Conclusions/Comments</b>	<b>Issues Raised</b>
Ted Arnott Wellington-Halton Hills  <b>Not yet completed but would</b>  <b>(no data)</b>	Supported the need for a supplement that would be spent in local communities.	
Robert Bailey Sarnia-Lambton  ✓	After doing the survey, MPP Bob Bailey concluded: <i>“Obviously the rates for Ontario Works are not enough, given the cost of living for a single person to live independently.”</i> <i>“The government has to move towards increasing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>“Housing is a big part of the puzzle. If we could address housing costs this could help a lot.”</i></li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$987</b> <b>(OW -\$415)</b> <b>(ODSP +\$33)</b></p>	<p><b><i>Ontario Works rates over time as the economy improves.”</i></b> <b><i>“Instead of the wasted money on EHealth and their spending scandals, the government should have put this money towards programs for disadvantaged people.”</i></b></p>	
<p>Ernie Hardeman Oxford</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Visited but did not complete the survey</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>(no data)</b></p>	<p>Mr. Hardeman started the survey but did not conclude it when he found that there was not enough money to live on.</p> <p>Could not support a \$100/mo. Healthy Food Supplement – no guarantee that would be used for healthy food choices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raising OW to amount needed to live was not a solution – people on OW are able to manage by sharing housing or getting help from family and friends.</li> </ul>
<p>Tim Hudak Erie-Lincoln</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Visited but would not complete the survey</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>(no data)</b></p>	<p>Mr. Hudak would not support the Healthy Food Supplement at the meeting, although he would email a formal response later. He prefers to tear down barriers that keep people from getting into work than adjusting benefits. He did say that people in his riding are <b><i>“clearly sympathetic to financially supporting persons with disabilities.”</i></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Assistance portfolio should be moved from MCSS to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.</li> </ul>
<p>Frank Klees Newmarket Aurora</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Visited -- did not complete survey but said that he would</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>(no data)</b></p>	<p>Acknowledged that people on social assistance do not get a lot of income and noted that the cost of rent takes up most of their benefit.</p> <p>Agreed that people on social assistance have a right to eat healthily.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would prefer a food voucher system to make sure that people use the extra assistance on food.</li> </ul>
	<p>Upon completing the survey, Mr. Miller acknowledged</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although the Healthy Food Supplement</li> </ul>

<p>Norman Miller Parry Sound-Muskoka</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$1740</b> <b>(OW --\$1168)</b> <b>(ODSP --\$720)</b></p>	<p>that social assistance rates do not add up. He saw he would have to trim his costs by, for example, reducing his food budget. Mr. Miller acknowledged it would be difficult to live on the rate one receives on Ontario Works or ODSP. He expressed support for giving people an amount of money on which they can reasonably live, and for a Healthy Food Supplement.</p>	<p>will help in the short term, longer-term solutions are required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr. Miller expressed his view that education is key to preventing the need for social assistance, that skills development is the best way to guarantee adequate incomes.</li> </ul>
<p>Julia Munro York-Simcoe</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Visited but did not complete the survey</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>(no data)</b></p>	<p>MPP Munro did <b><i>“not have adequate cost information on the items on the survey to complete it.”</i></b> She acknowledged that <b><i>“nothing much had been done about social assistance rates since the mid-1990s and that things could always be improved.”</i></b> Supported a review of the social assistance system.</p>	
<p>Elizabeth Witmer Kitchener-Waterloo</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Visited but did not complete the survey</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>(no data)</b></p>	<p>Receptive to the idea of a \$100 healthy Food Supplement and agreed that these monies would be spent directly in the local economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feels that there should be something done about the restrictions on the personal assets of OW and ODSP recipients.</li> </ul>



## NDP MPPs

<b>MPP Name</b> <b>Riding</b>  <b>Completed <i>Do the Math</i> Survey</b> ✓  <b>Amount Calculated for Monthly Living Costs \$/mo.</b>  <b>Shortfall of OW/ODSP Monthly Amounts (--\$)</b>	<b>MPP</b> <b>Conclusions/Comments</b>	<b>Issues Raised</b>
Cheri DiNovo High Park-Parkdale  ✓  \$1820 (OW --\$1248) (ODSP --\$800)	Supports the Healthy Food Supplement -- <b><i>“Raising the rates needs to be the main message here – just give people more – we want people to have more money to live on! Drawing people out of poverty could actually be done quite simply by raising the rates.”</i></b> <b><i>“We’re eroding the middle class while the wealthy are getting wealthier. The HST tax will hit poor people the worst in this Province when it is implemented. When the government gives away money in tax cuts to the rich, then we are left without money needed to fund social services.”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Must also implement minimum wage increases more quickly and create more affordable housing through policies like inclusionary zoning (Her Private member’s Bill)</li> </ul>
Andrea Horwath Hamilton Centre  ✓  \$1396 (OW --\$824)	When asked if she would support an immediate increase of \$100 per month to single adults on Social Assistance – <b><i>“Yes, of course. Everyone knows that Social Assistance affects health.”</i></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussing some of the rules instituted by Harris such as liquefying assets before qualifying for OW, the spouse in the house rule etc., Ms. Horwath pointed out that we can change such rules by regulation not legislation.</li> </ul>

<b>(ODSP --\$376)</b>		
<p>Paul Miller Hamilton East-Stoney Creek</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$1418</b> <b>(OW -- \$846)</b> <b>(ODSP --\$396)</b></p>	<p>Supports the Healthy Food Supplement. Strong advocate for an Ontario seniors pension – might <b>“divert some from needing to be on OW.”</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did question whether <b>“those people couldn’t possibly afford to have a pet”</b>.</li> <li>• Some unfortunate suggestions that people take advantage of food banks.</li> </ul>
<p>Michael Prue Beaches-East York</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$1425</b> <b>(OW --\$853)</b> <b>(ODSP --\$405)</b></p>	<p><b>“After you fill out the amount for rent, there isn’t a lot left to give you much of a life.”</b> \$100/mo Healthy Food Supplement is <b>“only a stepping stone to what is really needed to bring equity to social assistance.”</b> As NDP Poverty critic, he would ask the Party leader to ask a question in the House about the Food Supplement and rates.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After rent and food nothing left -- <b>“no essentials like the internet, no pets, no personal grooming and hygiene costs and no room for any entertainment.”</b></li> </ul>
<p>Peter Tabuns Toronto-Danforth</p> <p style="text-align: center;">✓</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>\$875</b> <b>(OW --\$303)</b> <b>(ODSP -- +145)</b></p>	<p>Indicated he did not complete survey because after allowing for rent <b>“there would be very little left to allocate to other categories.”</b> OW recipients could not be able to live a healthy, dignified life on current rates. Supported the Healthy Food Supplement but <b>“it should be emphasized that the \$100 supplement is only a step in the right direction – it is not an adequate solution.”</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Asserted health link referring to U of T medical policy research <b>“which states that eliminating poverty would be the financial equivalent of eradicating cancer.”</b></li> </ul>

**For further information contact:**

**Peter Clutterbuck**  
**Social Planning Network of Ontario,**  
**December 3, 2009**  
**[pclutterbuck@spno.ca](mailto:pclutterbuck@spno.ca)**  
**416-653-7947**

**[www.povertywatchontario.ca](http://www.povertywatchontario.ca)**  
**[www.dothemath.thestop.org](http://www.dothemath.thestop.org)**