

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 28, 2018

**The 2018 Ontario Budget:
Setting the stage for “serious transformation” of Ontario’s Income Security System**

(Toronto, ON – March 27, 2018) Daily Bread Food Bank is encouraged by the 2018 Ontario budget, which contains important measures to advance poverty reduction and improve circumstances for low-income Ontarians.

The 2018 Ontario Budget makes bold commitments that take solid leads to further modernize and transform Ontario’s Income Security System, as guided by the Income Security Reform Working Group Report, *Income Security: A roadmap for change*.

“With the measures in this budget, there are substantial commitments that help reduce barriers for people living in poverty,” said Neil Hetherington, CEO of Daily Bread Food Bank. “On behalf of those we serve, we are grateful for these bold new initiatives as Ontario continues its commitment to improve the lives of everyone.”

Daily Bread Food Bank is encouraged to see the following key commitments:

- In 2020-21, creating a new standard flat rate in social assistance to replace the current structure that separates basic needs and shelter rates;
- Increasing Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program rates by 3 per cent annually starting in fall 2018;
- Doubling the amount of employment income earned without impacting social assistance benefits to \$400 a month from \$200 a month starting in fall 2018;
- Increasing asset limits for singles and couples on Ontario Works to \$15,000 and \$20,000 respectively, and fully eliminating asset limits for those on Ontario Disability Support Program starting in 2019;
- Cost-matching the Federal-Provincial/Territorial Housing Partnership and the Canada Housing Benefit under the National Housing Strategy, including for a portable housing benefit.
- Expanding OHIP+ to seniors beginning in August 2019, which will eliminate the annual deductible and co-pay and save the average senior \$240 per year;
- Introducing a new Ontario Drug and Dental Program in summer 2019 that would reimburse up to 80 per cent of expenses to a maximum of \$400 for singles, \$600 for couples and \$50 per child;
- Beginning in 2020 making free, full-day licensed day care available for children aged two-and-a-half until they start kindergarten;
- Launching the Food Security and Climate Change Impact Fund to support projects that address Indigenous food production and northern food access, among others;
- Developing a Made-in-Ontario Market Basket Measure to inform future decisions about rate increases and income security reform;
- Making the definition of a “spouse” consistent with the *Family Law Act*, and changing the duration of living together to three years from three months which will have a direct benefit on both income security and dignity of Ontarians on social assistance.

“This budget sets the stage for serious transformation of our province’s income security system,” said Hetherington. “The frontline experience of our 130 member agencies and our nearly two decades’ worth of

research have shown us repeatedly that food insecurity is symptomatic of income insecurity. It is heartening to see the province taking these pragmatic steps forward.”

About Daily Bread Food Bank

Daily Bread Food Bank is an independent, non-profit, charitable organization that is fighting to end hunger in our communities. As Canada’s largest food bank, Daily Bread serves people through neighbourhood food banks and meal programs in 130 member agencies across Toronto. Daily Bread also works towards long-term solutions to hunger by conducting research, raising public awareness, and running innovative programs to support people on low incomes. Learn more at DailyBread.ca.

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