

**If you want to help make sure everyone is
able to Pay the Rent
AND Feed the Kids you can:**

- Write or call your Member of Provincial Parliament.
- Write letters and e-mails to your local news media.
- Join or endorse the campaign.
- Help spread the word by distributing posters, postcards and pamphlets.
- Help organize forums and events in your community.
- Donate funds to help us with the campaign.
- Sign our Petition.

**For more information call LIFT at
(416) 597 9400 or
www.paytherent.ca**



Supporting Organizations

Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, Anishnawbe Health Toronto, Campaign 2000, Canadian Buddhist Women's Association, Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, Children's Aid Society of Toronto, Christie Ossington Neighbourhood Centre, Community Legal Assistance Sarnia, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, Daily Bread Food Bank, Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre, Dawn Ontario: DisAbleD Women's Network Ontario, Family Services Association of Toronto, Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations, Flemingdon Neighborhood Services, Housing Action Now, Housing and Homelessness Network of Ontario, Income Security Advocacy Centre, ISARC, Karuna Community Services, Kensington Bellwoods Community Legal Services, Low Income Families Together, Metro Network for Social Justice, Nellie's, OAITH- Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses, Ontario Association of Food Banks, Ontario Coalition for Social Justice, Ontario Conference of Catholic Bishops, Ontario English Catholic Teachers, Ontario Federation of Labour, Ontario Social Safety Network, Ontario Non- Profit Housing Association, Parkdale Community Legal Services, Sistering, Somerset West Action Network, The STOP, Toronto Disaster Relief Committee, Toronto Network of Engaged Buddhists, UNITE Ontario Council, YWCA of Greater Toronto.



Photo by Kathy Dunn

WHY CAN'T WE ALL

**PAY THE RENT
AND
FEED THE KIDS?**

**WHY MUST FAMILIES BE FORCED TO CHOOSE
BETWEEN PAYING THE RENT OR FEEDING THEIR CHILDREN?**

In the Winter of 2002 our coalition formed in response to collective concern for Toronto's poor. Inspired by the success of the Ottawa Pay the Rent and Feed the Kids coalition we in Toronto decided to educate, mobilize and lobby collectively.

Low-income people in Toronto are not getting by and over the last seven years their circumstances have gotten worse. 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 reduced social assistance recipients' spending by 1/3. At the same time, minimum wage levels are so low they do not allow households to pay the rent and feed the kids. The negative impact of these changes is compounded by the loss of rent control and cancellation of the provincial non-profit housing program.

Since the provincial government removed rent control in 1998, rents in Toronto have increased by 17% for a two-bedroom apartment, more than double the rate of inflation. At the same time, few housing options, such as rent-geared-to-income housing, exist for low-income people. Ontario Works benefits and Ontario Disability Support Program benefits do not provide enough to cover the basics of rent, food, clothing and transportation.

The **Pay the Rent AND Feed the Kids** campaign is an effort to challenge the provincial government to raise social assistance rates to reflect the actual cost of living. The solutions we propose:

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

**INADEQUATE SHELTER ALLOWANCE RATES ARE LEADING TO
INCREASED HUNGER AND HOMELESSNESS.**

People living on social assistance use almost all of their income to cover housing costs. Very little money is left over for groceries, utilities, shoes, jackets, medicine, bus passes and other necessities. Too many people in our community are unable to pay the rent, and for those with children, the ultimate choice is often between *paying the rent or feeding the kids*.

This has led to an increased use of crisis supports like food banks and emergency shelters and the need is rising.

- 155,000 people must rely on food-relief programs in the GTA every month to eat. 40% of these recipients are children. This is up from 140,000 last year.
- In 2001 over 6,000 children and 11,000 women lived in Toronto shelters.
- There is a waiting list of 60,000 for subsidized housing in Toronto.
- 82% of social assistance recipients pay rent in the private market, which averages over 100% of their benefits. Only 18% live in not for profit affordable housing.

INCOME VS. HOUSING EXPENDITURE FOR WELFARE RECIPIENTS

Household Structure	Monthly Welfare Income	Average Market Rent	% Spent on Rent
Single Adult	\$520	Bachelor \$695	134%
2 Adults	\$901	1 Bedroom \$866	96%
1 Adult & 1 Child	\$957	2 Bedroom \$1039	109%
2 Adults & 1 Child	\$1030	2 Bedroom \$1039	101%
2 Adults & 2 Children	\$1178	3 Bedroom \$1224	104%