

PRESS RELEASE



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Ten prominent Torontonians have joined The Stop Community Food Centre to fight hunger, raise social assistance rates and put food in the budget

Toronto, April 6, 2010 – The Stop Community Food Centre today announced the second phase of “Do the Math,” the anti-poverty organization’s campaign to highlight the failure of Ontario’s current social assistance rates to support healthy, dignified lives.

The Stop’s Executive Director Nick Saul was joined by ten prominent Torontonians—including author Naomi Klein, media executive and public policy advocate Michael MacMillan, Councillor Joe Mihevc, musician Damian Abraham and Toronto Medical Officer of Health, Dr. David McKeown—to launch this part of the campaign, during which these participants will live exclusively off the contents of a food bank hamper. The group picked up hampers from The Stop’s food bank, with each containing a three- to four-day supply of food.

“We’re not here to criticize food banks,” said Saul. “But rather to point out that food banks cannot be a substitute for decent income support programs. We hope that this week’s challenge will draw attention to the impossible choices faced by hundreds of thousands of people on social assistance in this province every day.”

“Sometimes when I talk to my friends about issues of food access and poverty, I can see their eyes glaze over,” said MacMillan, the co-founder of Samara and former head of Alliance Atlantis. “But this campaign is capturing their attention, and I’m happy to help start a conversation about these issues.”

This phase of the campaign will run for one week, with a public Town Hall meeting at the Wychwood Barns on April 13, at 7 pm. The Town Hall will include a discussion with the Do the Math participants about both their experiences and how to continue to put pressure on the provincial government to address the gross inadequacies of social assistance rates.

This is the second part of The Stop’s Do the Math campaign, initially launched in August, 2009. This campaign features an interactive website where visitors are asked to add up the monthly expenses they think necessary for a single person on social assistance. This budgetary exercise vividly illustrates that, after housing, clothing and transportation, most people have no money left over for food and must rely on food banks and drop-in meals to survive. More than 5,000 people have done the math online and thousands of others have signed Do the Math postcards addressed to the Premier of Ontario. These supporters joined The Stop in asking the provincial government to immediately introduce a \$100/month Healthy Food Supplement for all adults on social assistance and to establish a clear and transparent process to set rates based on what it actually costs to live a frugal, but healthy and dignified, life in Ontario.

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About The Stop: Located in Toronto’s west end, The Stop Community Food Centre works to increase access to food in a manner that maintains dignity, builds health and community and challenges inequality. From its origins as one of Canada’s first food banks, The Stop has blossomed into a thriving community hub where neighbours participate in a broad range of programs that provide healthy food, as well as foster social connections, build food skills and promote engagement in civic issues. Underlying all of The Stop’s efforts is the view that food should be a basic human right.