The Hon. Merrilee Fullerton,

Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
7th Floor
438 University Ave.

Toronto, ON M5G 2K8

[Today’s Date]

Dear Minister Fullerton,

I am writing to you to urge you to raise social assistance rates in Ontario.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontarians depending on social assistance were living in deep poverty. Single adults on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) had incomes 40% below the poverty line, while single adults receiving assistance through Ontario Works (OW) were more than 60% below the poverty line. As inflation has climbed, this poverty gap has only widened.

I appreciate that your government has followed through on its campaign promise to raise ODSP rates by 5%, and will be indexing those rates to inflation. However, this increase, approximately $59 per month for a single person on ODSP, barely makes a dent in the increased cost of living, considering that inflation has risen by over 11% since rates were last raised in September 2018.

For people on Ontario Works, the situation is even more dire, as their levels of assistance continue to be frozen at 2018 rates. Nowhere in this province is the $733 per month received by a single person on OW adequate to meet the cost of food, shelter, and clothing, much less digital access, transportation, and other basic needs.

As people fall further into destitution, they are more and more at risk of homelessness and a serious decline in their physical and mental health. If we allow this to continue, Ontario taxpayers will bear the increased cost of poverty in terms of the burden it will place on shelters, hospitals, the criminal justice system, and other social services. It makes sense to invest in preventing people from falling into deep poverty in the first place.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ontario has saved on social assistance costs due to federal benefits and lowered caseloads. It is time to reinvest these savings.

Together with the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, the Income Security Advocacy Centre, and more than 200 food banks, legal clinics, faith communities and other community organizations across Ontario, I urge your government to double both OW and ODSP rates, and to index these rates to inflation.

Yours sincerely,

[name]

[cc. Your MPP]