

Proposed Motion to Declare Food Insecurity an Emergency in the City of Mississauga

WHEREAS according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 25(1), every human being has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of themselves and of their family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond their control; and,

WHEREAS food insecurity is defined as the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints; a serious public health problem and a marker of pervasive material deprivation (poverty); and,

WHEREAS chronic stressors (e.g., disability, precarious work, cost of living crisis) and acute shocks (e.g., COVID-19, illness, eviction) make it more difficult to afford life's basic needs and live free from poverty; and,

WHEREAS Food Banks Mississauga and their 60+ agency member network provided food and household items to over 56,267 neighbours (+58%), or 8% of Mississauga residents, over 421,000 times (+80%) year-over-year, with revenue growth at 2% and no ability to further cut costs without detrimental impacts to food security programming; and,

WHEREAS over 28% of food bank visitors in Mississauga were children (15,754), a 42% increase from last year; and,

WHEREAS one out of every four (25%) of Food Banks Mississauga visitors identifies as having a disability, and the most a single person on ODSP can receive is \$1,368 per month, which is less than \$17,000 per year. ODSP is currently lower than it was in 2018 (\$1,409, adjusted for inflation) and amounts to less than half of the disability-adjusted poverty line (\$3,177).¹ OW has had no increases since 2018. The maximum a single person on OW can receive is \$733 per month, which is 70% below the poverty line; and,

WHEREAS according to Food Banks Canada and the Material Deprivation Index, it's estimated that closer to 25% of all Canadians – meaning almost 175,000 people in Mississauga – currently have a poverty level standard of living; and,

¹Inclusion Canada. *The Additional Costs of Disability: Why Canada's Poverty Measure Falls Short.*

WHEREAS by 2027, without appropriate policy intervention, we estimate food bank use in Mississauga to almost double to over 100,000 people, requiring a commensurate 91% increase in food sourcing; and,

WHEREAS food banks are not funded by the Government of Canada and Government of Ontario; and,

WHEREAS Ontario nonprofits, including food banks, are collectively experiencing stagnant and declining financial resources amidst climbing demand, and increased reserve use, with 39% of nonprofits assessing themselves at significant risk for not existing in the next three years;² and,

WHEREAS the Government of Canada and Government of Ontario have historically deprioritized and underinvested in poverty-reducing social services and programs over multiple decades, resulting in the continued erosion of social safety nets; and,

WHEREAS the roots of rising income inequality are legislative: economic policies and market changes have disproportionately benefited high-income households and negatively impacted lower-income households;³ and,

WHEREAS in the fourth quarter of 2023, the economic divide between the wealthiest 20 per cent and the poorest 40 per cent in Canada has widened to 65 percentage points, an increase from the same quarter a year earlier. The richest 20 per cent of households saw their average disposable income [increase](#) by 6 per cent due to higher wages and higher returns on financial assets. This group now owns 67.7 per cent of the country's total wealth, an average of \$3.3 million per household;⁴ and,

WHEREAS according to Food Banks Canada's [Poverty Report Card](#), the current Ontario Government received a D- on *Experience of Poverty* and an F on *Poverty Measures*; and,

² Ontario Nonprofit Network [2024 State of the Sector Report](#).

³ Green, David A.; Riddell, W. Craig; St-Hilaire, France. *Income Inequality in Canada: Driving Forces, Outcomes and Policy*. Institute for Research on Public Policy. February 23, 2017.

⁴ Yassin, Shaimaa; Petit, Gillian; Abraham, Yasmin. *The troubling rise of income and wealth inequality in Canada*. Institute for Research on Public Policy. July 18, 2024.

WHEREAS poverty costs Ontario around \$33 billion dollars per year: increased justice system - \$1.1 billion; health care - \$3.9 billion; lost income - \$19.4-25 billion; lost tax revenue - \$2.7-3 billion;⁵ and,

WHEREAS if this trend continues, the Government of Canada will not only fail to meet its 2030 target of a 50% decrease in poverty compared to 2015, but will also fall back below its 2020 target of a 20% decrease.

THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED THAT THE CITY OF MISSISSAUGA:

1. Declare food insecurity an emergency in Mississauga; and,
2. Request that any relevant upcoming Region of Peel awareness campaigns include this declaration; and,
3. Advocate to higher orders of government alongside Food Banks Mississauga and its 60+ neighbourhood food banks, meal and snack programs, and food pantries for long-term, sustainable, poverty-reduction legislation, policies and programs that centre people with lived experience, in the highest impact areas of:
 - a. Improving Ontario's social assistance programs;
 - b. Investing in affordable, supportive and public housing; and,
 - c. Building a stronger workforce through better labour laws that benefit workers and enhanced worker support programs.
4. Recommend the Peel Region *Food Security Emergency Response Fund* be increased for 2025, with a robust and transparent application process to ensure equitable fund distribution; and,
5. Send a communication, signed by Mayor Carolyn Parrish on behalf of City Council, to Mississauga MPs and MPPs, requesting they join their municipal counterparts in solidarity, asking for an emergency to be declared at the Provincial and Federal levels, and increasing their commitment to poverty reduction policies and programs in support of basic human rights; and,
6. Send a communication, signed by Mayor Carolyn Parrish on behalf of City Council, to Premier Ford and Prime Minister Trudeau, advocating to the Provincial and Federal governments to support the Groceries and Essentials Benefit brought forward by Food Banks Canada, aimed to help struggling households afford vital costs like food and shelter. It focuses on low-income families, directly aiding those hit hardest by food insecurity and poverty; and,
7. Send a copy of this Resolution to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

⁵ Feed Ontario Report: [The Cost of Poverty in Ontario: 10 Years Later](#).

Chris Fonseca