

MEDIA RELEASE

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Coalition releases innovative plan to address housing poverty

TORONTO – A coalition of private, public and non-profit housing associations, community organizations, academics, and foundations released a proposal today for a new housing benefit for low-income Ontarians. The proposal, outlined in ***A Housing Benefit for Ontario: One Housing Solution for a Poverty Reduction Strategy***, recommends a new income benefit that will help low-income, working age renters with high shelter costs in communities across Ontario. The proposal would add a necessary affordable housing component to Ontario's highly anticipated Poverty Reduction Strategy, expected in December.

"The average food bank client spends over three quarters of their income on rent alone, leaving them in a situation where they cannot afford food and other necessities," said Gail Nyberg, Executive Director of Toronto's Daily Bread Food Bank. "An effective poverty reduction strategy must address housing affordability. This is an innovative proposal being put forward by a unique coalition of people and organizations. Our coalition urges the Ontario government to include the housing benefit in Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy when it is released next month."

The proposed benefit pays an average of \$103 per month to an estimated 66,000 families and 129,000 individual and couple households. The amount of the benefit is based on a formula that pays 75% of shelter costs between a floor and a ceiling that varies by community size. The housing benefit is reduced as income rises.

The housing benefit would produce a number of positive outcomes, including: increasing housing affordability and therefore preventing hunger and homelessness; providing housing assistance to the working poor for the first time in decades; helping people get off welfare and into work by continuing assistance to those moving into the labour force; and helping low-wage workers live and work in their home communities, reducing stress on transit systems and helping to mitigate against labour shortages in high cost cities such as Toronto and Ottawa.

"Our housing benefit is a carefully targeted, fiscally conservative proposal – exactly the kind of investment that is needed to help people make ends meet at a time when jobs are being lost and the economy is uncertain," said Vince Brescia, President and CEO of the Federation of Rental Housing Providers of Ontario.

"The lack of affordable housing was raised at every stop in the Ontario government's recent poverty consultation. The housing benefit, along with investment in affordable housing supply and maintenance, is a critical piece of both a poverty reduction strategy and an affordable housing strategy," said Sharad Kerur, Executive Director of the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association.

The housing benefit proposal was written by unique and diverse group of organizations and individuals including:

- **Federation of Rental Housing Providers of Ontario:** FRPO is the province's leading advocate for quality rental housing, representing a wide range of multi-residential housing providers, from the smallest landlords to the largest property management firms.
- **Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association:** ONPHA is the voice of non-profit housing in Ontario, uniting 770 non-profit organizations providing housing in 220 communities across Ontario.
- **Greater Toronto Apartment Association:** Based in Toronto, the Greater Toronto Apartment Association (GTAA) represents the interests of greater Toronto's multifamily rental housing industry.
- **Daily Bread Food Bank:** Daily Bread is a non-profit, charitable organization that fights hunger in our communities by providing food and resources for hungry people; mobilizing greater community support and creating social change through research, education and advocacy.

- **Metcalf Charitable Foundation:** The Metcalf Foundation was established by George Cedric Metcalf in 1960 to support work primarily in three areas: environment, performing arts and low-income communities.

For the complete report and full list of coalition members, download *A Housing Benefit for Ontario: One Housing Solution for a Poverty Reduction Strategy* at www.dailybread.ca.

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