



For Immediate Release

April 3, 2012

Attention: News Editors/Assignment Desk/Social Issue Reporters

Critical shortage of baby formula at area food banks spurs Hamilton community to action... *But where's the Provincial Government?*

Hamilton, Tuesday, April 3, 2012: As Hamilton Food Share loaded bulk purchases of baby formula and other staples for distribution to city wide emergency food programs in time for Easter: representatives from local area food banks and the Poverty Roundtable gathered together in Hamilton Food Share's warehouse to spur the Hamilton Community to action after the release of the provincial budget. "The Ontario budget will deepen the crises facing many hungry children and adults in Hamilton," stated Tom Cooper, Director of the Poverty Roundtable for Poverty Reduction. Hamilton area food banks have been struggling as hunger grows in Hamilton in 2012. "Many emergency food programs across the City have been reporting a significant increase in need – particularly for infant baby formula. Since March 2008 to March 2011 access to our local food banks increased 36.9%," stated Hamilton Food Share's Executive Director, Joanne Santucci. "When is there going to be relief for the hungry in our community? The provincial government's budget has turned its back on the poor, making welfare recipients, the people on disability pensions and our poorest and smallest of citizens -children- pay the price for Ontario's deficit. This budget means more children will go to bed hungry with the bonus of being at extreme risk of homelessness," said Santucci.

In a report due out in June, over 485 low income households were surveyed and 71% said that without support from the local food banks they would be homeless. According to Food Share's 2011 Hunger Count, 75% of all individuals and families going to local food banks are in receipt of Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program. As well, the Christmas Hamper program in 2011 assisted a record number of 36,602 people, up 12.9% over the 2010.

Generous community donors and Hamilton Food Share have answered the immediate call, but hunger remains real for many Hamiltonians – particularly those in receipt of provincial social assistance benefits "These supplies will help right now but it is only going to last a very short time on the shelf," says Santucci. The number of people in need of help at our local food banks is up 14% this February from the same time last year. Hamilton Food Share and area food banks are asking their local community to help this Easter by making a financial gift or contribute a bag of nonperishable items.

Representatives from Hamilton Food Share, local emergency food programs and the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction are gravely concerned that ***the recent Ontario budget will intensify pressure for emergency food services for the entire community.***

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For more information contact:

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Hunger in Hamilton

- **18,432 people per month turn to a food bank**
- **8,526 (46%) are children under the age of 18**
- **32% are Single**
- **10% are couples with no children**
- **42% are single parent families**
- **16% are dual parent families**

For more information please contact Rachel O'Reilly at Hamilton Food Share (905) 664-9065 or Tom Cooper at the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction 905-512-7863

Quick Facts on Social Assistance in Hamilton:

- In January, 2012 more than 59,000 children, women and men in Hamilton lived in households in receipt of either Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program.
- According to Hamilton Food Share, 75% of all food bank users receive their main source of income from Ontario social assistance benefits
- A single individual on Ontario Works receives approximately \$599 a month in social assistance benefits. Average Rent for a Bachelor Apartment in Hamilton is \$510 / A nutritious food basket for a single person according to the City's Public Health Department is \$240.78 putting recipients \$115.78 in the hole and unable to purchase other necessities such as household or personal supplies, clothing or a telephone services to conduct a 'job search'.
- The Poverty Roundtable has endorsed the work of lawyer Craig Foye of Hamilton Community Legal Clinic to develop an evidence-based system for setting social assistance rates that reflects the real costs of living in Ontario communities. For more information on social assistance reform please go to www.hamiltonpoverty.ca

About Hamilton Food Share

Hamilton Food Share's purpose is to increase our community's capacity to reduce hunger. We do this by supplying much needed food supplies and short-term storage to food banks and hot meal programs. Additionally, our organization establishes community partnerships, donor relations and fundraising activities that support our food recovery operation.

Our support is vital as the resources allocated by Hamilton Food Share defray costs for the emergency food programs and redirect these savings to other program areas. The second purpose of our organization is to work collaboratively across every sector of the community to bring about awareness of hunger, its root causes and the impact it creates for people in need. For more information on Hamilton Food Share go to our website at www.hamiltonfoodshare.org or call us at 905-664-9065

About the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction focuses on the need to invest in poverty reduction to create a healthier, inclusive, more prosperous Hamilton. Roundtable members work to influence change at all levels of government through a community aspiration: to Make Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child. The Roundtable is financially supported by the Hamilton Community Foundation, the City of Hamilton, the J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and individual donors. HRPR participates in a network with other communities across Canada through 'Vibrant Communities Canada'

The Roundtable's Action Plan is available at www.hamiltonpoverty.ca