



February 1, 2021

**By Fax Only**

Hon. Raymond Sung Joon Cho  
Unit B 4559 Sheppard Avenue East  
Toronto, Ontario M1S 1V3

Hon. Prabmeet Singh Sarkaria  
Unit 412A, 7700 Hurontario Street  
Brampton, Ontario L6Y 4M3

Dear Ministers:

In the midst of our global pandemic, social assistance recipients are experiencing a rise in food prices and a static rate of social assistance--no increase since 2018. This is a continuation of a gradual downward slide in the value of social assistance, beginning with a drastic cut in 1995. The attached Chart illustrates how the buying power has continued to sink over the years, because of minimal or no annual increases to match inflation.

We all realize that the pandemic has been intensified by the living conditions of low-income people: they are forced to live in crowded accommodation, use public transit, and go to food banks to supplement their diet. Their health was already compromised by inadequate nutrition before the pandemic, and their communities have the highest levels of Covid-19 infections and deaths. Their children are being forced to spend more time at home, missing school programs, such as food, that provide a safety net for families who are struggling to feed their children.

The federal government's response to the pandemic set \$2,000 per month as a 'basic income' for people who have lost their jobs. This should also be a target for social assistance recipients, instead of the current \$733 (OW) and \$1,169.00 (ODSP).

Another reason for increasing social assistance is the cost of poverty in Ontario. A study by Feed Ontario (formerly the Ont. Assoc. of Food Banks) estimated that the annual cost of poverty in Ontario is between \$27.1 and \$33 billion: these costs come from loss of tax revenue, and increased expenses in the health and justice systems (Feed Ontario. The Cost of Poverty in Ontario 2019, p.4).

Sincerely,

*Omar Ha-Redeye*

Omar Ha-Redeye  
Executive Director  
Durham Community Legal Clinic & Access to Justice Hub

OH/ja

CC: Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy – Minister of Finance, MPP Pickering-Uxbridge  
Rod Phillips – MPP Ajax  
Lorne Coe – MPP Whitby  
Jennifer French – MPP Oshawa  
Lindsey Park – MPP Durham

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# Ontario Works and ODSP Rates, Adjusted for Inflation -- 1993 to 2021 1993=100

Note: Fall 2016 OW increase reflects \$25 increase in the minimum single benefit (3.67%) not the 1.5% general increase)

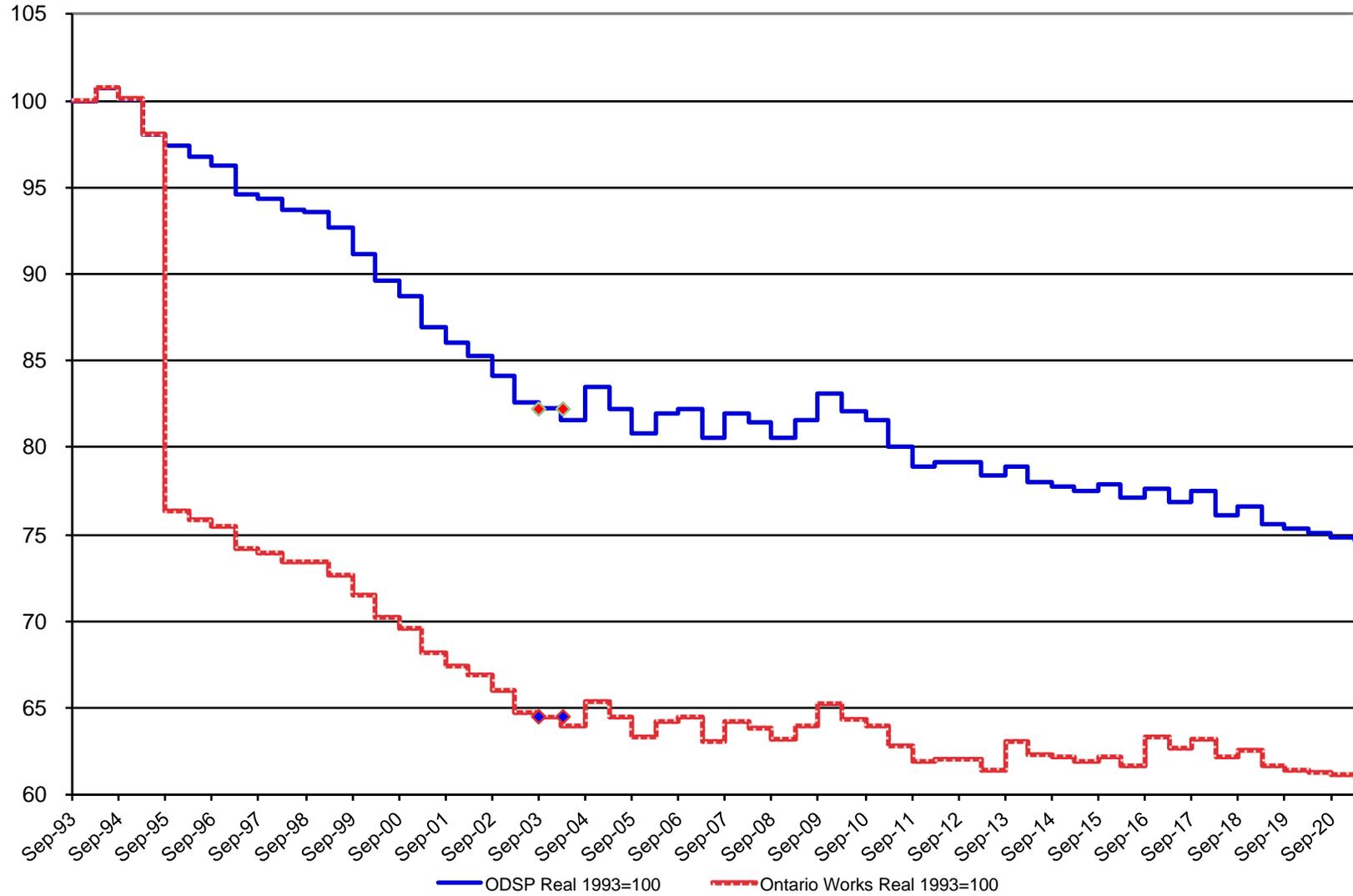


Chart by Hugh Mackenzie, Research Assistant, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.