

Moms are not OK: The 'new normal' and inflation is crushing us ^[1]

To support local moms in crisis, we need an urgent and appropriate increase in wages, family supports and social assistance rates.

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EXCERPTS

Facing a painfully long global health crisis along with increasing financial and social challenges over these past two years has not been easy. Most of us have been forced to find creative ways to keep our heads above water, avoid or overcome sickness, keep our sources of income, and on top of all that, support ourselves and our families during a financial crisis.

I have seen first-hand how mothers bear the brunt of this weight in our community. I am both a mom and front-line worker supporting low-income new and expecting moms at The Stop Community Food Centre. The mid-sized non-profit provides emergency food access, community building programs and urban agriculture. This work is important, and to me supporting moms is a personal commitment since, like them, I was in a vulnerable situation when I was expecting my youngest child.

I understand the feelings and the struggles many families in vulnerable conditions are experiencing. Like many other moms, I am overwhelmed by the extra work hours I need to put in weekly (thank you inflation) to earn the money that will provide what my family needs. I see the detrimental impacts of our current environment on the moms we serve.

The so-called "new normal" has a lot to do with a systemic lack of empathetic, committed and conscious leadership promoting personal and financial empowerment for individuals and families.

Working multiple jobs while raising children is a huge challenge in itself. On top of that, finding decent paying jobs with decent working conditions, as well as affordable child care, has become a living nightmare for Ontario moms.

Families regularly need to find ways of supplementing the income they have (or in some cases, used to have). Moms who access The Stop's services find their income falling short and their families falling through the cracks. We know how crucial the social and financial support provided by governmental and non-governmental organizations, agencies, and charities is; especially in Toronto, where the cost of living has gone from expensive to largely unaffordable.

Supporting families experiencing poverty is why The Stop exists. We provide fresh food hampers to the moms in our program, along with diapers, lactation consultants, personal support, food vouchers and community building. Moms in our program know there is always another mom willing to support her.

However, these are stopgap solutions to systemic issues. Minimum wages, social assistance rates and working conditions in Ontario are unsustainable and moms are paying the price. I have watched as Ontario has slipped into a system that has very little respect and regard for people living in poverty or with a disability.

To support local moms in crisis, we need an urgent and appropriate increase in wages, family supports and social assistance rates. This is a critically important moment to create and strengthen partnerships with both governmental and community organizations. We must treat poverty with urgency, because our moms are not OK, and that should worry us all.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: Women ^[4]

wages ^[5]

poverty ^[6]

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