November 17, 2008

His Worship Fred Eisenberger
Mayor
City of Hamilton
230-77 James Street North
Hamilton City Centre
Hamilton, Ontario
L8R 2K3

Dear Mayor Eisenberger:

Thank you for your letter regarding the 2008 Nutritious Food Basket Report for Hamilton. I appreciate your keeping me updated on council’s activities.

Be assured that our government will continue to do everything we can to help struggling families and to provide our children with opportunities for success. That is why, by the end of 2008, our government will deliver a comprehensive, long-term poverty reduction strategy, including targets and indicators. Our first focus of investment will be on child poverty, specifically ensuring that we break the cycle of poverty and give all of our children a chance at long-term success. Our poverty reduction strategy is not only the right thing to do, it is critical for our future economic success. Ontario needs all of its citizens to be strong if we want to compete in the global economy. We cannot afford to let anyone fall behind.

This strategy will build on the progress we have made. You may be aware that our government announced four important steps this year to help Ontarians reach their full potential while we work to complete our poverty reduction strategy. An important component of this initiative is our plan to provide dental benefits to hard-working low-income families. Over and above that, we will invest an additional $32 million over three years — more than double current annual funding — in the Student Nutrition Program, which provides nutritious meals and snacks to children and youth in schools and community settings across the province. We will also provide $100 million to municipalities to repair existing social housing stock — helping nearly 10,000 Ontarians by fixing about 4,000 units. Finally, we have invested $5 million in rent banks, which help save low-income tenants and their families from eviction by providing up to two months’ rent payments directly to landlords. This brings our total investment in rent banks to over $23 million, and will help build on the more than 13,000 evictions already prevented through this program.
These investments are in addition to several other measures that already contribute to poverty reduction, including the Ontario Child Benefit, which will support nearly 1.3 million children under the age of 18 in low-income families with up to $1,100 by 2011, and raising the hourly minimum wage to $10.25 by 2010.

I note that you have also informed several of my Cabinet colleagues of this resolution. I trust that the ministers will also take council's views into consideration.

Thank you again for the information. Please accept my best wishes.

Yours truly,

[Signature]

Dalton McGuinty
Premier

c: The Honourable Madeleine Meilleur
   The Honourable Deb Matthews