

You and your religious community are invited:

Raise the Rates Interfaith Fast

For many years, ISARC (Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition) has monitored the level of social assistance support provided to vulnerable Ontarians who are unemployed, underemployed or living with disabilities.

Most recently, in its fifth cross province consultation (2020) listening to stories and asking for recommendations from people living with poverty, ISARC heard yet again that social assistance rates are abysmally low, and that with no increase in social assistance rates since 2018, program recipients are worse off than ever.

A single adult on OW (Ontario Works) has a monthly income of \$733, which amounts to only 56% of the deep poverty threshold.

ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Programs), designed for those who have barriers to employment, provides only a slightly higher income level. In June 2022, the current Ontario Government committed to raising ODSP rates by 5%.

The “social safety net,” as it is referred to, is supposed to provide the means by which someone can provide basic food and shelter for themselves and their family and live as a member of the community. Yet, it is estimated that more than 900,000 Ontarians seek to survive on social assistance incomes that leave them in deep poverty. Many of them are children.

We invite you to join us for our Raise The Rates Interfaith Fast - an intentional time of prayer and fasting between **Monday, November 14 and Friday, November 18**. Justice, equity, and compassion are at the heart of many faiths, and it’s important for us as an interfaith community to support our most vulnerable neighbours.

This event will lead into our annual **Religious Leader’s Forum on Wednesday, November 23**, with a focus on the importance of raising social assistance rates for those who survive by relying on these incomes.

Raise The Rates Interfaith Fast

Participation Guide

Why

- To raise consciousness about the deplorable levels of social assistance rates
- To connect us as an interfaith community across Ontario and create the solidarity of an interfaith initiative undertaken together.

When

The fasting or “restricted diet” period will be between **Monday November 14 to Friday November 18.**

Participation as an individual

1. Indicate your participation by clicking [here](#), anytime.
2. Pick a specific fast day or participate all week.
3. Choose a fasting or food reduction option:
 - Reduce your food consumption to align with the amount a person on social assistance would receive for food - approximately \$47.50 per week or \$6.79 per day.
 - Choose a restricted diet - ie. eat only one meal a day or skip breakfast or lunch.
 - If you are not able to fast, you can participate in other ways such as praying and reflecting on this topic, and/or taking the additional actions below.
4. Read the daily reflection in your email or on [ISARC’s facebook page](#).

Additional actions

- Send a letter to the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services. You can access the template [here](#) or see the attached word document.
- Share this initiative on social media.
- Contribute to a program that addresses food or income insecurity.

[Click here to sign up as an individual for the fast](#)

Participation for religious leaders and communities

1. Indicate your community's participation by clicking [here](#), anytime.
2. Promote this initiative and your community's participation on your own website and social media. Please refer your members and followers to the information in this email.
3. [Optional] Contribute a prayer, spiritual reading, or reflective thought drawn from your tradition to inspire participants. A paragraph or two is great. Click [here](#) to submit your reflection. **Please submit your prayer by Friday November 4.**
A prayer/reflection will be posted daily on ISARC's website and [Facebook page](#).
4. Encourage your members to save the date for our **Religious Leaders Forum on November 23** from 9:30am-12:30pm on zoom. The forum will include a post-fast reflection and discussion at approximately 11:30am (exact time to be confirmed). This will be an opportunity to hear from other participants about their experiences and share your own. **Official invitations to the forum will be sent to those who register for the fast.**

[Click Here to sign up your community for the fast](#)