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### Let's "Do the Math Challenge"

Dear CUPE Sisters and Brothers,

Next week, I am supporting the objectives of the Put Food in the Budget Campaign, by participating in the "Do the Math Challenge" with a wide range of community leaders and concerned citizens across Ontario.

Coming out of our 2010 Provincial Convention, our Action Plan calls on CUPE Ontario to continue our campaign to combat poverty in this province. In response to the 2010 Provincial Budget -- where the McGuinty government cut the Special Diet Benefit which provides people on social assistance up to \$250/month for healthy food -- delegates also passed a motion to actively support campaigns to raise social assistance to the levels that actually support the people who need help.

The numbers are startling. As the Emergency Resolution to our Convention pointed out, 40% of the approximately 700,000 Ontarians living on social assistance are children. As many CUPE members working in our social services sector will tell you, the basic amount of \$585 a month for a single person means too many Ontarians are relying on food banks as their only source for food, as all their assistance goes towards housing.

The "Do the Math Challenge" offers the opportunity to make those numbers a reality, by challenging participants to live on the contents of a typical food bank hamper for one week.

The economic crisis has led to anger in our communities and it is an anger that right wing politicians at all levels at all levels of government are seizing on. Just look at the municipal election debates going on right now across this province, where some politicians are racing each other to cut vital public services and sell off public assets we've built over generations. Just look at the provincial government who loudly proclaims long-term caregivers making \$35,000 a year should take wage freezes for two years while continuing to let for-profit corporations get away with not providing standard hours of care for patients.

Well, I'm angry too. I am angry that the provincial government in the 2010 Budget cut the \$200 million needed for the Special Diet as they gave away \$4.6 billion dollars in new tax cuts to profitable corporations.

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**Fred Hahn**  
President

**ONE STRONG VOICE**

**Candace Rennick**  
Secretary-Treasurer

For me, the “Do the Math Challenge” is a way to put numbers into reality. While we struggle to ensure dignity and a living wage for our members, others in our communities are struggling just to eat. To show solidarity with that struggle and to better understand its harsh realities, next week I will “Do the Math Challenge” and write about my experience, posting it on the CUPE Ontario website. The guidelines for this challenge are posted on our website as well and I hope you will consider joining and challenging other members of your local to do so as well.

In solidarity,



Fred Hahn  
President

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