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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

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Food Banks in Crisis

Mr. Jeff Burch: I received a letter this month from Bart Coleman, Pastor of St. Matthew's Lutheran in Welland, and First Lutheran in Port Colborne, highlighting the staggering number of people using food banks in Niagara. They wanted to know what the government was doing to address this crisis. I had no answer for them. Food banks receive very little government support. They depend on charity and are barely hanging on these days.

Jon Braithwaite, CEO of the Hope Centre in Welland, will tell you they continue to see a steady increase in clients. He also noted 2,364 Wallander's used their food bank for the very first-time last year. They struggle to ensure they have enough food on the shelves and cannot keep up with the demand.

With social assistance rates remaining well below the poverty line, this government continues to legislate poverty in Niagara and across Ontario.

Christine Clark Lafleur is the CEO of Port Cares in Port Colborne. She says that food banks like Port Cares are seeing families that used to donate food now have become clients. While food banks are on the brink of collapse and cannot keep pace with the growing need in our communities, this government is handing over billion dollars to corporations in order to put beer in corner stores one year earlier than it was already scheduled to happen. What a cruel and twisted sense of priorities. What a slap in the face to those who are on social assistance as well as those who work every day to help feed hungry families in our communities.

Let's hope this government rethinks its priorities. How can you trust a government that puts early access to beer in corner stores ahead of access to food and shelter for its poorest citizens?
