



A VISION FOR ESURIO: CHANGE THE WORLD WITH WORDS

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Introduction

The Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB) is very proud to launch Esurio. It required a great deal of time, effort and enthusiasm to turn a good idea on paper into a great online initiative. As the publisher for this new journal, we believe that it is important to outline our vision for this exciting endeavour.

The basic expression of our vision can be found in a very simple place.

I stumbled upon this expression during a fall stroll on Yonge Street while cataloguing the terrible and terrific sights of the street with my trusty digital camera:

Change the world with words.

These words were boldly scrawled in blue and white spray paint on the red brick exterior of a stout building near the Summerhill subway station. The words were not visible from the street; they could only be viewed by those adventurous enough to wander into the dodgy and slightly overgrown parking lot, uncomfortably located beside the carefully manicured lawns of a local cemetery.

I am not in the habit of believing everything I read that has been hastily drawn on the back of strange buildings, and the words could have been pulled from a clichéd book of quotable quotes. This should not lessen the value of the statement. These five words painted carefully together have a great deal of power and meaning. They do not offer advice or opinion. They do not pose a question. These five words are an imperative. They issue a command and a call to action.

This journal takes up this call, and issues this imperative to others. We know that we can change the world with words. Our journal will be the repository for those words.

Our Mission

Beyond its fundamental vision, we believe that Esurio has a very specific mission. It is an ambitious experiment with at least five focus areas and achievable aims: knowledge creation, knowledge capture and sharing, preparation, connectivity, and policy change.

Knowledge creation: We can build a base of knowledge in existing or emerging areas of research on hunger and poverty that require examination and discussion. There are many current and emerging areas of research that require thoughtful examination by bright young minds. We have developed a comprehensive suite of focus areas related to hunger and poverty, including food security, energy poverty, poverty and place, poverty and education, social enterprise, financial exclusion, poverty and health, and poverty and public policy. It is necessary to build the base of knowledge in these areas so that we can more fully comprehend the characteristics, causes, consequences and solutions related to hunger and poverty in Ontario. We are particularly fortunate that our founding supporter has a genuine interest in energy poverty, and we will look forward to generating discussion and research on this emerging topic as we move forward.

Knowledge capture and sharing: We can capture and share knowledge on hunger and poverty. Students, policy experts, and leading thinkers are already engaged in research on the focus areas of the journal. This research may include course papers or limited release or unpublished journal articles by graduate and undergraduate students. *Esurio* will be a tool to capture and share this knowledge with those inside and outside of our little world. It will also help to stitch together these apparently disconnected areas of research, from financial exclusion to energy poverty, into a single space. As an open source journal, it will be universally accessible: *Esurio* is free for all those who can access the Internet. Readers and contributors may also use the journal as a forum for exchanging knowledge and discussing controversial or emerging ideas related to hunger and poverty.

Connectivity: We can create meaningful connections between the academy, community, and students who are interested and engaged in work on hunger and poverty. There can be a lot of distance between what happens on the front line and what happens in the classroom. Beyond its role as a medium for knowledge creation, capture and sharing, *Esurio* will also be a platform for university researchers, front line agencies, and students to connect. These connections will be made directly through the articles themselves, which are encouraged to demonstrate collaboration between the community and academy, as well as through the individual contributions of a diverse array of invited contributions by community experts and articles by students.

Preparation: We can prepare the next generation of thinkers and doers to be thoughtful agents for change by engaging them in learning and research. We hope that *Esurio* will not just build a base of general knowledge and a community of learners. *Esurio* will help prepare the next generation of researchers, engage emerging minds in issues related to hunger and poverty. We hope that this will direct and prepare students for related careers in academia, in the related non-profit sector, or even both. In this way and others, *Esurio* is also a learning process itself. Through a form of focused and ongoing academic boot camp for reviewers and contributors, students will engage in the research and review process as a community of scholars. It is also vital that these students have the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in this process, as they manage and set direction for this publication moving forward.

Policy change. We can influence public policy with detailed and well-supported research. Our final mission area is related to our overall vision for the publication: policy change. There is a strong desire for articles featured in *Esurio* to include well-supported research outlining the challenges in a particular sphere, alongside related policy solutions that will help reduce hunger and poverty. We know that we can influence public policy with our research. We have proven success with this in the past. We believe that the articles included in *Esurio* will also be able to influence public policy, demonstrating the power that these words can have to change a small part of the world.

Looking Ahead

Although *Esurio* is expected to evolve significantly, we hope that within a few years this journal will become a widely respected source of knowledge on hunger and poverty, create strong connections from the front line to the classroom, and generate people and policies that will have a positive impact on the world around us.

It may seem unusual that a food bank association is launching an academic journal. But the ultimate aim of the journal aligns with our overall vision for a hunger-free Ontario.

Our diligent pursuit of this aim is particularly important now.

We are beginning this endeavour at a time of severe economic hardship and uncertainty. Tens of thousands more Ontarians have been forced to turn to food banks in the past year alone. Thousands more may find themselves in similar circumstances in the months ahead.

We cannot be expected to bear the burden of these troubling times merely through the provision of food. We will also not wrest ourselves from the depths of an economic downturn solely with political rhetoric or available funds.

It is at these times more than ever that we must rely on our ingenuity, our minds, and thoughtful consideration of what must be done in order to protect our neighbours and return our economy to better health. Our recovery will be dependent on the power of good ideas and the strong and supported words that we are able to gather together to advance them. The new order that continually emerges will be shaped by the words we use today.

I hope that you will join us in our endeavour.