



April 20, 2016

Dear Put Food in the Budget

We read with great interest your recent report *Food Banks Are Not Enough!* The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) agrees: food banks are not enough. OSNPPH would like to take this opportunity to commend your organization on your report and share with you our own Position Statement released in November 2015 which identifies many of the same issues.

In particular OSNPPH is in agreement with the statement in *Food Banks Are Not Enough!* that food charity does not meet people's daily needs for nutritious food. The OSNPPH [Position Statement on Responses to Food Insecurity](#) discusses the constraints under which food banks operate and the supply limitations which prevent food banks from meeting people's food preferences, religious restrictions and nutritional or health-related dietary requirements.

Like the Put Food in the Budget campaign, OSNPPH believes that food charity does not address the root cause of food insecurity, which is poverty, and that an income response is required to effectively address food insecurity. The responses identified in the *Food Banks Are Not Enough!* report about raising social assistance rates, raising the minimum wage, and creating affordable housing, are consistent with recommendations OSNPPH has developed for members to use in their local advocacy using Nutritious Food Basket costing data, calculated annually by public health dietitians.

In particular, OSNPPH calls on the provincial government to increase social assistance rates immediately to reflect the actual costs of nutritious food and adequate housing as informed by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's Nutritious Food Basket survey and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Rental Income (Ontario) reports. As well, social assistance rates need to be indexed to inflation to keep up with the cost of living.

In 2013, 57.5% of Ontario food insecure households had wages or salaries as their main source of income.<sup>1</sup> In other words, working for a living is not providing a living for many Ontario households. While not all people in food insecure households relying on wages were working for minimum wage, OSNPPH recognizes that increasing the minimum wage is a good first step to reducing food insecurity for some of Ontario's most impoverished working families.

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<sup>1</sup> Tarasuk, V, Mitchell, A, Dachner, N. (2015). Household food insecurity in Canada, 2013. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <http://nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca/>



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When local housing and Nutritious Food Basket costs are compared to average incomes, the data show that many individuals and families living on a limited income do not have adequate funds to purchase nutritious food on a consistent basis. Therefore creating affordable housing, as indicated in the *Food Banks Are Not Enough!* report, would help to reduce the financial constraints that lead to food insecurity in low income households.

OSNPPH is the independent and official voice of Registered Dietitians working in Ontario's public health system. OSNPPH provides leadership in public health nutrition by promoting and supporting evidence-based nutrition information to enable healthy eating at every stage of life. This is done through advocacy, supporting the creation of healthier eating environments, and implementing nutrition education and skill building programs.

OSNPPH commends Put Food in the Budget on its important work. For more information on OSNPPH's *Position Statement on Responses to Food Insecurity* or on this letter, please contact Mary Ellen Prange at [MaryEllen.Prange@hamilton.ca](mailto:MaryEllen.Prange@hamilton.ca).

Sincerely

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