

April 20, 2016

The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park
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The Honourable Deb Matthews, Deputy Premier of Ontario and Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy
Room 4320, 4th Floor, Whitney Block
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The Honourable Dr. Helena Jaczek, Minister of Community and Social Services
6th Floor, Hepburn Block
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Dear Premier Wynne, Deputy Premier Matthews and Minister Jaczek:

On November 26, 2015, the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) released our [Position Statement on Responses to Food Insecurity](#). To date, more than 100 organizations and individuals have [endorsed](#) our Position. Some of these organizations have declared their endorsement of our Position in correspondence to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

OSNPPH is the independent and official voice of Registered Dietitians working in Ontario's public health system. Our members are mandated by the [Ontario Public Health Standards](#) (OPHS) to provide healthy eating expertise on programs and services that aim to support healthy growth and development and reduce chronic diseases. One of the requirements of the OPHS is to, "monitor food affordability in accordance with the Nutritious Food Basket Protocol" (OPHS, p. 28).

OSNPPH members apply the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket and average rental housing costs to various family composition and income scenarios in both Northern and non-Northern jurisdictions. Year after year, our analyses clearly indicate that families and individuals who have minimum wage incomes or receive social assistance do not have enough money to cover the basic costs of living. When their income is too low, people are forced to choose between paying rent and other expenses, including nutritious food. Income-related barriers to accessing adequate amounts of nutritious food are barriers to good health and predictably lead to the need for health care.

According to data from the Canadian Community Health Survey reported in [Household Food Insecurity in Canada 2013](#), 624,200 households (12.5%) or 1.6 million people in Ontario in 2013 experienced some degree of food insecurity, defined as worrying about running out of food (marginal food insecurity), compromising quantity or quality of food consumed (moderate food insecurity), or reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns due to lack of food (severe food insecurity). For almost 10% of Ontario households, the food insecurity situation was moderate or severe in 2013. The prevalence of food insecurity in Ontario in 2013 was the highest since consistent monitoring of food insecurity in Canada began in 2005.


As demonstrated in our Position Statement, the primary community response to food insecurity – food charity – is an ineffective and counterproductive response to food insecurity because it does not address the root cause which is poverty. While food charity may help to relieve immediate hunger in those who seek assistance, food insecurity persists. To effectively address food insecurity, income responses are required.

OSNPPH joins other health associations and coalitions, including the Canadian Medical Association, Canadian Public Health Association, Health Providers Against Poverty, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies and the Ontario Public Health Association in support of joint federal/provincial investigation into a basic income guarantee. We believe that a basic income guarantee has strong potential as part of a multi-pronged approach to reduce poverty and income inequality.

OSNPPH is encouraged by the recent announcement in the 2016 Ontario Budget of a basic income pilot. We urge prompt action given existing evidence of the positive outcomes reported by Dr. Evelyn Forget from the [Mincome pilot](#) in Manitoba.

The Ontario Liberal government has the opportunity to lead on social policy reforms that could truly diminish poverty and make Ontario a model for the rest of Canada and world-wide. OSNPPH looks forward to following Ontario's progress on this vital initiative.

Sincerely,



Evelyn Vaccari, RD
Co-Chair, OSNPPH



Mary Ellen Prange, RD
OSNPPH Food Security Workgroup

cc. The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
The Honourable Jane Philpott, Minister of Health
The Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Ian Culbert, Executive Director, Canadian Public Health Association
Dr. Andrew Pinto, Chair Health Providers Against Poverty-Ontario
Dr. Miriam Klassen, Chair, Council of Ontario Medical Officers of Health
Dr. Valerie Jaeger, President, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Linda Stewart, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Pegeen Walsh, Executive Director, Ontario Public Health Association