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Minister Responsible for the  
Poverty Reduction Strategy

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**JUN 13 2016**

Ms. Evelyn Vaccari  
Co-Chair

Ms. Mary Ellen Prange

Food Security Workgroup

Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health

[info@osnpph.on.ca](mailto:info@osnpph.on.ca)

*Evelyn + Mary Ellen*  
Dear Mesdames Vaccari and Prange:

Thank you for your letter of April 20, 2016, regarding food insecurity. The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier, also wrote on your behalf.

In your letter, you raised the issue of income security as being a key element of providing food security to Ontarians. As you may know, moving towards employment and income security is one of the pillars of our second Poverty Reduction Strategy, Realizing Our Potential. As such, it is a priority area for this government.

As you've noted, in the 2016 Ontario Budget we announced that we will be evaluating a Basic Income pilot project. We're excited to work with communities, researchers, and other stakeholders in 2016 to determine how best to design and implement the project.

The pilot project will test whether a basic income could provide more consistent and predictable support in the context of today's dynamic labour market. It would also test whether a basic income would provide a more efficient way of delivering income support, strengthen the attachment to the labour force, and achieve savings in other areas, such as health care and housing supports.

I would add that the Basic Income Pilot project is just one of the ways that our government is supporting income security.

As the cornerstone of Ontario's first poverty reduction strategy, the Ontario Child Benefit supports children in low- to moderate-income families. As of July 2015, we indexed the Ontario Child Benefit to annual increases in the Ontario Consumer Price Index. The maximum benefit rose to \$1,336 per child, and has more than doubled since it was introduced in 2008.

In November 2014, the *Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act, 2014* received Royal Assent. The new act increases protections for vulnerable workers and ties future minimum wage increases to the Consumer Price Index for Ontario. Accordingly, Ontario's general minimum wage rose to \$11.25 in October 2015.

We have also made progress in reforming the social assistance system over the past several years with important first steps to improve incomes, promote better employment outcomes, and increase fairness. In 2016, our government will build on our previous investments in social assistance by:

- increasing social assistance rates by 1.5 per cent for adults receiving Ontario Works and people with disabilities relying on the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP); and
- providing a further top-up to those with the lowest social assistance rates — singles without children receiving Ontario Works — bringing their total increase to \$25 per month, which is \$100 more per month than they received in 2012.

These rate increases will take effect in September 2016 for ODSP and in October 2016 for Ontario Works. Over the next year, we will introduce changes so families receiving social assistance who receive child support payments can benefit from more of this income.

We also welcome the new federal government's announcement of a Canadian poverty reduction strategy and the proposed Canada Child Benefit. Ontario ministers have already spoken with their federal counterparts to ensure we work together to boost efforts to reduce poverty.

Through these and other initiatives, we aim to improve income security and provide the basis for all Ontarians to lead prosperous and fulfilling lives. I appreciate you taking the time to share the concerns and opinions of the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health. I will keep them in mind as we move forward with our plans and work to make Ontario a place where everyone can realize their potential.

Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely,



Deb Matthews  
Deputy Premier  
President of the Treasury Board  
Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy

c: The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Premier