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Ms. Namrata Bains
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Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
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Dear Ms. Ho and Ms. Bains

[Ontario Dietitians in Public Health](#) (ODPH), the independent and official voice of Registered Dietitians working in Ontario's public health system, is writing to urge the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Local Health Integration Networks to recommend the Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) as one of the priority modules for the 2019-20 cycle of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS).

The HFSSM has facilitated systematic assessment of household food insecurity (HFI) in Canada since 2004 and has been included as core content on the 2007-08, 2011-12 and 2017-18 cycles of CCHS. In the intervening years, however, administration of the HFSSM has been left to the decision of provincial/territorial governments. Ontario was one of three provinces/territories that did not measure HFI in the 2015-16 cycle of CCHS. As a result, Ontario Public Health Units did not have access to provincial and local HFI data for that cycle, nor was it possible to accurately estimate the prevalence of HFI nationally for those years. This gap in data impedes research on food insecurity and understanding of the impacts of income-related policies such as changes in federal and provincial child tax benefits on food insecurity.

Regular and consistent monitoring of HFI is fundamental to population health research and evidence-based policy decision-making at all levels of government. Besides local public health units, researchers such as [PROOF](#) rely on these data. For example, using the CCHS HFSSM data, researchers have found that total health care costs were 23% to 121% higher for individuals in food insecure households, depending on level of food insecurity, compared to food secure households. The study showed that household food insecurity was a strong predictor of health care costs, independent of other social determinants of health.

Researchers have also found that households experiencing food insecurity are sensitive to changes in income, i.e. income and employment changes within households are associated with fluctuations in severity of food insecurity. This has also been observed among low-income older adults where food insecurity rates fall by half between the ages of 60-64 and 65-69, primarily as a result of federal public pensions.

ODPH recommends that the HFSSM become a core module of the CCHS, whereby provinces and territories cannot opt-out. More immediately, for the 2019-2020 cycle, ODPH recommends that the Household Food Security Survey Module be one of the priority modules. We urge MOHLTC and LHINs to support our recommendations.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Erin Salewski".

Erin Salewski, RD
Co-Chair ODPH

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mary Ellen Prange".

Mary Ellen Prange, RD
Co-Chair ODPH Food Insecurity Workgroup