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Sent: Wednesday, January 23, 2019 2:00 PM

To: executive@odph.ca

Subject: Your concerns regarding the Province of Ontario's decision to end the Basic Income Pilot

Dear Ms. Lakusiak and co-signatories:

I am responding to your correspondence of October 5, 2018, in which you conveyed your concerns regarding the Province of Ontario's decision to end the Basic Income Pilot. I, too, am concerned about this decision. I regret the delay in replying.

Since the pilot's introduction in 2016, I have been clear and consistent in saying that the Ontario Basic Income Pilot was a positive development and that I was looking forward to reviewing the results of the program. I am disappointed that social development policies in Ontario and across Canada will not benefit from a completed pilot and from the associated data. I am also deeply concerned that some pilot participants may have been made more vulnerable as a result of the pilot's premature cancellation.

That being said, it is important to acknowledge that it is up to the provinces to make decisions around the design of their social assistance systems and policies. Investments made under Opportunity for All – Canada's First Poverty Reduction Strategy, which was announced in August 2018, seek to address many of the challenges that some pilot participants may be facing.

I am proud to say that we have already implemented several measures to support the objectives of the Strategy, which sets ambitious and concrete targets for poverty reduction. We aim to reduce poverty by 20 percent by 2020, and by 50 percent by 2030, according to the new Official Poverty Line. This year, the Government announced planned investments of nearly \$10 billion in new spending in support of poverty reduction. The federal government has invested \$22 billion over the 2016-2017 to 2018-2019 period, and we have also committed new investments of over \$12 billion for 2019-2020.

You will be pleased to know that, by design, many of our new initiatives act as a basic income for specific groups, like families, seniors, and low-income Canadians working hard to join the middle class. This includes the Canada Child Benefit (CCB), which provides substantial income support to families raising children. The CCB is tax-free, based on income, and provides more support to families who need help the most. The CCB helps almost 3.7 million families and over 6.5 million children, putting nearly \$24 billion annually, tax-free, in the hands of families. The CCB has helped to lift over half a million individuals, which includes about 300,000 children, out of poverty. In Ontario, there were almost 1.4 million families receiving the CCB during the 2017-2018 benefit year, representing almost 2.5 million children. The average monthly CCB paid to these families was approximately \$540 during this period.

For Canadians in their senior years, the Old Age Security (OAS) program plays a significant role in providing income security. OAS pensioners who receive little or no income, other than the OAS pension, are also eligible for additional assistance through the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). The GIS is income tested to ensure that this additional assistance is provided

to seniors most in need. In July 2016, the Government of Canada increased the GIS by up to \$947 annually for the lowest-income single seniors. This increase to the GIS represents an investment of \$670 million per year and improves the financial security of close to 900,000 vulnerable seniors across Canada.

As you mentioned, food insecurity will be tracked as an indicator of progress in poverty reduction as part of Opportunity for All. As part of the data and measurement plan for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the 18 questions related to food security will now be collected annually through the Canadian Income Survey starting in 2018. You may want to share your organization's experience regarding data collected by the Canadian Income Survey with Statistics Canada directly. Please contact Ms. Tracey Leesti, Director of the Income Statistics Division at Statistics Canada at 613-951-5693 or by email at tracey.leesti@canada.ca.

As you may also know, a food policy for Canada is under development and led by the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay. It will set a long-term vision for the health, environmental, social, and economic goals related to food, while identifying actions that the Government can take in the short-term. This food policy will potentially capture a wide range of food-related issues, including food security, health and food safety, environment, and economic growth. To learn more about Canada's food policy, please visit www.canada.ca/en/campaign/food-policy.html.

The federal government, guided by the Opportunity for All strategy, remains committed to reduce poverty, working with all partners, including the provinces and territories, municipalities, Indigenous peoples, community groups, academics, social innovators and Canadians who have experience of poverty.

I hope that this information is helpful in addressing your concerns. Thank you for writing.

Yours sincerely,

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Families, Children, and Social Development