

TITLE: Monitoring Food Affordability in Ontario and Inadequacy of Social Assistance Rates

SPONSOR: Ontario Dietitians in Public Health

WHEREAS the Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol (2018) of the Ontario Public Health Standards require public health units (PHUs) to monitor food affordability, as well as assess and report on the health of local populations, describing the existence and impact of health inequities;

WHEREAS it is well documented that food insecurity has detrimental impacts on physical and mental health leading to increased healthcare utilization and greater healthcare costs;

WHEREAS adequate income is an important social determinant of health that greatly impacts household food security status;

WHEREAS results of monitoring food affordability in Ontario in 2022 highlight the inadequacy of both Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP);

WHEREAS 67% of households in Ontario that rely on ODSP and OW as their main source of income experience food insecurity;

WHEREAS prices for food purchased from stores rose 10.6% from February 2022 to February 2023, the fastest pace since 1981;

WHEREAS ODSP rates were increased by 5% in 2022 and will be indexed to inflation going forward; however, current ODSP rates are not based on the costs of living. Further, OW has not been increased since 2018 and is not indexed to inflation; and

WHEREAS Previous alPHA resolutions [A05-18](#) (Adequate Nutrition for Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program Participants and Low Wage Earners), [A15-04](#) (Basic Income Guarantee), and [A18-02](#) (Minimum Wage that is a Living Wage) have underscored the need for income-based responses to poverty and food insecurity.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that alPHA call on the Province of Ontario to utilize food affordability monitoring results from PHUs in determining the adequacy of social assistance rates to reflect the current costs of living and to index Ontario Works rates to inflation going forward;

AND FURTHER that alPHA call on the Province of Ontario to acknowledge the impact of rising food costs, particularly for individuals living on social assistance incomes, and legislate targets for reduction of food insecurity as part of Ontario's plan for poverty reduction.