

June 16, 2023

The Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau  
Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food  
via email: [marie-claude.bibeau@parl.gc.ca](mailto:marie-claude.bibeau@parl.gc.ca)

Dear Minister Bibeau,

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (ODPH), the independent and official voice of Registered Dietitians working in Ontario's public health system, is writing to you to express concern about the Local Food Infrastructure Fund (LFIF), the only federal program "[designed to reduce food insecurity](#)."

In May 2023, Statistics Canada released [data from the 2021 Canadian Income Survey](#) indicating 18.4% of Canadians or 6.9 million people in the ten provinces lived in households that experienced marginal, moderate or severe food insecurity, up from 15.7% or 5.8 million people in 2020. The proportion of Ontarians living in food insecure households in 2021 was 19.2% or 2.8 million people. These represent the highest rates recorded since monitoring of this problem began in Canada in 2005.

Food insecurity is not a food problem that can be solved or reduced by food charity or community food programs as discussed in our [Position Statement and Recommendations on Responses to Food Insecurity](#). Only about 20% of people who experience food insecurity use food banks and for those who do, using food banks does not make them food secure. Food insecurity is a highly sensitive measure of material deprivation and is reflective of inadequate incomes that have not kept pace with exponential increases to basic costs of living including housing and food. Even with expansion and improvements to food charities and community food programs, the extent of the problem in Canada is simply too massive for these programs to be effective at reducing food insecurity.

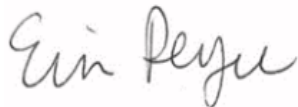
Canadian research shows food insecurity can be [effectively reduced by policies](#) that improve the financial circumstances of low-income households. Two of Canada's most prominent social programs, the Canada Child Benefit and public pensions for seniors (Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement) demonstrate effectiveness in improving the stability and adequacy of households' income. These examples provide strong evidence that a basic income for working-age Canadians would be effective at reducing food insecurity on a population level. Since 2016, ODPH (formerly OSNPPH) has [urged the Federal Government](#) to adopt a basic income guarantee.

The [Grocery Rebate for Canadians](#) included in the 2023 Federal Budget as a direct cash transfer to low income Canadians is a positive step and acknowledges food insecurity as an income problem. However, a one-time cash transfer of \$234 for a single person and \$467 for a family of four falls far-short of making up for the [almost 10% increase in the price of food purchased from stores in 2022](#) – the highest rate of food inflation in Canada since 1981. Furthermore, [a one-time benefit cannot address the chronic inadequacy of public income supports and wages underlying the persistence of food insecurity in this country](#).

For the [Food Policy for Canada](#) to reach its target to end hunger and ensure access by all Canadians by 2030, it is imperative to immediately implement and evaluate income support programs specifically designed to reduce food insecurity. ODPH concurs that Canada's national food policy is [at risk of enshrining a two-tiered food system](#) through the Local Food Infrastructure Fund whereby "affluent Canadians purchase premium products at supermarkets, farmers' markets and designer food outlets, while millions of others line up to receive rations from volunteers working feverishly to distribute the food rejected from that retail system."

ODPH follows emerging evidence about food insecurity in Canada closely. Please consider the information provided in this letter about the need to prioritize adequate income supports that can effectively reduce food insecurity on a population level. ODPH strongly urges the Government of Canada to implement the recommendations specified in our [Position Statement and Recommendations on Responses to Food Insecurity](#). Thank you for taking the time to review this letter.

Sincerely,



Erin Reyce, RD  
Co-chair, ODPH Food Insecurity Workgroup



Laura Abbasi, RD  
Co-chair, ODPH Executive Committee

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