



The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos
Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

December 9, 2016

Dear Minister Duclos

We are writing to you in support of an adequate basic income guarantee, or guaranteed annual income, on behalf of the [Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health](http://www.osnp-ph.on.ca) (OSNPPH). OSNPPH is the independent and official voice of Registered Dietitians working in Ontario's public health system.

OSNPPH's [Position Statement on Responses to Food Insecurity](#) and [infographic](#) describe food insecurity as the inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints. It is an urgent human rights and social justice issue. In Ontario, 12.5% of households, or over 1.5 million Ontarians, report food insecurity.¹ In Canada, 4 million individuals, including 1.15 million children, experience food insecurity.² The Position Statement has been [endorsed by over 140 organizations and individuals](#).

Year after year, [Nutritious Food Basket](#) analyses in Ontario health units, as per the [Ontario Public Health Standards](#) (p.28), clearly indicate that families and individuals who have minimum wage incomes or receive social assistance do not have enough money to cover the basic costs of living. When their income is too low, people are forced to choose between paying rent and other expenses, including nutritious food.

As discussed in the OSNPPH Position Statement, the primary community response to food insecurity, food charity, is an ineffective and counterproductive response. Food charity does not address the root cause which is poverty, and it perpetuates the misconception that food insecurity is being taken care of by food banks. To effectively address food insecurity, income responses are required, such as an adequate basic income guarantee.

We recognize that the Canada Child Benefit will help to lift thousands of children out of poverty. Similarly, the basic income guaranteed to seniors has been shown to reduce food insecurity risk by 50%.³ However, single working-age people with low incomes, post-secondary students, and low income families headed by working age parents with children over 18 years, among others, remain vulnerable to poverty.



The federal government has the opportunity to plan, develop and implement a policy that would address the underlying cause of food insecurity. We urge the Trudeau government to work toward ensuring that all Canadians have sufficient income to meet their basic needs. Please feel free to contact us at executive@osnp-ph.on.ca to discuss this further.

Sincerely

Tracy Woloshyn, RD
Food Security Workgroup, OSNPPH

Candice Einstoss, RD
Co-chair, OSNPPH

cc.

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
Honourable Helena Jaczek, Minister of Community and Social Services, Government of Ontario
Honourable Chris Ballard, Minister of Housing, Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy, Government of Ontario
Linda Stewart, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Pegeen Walsh, Executive Director, Ontario Public Health Association

References

1. Tarasuk V, Mitchell A, Dachner N. Household food insecurity in Canada 2013. [Online report]. Toronto, ON: PROOF: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity; 2015 [cited 2016 Nov 06]. Available from: <http://nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/foodinsecurity2013.pdf>.
2. Tarasuk V, Mitchell A, Dachner N. Household food insecurity in Canada, 2012. [Online report]. Toronto, ON: PROOF Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity; 2014 (2014). [cited 2015 Aug 20]. Available from: http://nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Household_Food_Insecurity_in_Canada-2012_ENG.pdf.
3. Emery H, Fleisch V, McIntyre L. How a guaranteed annual income could put food banks out of business. University of Calgary: The School of Public Policy Research Papers [serial online]. 2013;6(37):1 Available from: <http://www.policyschool.ucalgary.ca/?q=content/how-guaranteed-annual-income-could-put-food-banks-out-business>.