



January 31, 2017

Honourable Helena Jaczek
Minister of Community and Social Services
Hepburn Block 6th Floor
80 Grosvenor St.
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9

Honourable Chris Ballard
Minister of Housing
College Park
777 Bay St.
Toronto, ON M5G 2E5

Dear Minister Jaczek and Minister Ballard

On behalf of the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH), we are writing to express our support for the Ontario basic income pilot and the [Technical Submission](#) jointly submitted by the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA), the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) and Public Health Ontario (PHO).

There is a powerful link between food insecurity, health and income. Food insecurity - inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints - is a serious social and public health problem in Ontario. Food insecurity increases the risk of chronic and infectious diseases, and negatively impacts mental health and child development. A root cause of food insecurity is poverty, which must be addressed through targeted and sustainable approaches. Therefore, to effectively address food insecurity, income responses, like a basic income guarantee, are required. This position is strongly supported by evidence and referenced in the [OSNPPH Position Statement on Responses to Food Insecurity](#) and the [Dietitians of Canada Position Statement on Addressing Household Food Insecurity in Canada](#).

We strongly support the Technical Submission jointly submitted by ALPHA, OPHA and PHO. The recommendations within this submission will help guide the development of a basic income pilot project with the strong research design and long-term follow-up needed to help inform public policy decisions. As detailed in the Technical Submission, eligibility should be based only on the age range selected, income level and family composition, regardless of employment status. We also recommend universal eligibility, regardless of immigration status.

In addition, we strongly recommend the use of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) Household Food Security Survey Module to monitor changes in food insecurity as part of the pilot's evaluation. Food insecurity is a strong predictor of poorer physical and mental health, independent of other social determinants of health. In contrast to other measures used to measure food insecurity, the CCHS Household Food Security Survey Module is evidence informed and is rigorous and systematic in its implementation. Measuring food insecurity based on food bank usage greatly underestimates the prevalence of food insecurity and does not allow for understanding the degree of food insecurity (marginal, moderate or severe) being experienced.

We agree that to significantly impact poverty, precarious employment and health, a basic income guarantee must also be part of a comprehensive approach that includes other key policies and programs, including affordable high quality child care, affordable housing, expanded health benefits and labour law reform.



Ensuring everyone has an income sufficient to meet basic needs and live with dignity would be one of the most important initiatives the provincial government could pursue to promote health, well-being and equity amongst Ontarians. As such, while the basic income pilot is in progress, we also strongly urge the province to increase social assistance rates to sufficient levels to meet basic needs of all Ontarians.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Kim Loupos, RD
Food Security Workgroup, OSNPPH

Candice Einstoss, RD
Co-Chair, OSNPPH

- c. Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Hon. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Ms. Pegeen Walsh, Ontario Public Health Association
Ms. Linda Steward, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Ms. Heather Manson, Public Health Ontario