



November 6, 2017

Ms. Nelson
CBC Senior Managing Director for the Ontario Region
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Dear Ms. Nelson

We are writing to you in advance of this year's Sounds of the Season food drive to request that the CBC, as part of its extensive coverage of this event, provide opportunities to expand public understanding of the issue of food insecurity and what can be done about it beyond food charity.

'Food insecurity' is the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints.¹ Food banks or hampers are the most visible and well-known response to hunger or food insecurity in Canada. However, no matter how generous and well-intentioned food charity is, it does not address the underlying reason why people are food insecure – incomes inadequate to cover the costs of food, housing and other basic needs. Charitable giving is often perceived as "the" solution that "takes care of" the problem of food insecurity so that no further action is required. Yet food donations are only able to meet the urgent, short term food needs of about [one in four households experiencing food insecurity](#).² Furthermore, the unfortunate reality is that when the food an individual or family receives from a food bank is gone, the problem of food insecurity remains as much of a concern for them as ever. Food banks allow some who are food insecure to feel less hungry, but they are a band-aid on the gaping wound of poverty.

Household food insecurity in Ontario has remained persistently high, affecting about one in eight households, since 2005.³ In other words, food banks are not solving this problem; nor can they. The scope of the problem is too big for community agencies to fill, and food banks can never address the underlying problem of income inadequacy or poverty. This conclusion is reinforced by the results of the Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) food costing surveys that health units across the province conduct annually. Year after year NFB survey results demonstrate that income from social assistance and low wage employment falls far short of what is needed to cover even basic costs of food and rent.

As emphasized in the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) [Position Statement on Responses to Food Insecurity](#),⁴ and the [Position Statement and recommendations on Addressing Household Food insecurity in Canada from Dietitians of Canada](#)⁵, higher level policy decisions are clearly needed to ensure that everyone has the income to feed themselves and their families with dignity now and in the long term. Recognizing this, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit has developed “No money for food is Cent\$less” ([Cent\\$less](#)), a communication campaign intended to raise broad awareness of the issue of food insecurity, its pervasive impact on health, and the need for income policy solutions such as an adequate basic income guarantee and living wages. Food Banks Canada⁶ has called for a [basic income program](#) that, by providing people with enough money to live a life with dignity, would reduce the need for food banks.

In essence, we need an adequate income for everyone, so they can afford basic needs: fair wages for those who work, levels of social assistance that allow people unable to work to acquire their own food in a dignified manner, and moving forward on a basic income for all program that will eliminate the deepest forms of poverty that lead people to lack the ability to eat in one of the wealthiest nations in the world.

Last year, in response to a letter from OSNPPH, you described how the CBC provides extensive and on-going coverage about poverty and food insecurity, and this is indeed appreciated. We believe that by ensuring such coverage is well-integrated into promotional programming leading up to Sounds of the Season and during the event itself, CBC can make an important contribution to the public understanding of the need for longer term solutions to food insecurity.

As part of your coverage of this issue, we invite you to interview any of the following experts on food insecurity:

Ms. Mary Ellen Prange, Chair, Food Insecurity Workgroup, Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health.

Mary Ellen Prange has been a member of the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health since 1994 and led the development of [OSNPPH's Position Statement on Responses to Food Insecurity](#).
maryellen.prange@hamilton.ca 905-546-2424 Ext. 3484

Dr. Elaine Power, Associate Professor, School of Kinesiology & Health Studies, Queen's University.

Elaine Power has been conducting research on food insecurity for almost 25 years and is the primary author of the Dietitians of Canada Background Paper on the Prevalence, Severity and Impact of Household Food Insecurity (2016). <https://www.dietitians.ca/Dietitians-Views/Food-Security/Household-Food-Insecurity.aspx>. power@queensu.ca 613-548-4476

Dr. Valerie Tarasuk, Professor, Department of Nutritional Sciences, University of Toronto.

Valerie Tarasuk is an internationally recognized expert on household food insecurity and one of Canada's leading researchers in this field. She has conducted dozens of studies to investigate this problem in Canada and published more than 60 peer-reviewed research articles. She is the Principal Investigator of the PROOF project: Food Insecurity Policy Research.
Valerie.Tarasuk@utoronto.ca 416-978-0618

Ms. Jennifer Buccino, Regional Executive Director for Dietitians of Canada (DC) in Ontario.

As Regional Executive Director, Jennifer Buccino supports the work of dietitians and DC members in all areas of practice to advance the health of Ontarians through food and nutrition. Jennifer.Buccino@dietitians.ca 905-330-1407

Dr. Lisa Simon, Associate Medical Officer of Health, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit.

Lisa Simon is a Public Health and Preventive Medicine specialist with an interest in the social determinants of health, and has advocated for a strong basic income guarantee for Ontarians. Lisa.Simon@smdhu.org 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 Ext: 7244

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further.

Sincerely

Original signed by

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Co-Chair
OSNPPH

Original signed by

Dennis Raphael, PhD
Professor of Health Policy &
Management
York University

Original signed by

Dr. Elaine Power, PhD
Associate Professor
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Original signed by

Ms. Loretta Ryan, CAE, RPP
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References

1. PROOF: Food insecurity policy research. Toronto, Ontario. Available from: <http://proof.utoronto.ca/>
2. PROOF: Food insecurity policy research. Toronto, Ontario. Available from: <http://proof.utoronto.ca/food-bank-stats-dont-tell-the-story-of-food-insecurity/>
3. Canadian community health survey - Annual component (CCHS). Ottawa, ON: Statistics Canada. Available from: <http://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p2SV.pl?Function=getSurvey&SDDS=3226> .
4. Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH). Position statement on responses to food insecurity. Available from: <https://www.osnpph.on.ca/upload/membership/document/2016-02/position-statement-2015-final.pdf>
5. Dietitians of Canada. Addressing Household Food Insecurity in Canada Position Statement and Recommendations from Dietitians of Canada. August 2016. <https://www.dietitians.ca/Downloads/Public/HFI-Position-Statement-and-Recommendations-DC-FINA.aspx>
6. [https://www.foodbankscanada.ca/Blog/November-2016-\(1\)/The-Promise-of-a-Basic-Income-in-Canada.aspx?lang=en-CA](https://www.foodbankscanada.ca/Blog/November-2016-(1)/The-Promise-of-a-Basic-Income-in-Canada.aspx?lang=en-CA)