

January 25, 2017

Honourable Helena Jaczek  
Minister of Community and Social Services  
Hepburn Block 6<sup>th</sup> Floor – 80 Grosvenor St.  
Toronto, Ont M7A 1E9

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

Dear Minister Jaczek and Minister Ballard,

On behalf of the Middlesex-London Board of Health, I am 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).

Social determinants of health, such as income, food, housing and employment, help explain the wide health inequalities in Ontario, and are strongly determined by government public policy decisions. As consistently demonstrated by our local Nutritious Food Basket survey results, and the results across Ontario, many individuals and families cannot afford to eat healthy after meeting other essential needs for basic living. People living with a low income have a greater risk of preventable medical conditions across the lifespan, including cancer, diabetes, heart disease, mental illness, and their associated health care costs. Living in poverty also negatively impacts childhood growth and development.

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 addressed in the Technical Submission, the basic income pilot requires sufficient funding to ensure an appropriate sample size, an adequate benefit level for participants and an adequate pilot duration. Data collection also needs to include sufficient details about changes in participants' behaviours and quality of life.

We also agree that to significantly impact poverty, precarious employment and health, a basic income guarantee must 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 reflect the rising cost of nutritious food and safe housing.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Jesse Helmer, Chair  
Middlesex-London Board of Health

cc: Dr. Valerie Jaeger, alPHA President  
Ellen Wodchis, OPHA President