

July 4, 2023

The Honourable Doug Ford  
Premier of Ontario  
*Delivered via email:* [premier@ontario.ca](mailto:premier@ontario.ca)

The Honourable Sylvia Jones  
Deputy Premier  
Minister of Health  
*Delivered via email:* [sylvia.jones@pc.ola.org](mailto:sylvia.jones@pc.ola.org)

The Honourable Michael Parsa  
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services  
*Delivered via email:* [michael.parsaco@pc.ola.org](mailto:michael.parsaco@pc.ola.org)

Dear Premier Ford, Deputy Premier and Minister Jones, and Minister Parsa:

**Re: Income-based policy interventions to effectively reduce household food insecurity (HFI)**

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On June 28, 2023, the Board of Health for Algoma Public Health (APH) passed a resolution endorsing income-based policy interventions to effectively reduce household food insecurity (HFI), which is an urgent public health problem that imposes serious consequences to the health and well-being of Ontarians.

HFI is inadequate or insecure access to food due to household financial constraints.<sup>(1, 2)</sup> It is a sign of poverty, rooted in a lack of adequate and stable income to make ends meet. In 2022, more than 2.8 million Ontarians were food insecure, and this will only get worse with recent sky-rocketing inflation.<sup>(3)</sup>

Locally, APH monitors food affordability as required by the *Ontario Public Health Standards*. Our local data shows that low-income households, especially those receiving Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), struggle to afford basic costs of living and will be increasingly vulnerable as food prices continue to rise.<sup>(4)</sup>

Not being able to afford adequate food has profound adverse effects on people's physical and mental health and their ability to lead productive lives. This creates a heavy burden on the health care system with adults living in severely food insecure households incurring 121% higher health care costs compared to food secure households.<sup>(5)</sup> Effective income policies to reduce food insecurity could offset considerable public expenditures on health care and improve overall health.

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Food charity is NOT a solution to the problem. Food banks may provide temporary food relief but do not address the root causes. Only about one-quarter of households experiencing food insecurity go to food banks and for those who do use them, food insecurity does not go away.<sup>(2)</sup>

We urge the province to collaborate across sectors to implement income-based policies that effectively reduce food insecurity, such as<sup>(1, 2, 5)</sup>

- increasing minimum wage to a rate that better reflects costs of living, such as a living wage,
- raising social assistance to reflect costs of living,
- indexing Ontario Works to inflation, and
- reducing income tax rates for the lowest income households.

Such income policies preserve dignity, address the root cause of the problem, give choice of which foods to buy, and ensure the basic right to food.

Sincerely,



Sally Hagman  
Chair, Board of Health,

cc: Dr. J. Loo, Medical Officer of Health and Chief Executive Officer for Algoma Public Health  
Local Councils  
Local MPs  
The Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Ontario Boards of Health

#### References:

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2. ODPH Position Statement on Responses to Food Insecurity: Ontario Dietitians in Public Health. 2023. Available from: <https://www.odph.ca/odph-position-statement-on-responses-to-food-insecurity-1>.
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4. Food affordability in Algoma infographic. 2023.
5. alPHA Resolutions- Determinants of health. Resolution A05-18, Adequate Nutrition for works and Ontario Disability Support Program Participants and Low Wage Earners; Resolution A15- 4, Public Health Support for a Basic Income Guarantee; Resolution A18-2, Public Health Support for a Minimum Wage that is a Living Wage. Association of Local Public Health Agencies, 2009. [https://www.alphaweb.org/page/Resolutions\\_SDOH](https://www.alphaweb.org/page/Resolutions_SDOH)