

February 19, 2019

Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

Re: Ensuring Ontarians have enough money to feed themselves and their families

Dear Honourable Premier Doug Ford:

Evidence has demonstrated a powerful link between poverty, food insecurity, and poor health. Adults who experience food insecurity are more likely to experience higher rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and depression. Children and youth who experience food insecurity are at a greater risk of asthma, depression, social anxiety, suicide and depression. Furthermore, the more food insecure someone is, the greater the demand on hospital, physician, emergency and other health care services. For someone who was extremely food insecure, their annual health care costs are estimated to be 121% higher than someone who is not food insecure.

Year after year, Nutritious Food Basket Survey results from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit show that individuals and families with low income do not have enough money to cover the cost of healthy food, housing and other basic necessities. Twelve per cent of Simcoe Muskoka households struggle to put food on the table. Results from the 2018 survey show that the cost of healthy eating for a family of four is \$862 each month. After food and housing costs, families on social assistance are left with only \$436 for other basic necessities like heat, hydro, telephone, child care, transportation, personal hygiene items, clothing, and other out of pocket health costs. A single individual on social assistance receives \$810 each month. After spending \$748 on rent and \$290 on food this individual would be in debt by \$229 a month before paying for any other basic needs. Clearly, social assistance rates are not adequate. However, having a job is also no guarantee of enough money to provide food on the table. If we look at Ontario, most (59%) of food insecure households are in fact working, but are trapped in low paying unstable jobs. (Canadian Community Health Survey 2013-2014 results for Ontario in Household Food Insecurity 2014) and not able to afford the basics.

We are writing to request that the Province of Ontario ensure our most vulnerable citizens have enough money to buy food to eat. We ask that you continue to assess, implement, and evaluate policies to reduce household food insecurity such as policies that:

- support fair workplaces and good jobs with regular hours and benefits;
- increase social assistance rates to match real living costs, indexed to inflation;
- increase minimum wage, and
- provide a basic income for all Ontarians.

Working together we can ensure that all Ontarians and their families have enough money for food to feed themselves. In doing so, health care costs and demand on health services are reduced and the physical and mental health of all Ontarians is enhanced.

Yours Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terry Glover', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Terry Glover
Mayor, Township of Lake of Bays

cc: Hon. Christine Elliott, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Hon. Victor Fedeli, Minister of Finance
Hon. Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing
Hon. Todd Smith, Minister of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
Hon. Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
Norm Miller, MPP Parry Sound-Muskoka
Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
Local Municipalities in Simcoe and Muskoka