



Services de santé du

TIMISKAMING

Health Unit

Enhancing your health in so many ways.

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May 8, 2023

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Rm 281
Queens Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1
Sent via email: doug.fordco@pc.ola.org

The Honourable Michael Parsa
Minister of Children, Community and Social
Services
438 University Ave, 7th Floor.
Toronto, ON M5G 2K8
Sent via email: michael.parsaco@pc.ola.org

The Honourable Sylvia Jones
Minister of Health/Deputy Premier
777 Bay Street, College Park, 5th Floor.
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3
Sent via email: sylvia.jones@pc.ola.org

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

Re: Addressing Household Food Insecurity in Ontario

On April 05, 2023, at a regular meeting of the Board of Health (Board) for the Timiskaming Health Unit, the Board recognized Household Food Insecurity (HFI) as an income-driven problem that requires income-based solutions.

Household food insecurity is a significant issue affecting our region, with 1 in 5 households in Timiskaming experiencing some form of food insecurity.² This vulnerability is closely linked to household income, and families with lower incomes are more likely to struggle with affording food, rent and other basic needs.¹

The 2022 Monitoring Food Affordability findings show that a family of four in Timiskaming spends \$1,152 monthly on food.² This family would need to allocate a significant portion of their income towards rent and food, with 50% and 41%, respectively. Consequently, they would have a meagre average of \$228 left to cover other basic necessities such as childcare, transportation, utilities, and medication.² To afford the actual cost of living in Timiskaming, individuals would need to earn a living wage of \$19.70, highlighting a discrepancy between the current minimum wage and the living wage.³

Accordingly, the Board endorsed the enclosed correspondence from the [Ontario Dietitians in Public Health \(ODPH\)](#) urging the Ontario government to adopt income-based solutions that effectively reduce HFI; these include the reinstatement of the basic income guarantee project, closing the gap between



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the minimum wage and living wage, increasing social assistance rates and indexing them to match the true cost of living, and reducing income tax rates for lowest-income households. These policies effectively reduce household food insecurity, improve health outcomes, and reduce long-term healthcare costs.¹

Our Board recognizes that the province of Ontario has the power to reduce food insecurity and extreme poverty for households receiving social assistance. We kindly request that you take into consideration the motion passed by our Board regarding this pressing issue.

We appreciate your attention to this significant matter.

Sincerely,

Stacy Wight
Board of Health Chair

cc John Vanthof, MPP – Timiskaming-Cochrane
Anthony Rota, MP – Timiskaming-Nipissing
Charlie Angus, MP – Timmins-James Bay
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA)
Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)
Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA)
Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (ODPH)
Ontario Boards of Health
Health Unit Member Municipalities

References

1. Tarasuk V, Li T, Fafard St-Germain AA. (2022) Household food insecurity in Canada, 2021. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>
2. Timiskaming Health Unit. (2023) The Cost of Eating Well in Timiskaming – Monitoring Food Affordability Report, 2022. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3ZTGh7f>
3. Coleman, A., Shaban, R. (2022). Calculating Ontario's Living Wages. Ontario Living Wage Network.



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Board of Health MOTION #21R-2023 – April 05, 2023

Moved by: Curtis Arthur *Seconded by:* Mark Wilson

WHEREAS, it is a requirement under the Ontario Public Health Standards for public health units to monitor food affordability, assess and report on the health of local populations, and describe the existence and impact of health disparities; AND

WHEREAS, food insecurity is widely known to have adverse effects on both physical and mental health; AND adequate income is a crucial social determinant of health that significantly affects food security; AND

WHEREAS, 67% of households in Ontario with social assistance as their primary income source experience food insecurity; AND

WHEREAS, the 2022 Monitoring food affordability results demonstrate that households relying on social assistance do not have enough money to cover their living expenses, including food; AND

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Health for the Timiskaming Health Unit (Board) continues to increase awareness of, and work to reduce, health inequities, including those related to food insecurity; AND

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board endorses the [Ontario Dietitians in Public Health \(ODPH\)](#) call for the provincial government to take swift and immediate action in implementing income-based policy interventions for all in Ontario, aged 18–64 years as an effective and long-term response to household food insecurity; AND

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board calls on the Province of Ontario to increase social assistance rates to reflect the true costs of living, and to index Ontario Works rates to inflation moving forward; AND

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board urges the Province to resume exploring the feasibility of creating a guaranteed living wage (basic income) in the Province of Ontario; AND

FURTHERMORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Board of Health provide correspondence of these resolutions to John Vanthof, MPP (Timiskaming-Cochrane), Anthony Rota, MP (Timiskaming-Nipissing), Charlie Angus, MP (Timmins-James Bay), Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA), Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM), Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA), Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (ODPH), Ontario Boards of Health, and Health Unit Member Municipalities.

CARRIED