

Food Secure Canada's "Eat Think Vote" Campaign

[Eat Think Vote](#) is a campaign led by [Food Secure Canada](#) and other partners to make food security an election issue. The long-term campaign goal is to ensure all Canadians have access to sufficient, safe, healthy, culturally appropriate and affordable food.

Food Secure Canada is advocating for a national food policy that addresses:

- [Healthy school food](#);
 - Universal school food program
- [Zero hunger in Canada](#);
 - Feasibility study of establishing a basic income floor
 - Increasing the National Child Benefit
 - Developing a national housing strategy
 - Instituting a national Pharmacare program
 - Developing a publicly funded childcare system
 - Increasing the Working Income Tax Benefit
- [Support for new farmers](#); and
 - Programs to help new farmers gain access to land
 - Legislation to prohibit foreign ownership, and limit acquisition of land by private investment funds
 - Low interest loan and small grants for new and aspiring farmers
 - Affordable farmer-to-farmer training, mentoring and apprenticeship programs
- [Affordable food in the North](#).
 - National food policy that includes the northern context
 - Sustainable funding for Community Food Coordinators in all northern communities
 - Basic income floor adjusted to reflect northern costs
 - Changes to *Nutrition North Canada* (e.g., include non-profit food markets and the transportation of traditional foods, reinstate subsidies for necessary non-food items such as gardening supplies and equipment)

The campaign encourages candidates to take a [candidate pledge](#) and electorate to sign a [petition](#).

“As a candidate running for office in the 2015 Federal Election, I pledge that if I am elected, I will work with stakeholders and citizens across Canada to develop and implement a national food policy that will lead to a more just, healthy and sustainable food system.”

“The Government elected in 2015 should work with others to ensure that all kids in Canada’s schools have access to healthy food every day, the right to food becomes a reality for the 4 million Canadians who are now food insecure, the next generation of farmers gets the public support they need to thrive, and good food is affordable and accessible in Canada’s remote and northern communities.”

Support for Campaign Recommendations

The campaign program and policy recommendations align with public health priorities, available evidence and public health messaging.

Healthy School Food

A universal school food program was recommended by the Healthy Kids Panel, as part of “[No Time to Wait: The Healthy Kids Strategy](#)”. “[Make No Little Plans: Ontario’s Public Health Sector Strategic Plan](#)” references moving forward with the Healthy Kids Panel recommendations as a proposed action to meet the strategic goal of improving health by reducing preventable disease and injuries.

Zero Hunger in Canada

The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA) supports income-related policy recommendations for improving health and addressing food insecurity. At the 2015 Annual General Meeting, ALPHA passed Resolutions supporting a [basic income guarantee](#) and a national, [universal pharmacare](#) program.

The Healthy Kids Strategy also supports the need to address income security to reduce food insecurity. The Healthy Kids Strategy recommends speeding implementation of the [Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy \(2014-2019\)](#) to ensure Ontario families have enough money to afford their basic needs, including healthy food and housing. Although the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy makes provincial, not federal, recommendations, addressing income security and affording basic needs is a prominent theme (e.g., Ontario Child Benefit, social assistance reform, updating Ontario’s Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, modernization of child care).

Support for New Farmers

In early 2015, the Health Unit Board of Health approved a proposal to increase the Health Unit’s capacity for food systems work by hiring a 1.0 FTE Public Health Dietitian (0.5 FTE permanent + 0.5 FTE temporary). Part of this work includes a community food assessment to provide an overview of the local food system and determine priorities for future action to help build a stronger and sustainable local food system. Data is currently being collected, and a report will be completed later this year; however, emerging issues include the increasing average age of local farm operators and barriers for new farmers. Given that agriculture is the predominant land use in Middlesex County and a major contributor to its employment sector, supporting new and future farmers is essential for the long-term vitality of Middlesex County.

Affordable Food in the North

The rate of food insecurity is highest in northern Canada. In 2012, 45.2% of the population of Nunavut and the Northwest Territories experienced food insecurity, compared to 15.2% of Ontario.¹ Within Ontario, the annual Nutritious Food Basket costing consistently shows an increased cost of food in Northern Ontario, as compared to Southern Ontario. In 2013, the average monthly cost for a family of four for the Northern Health Unit regions was \$864.92, compared to \$796.55 in the Southern Health Unit regions. This is an additional cost of \$68.37 or 8.6% per week for residents living in Northern Ontario. Food affordability in the north is essential for resident’s food security and overall health.

¹ http://www.nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Household_Food_Insecurity_in_Canada-2012_ENG.pdf