

FOOD INSECURITY IN ONTARIO'S COMMUNITIES

Our Ask

That municipal governments support their local Public Health Unit and encourage the Provincial Government to:

- Implement measures to reduce food insecurity.

That municipal governments create or enhance policies that have the potential to enhance incomes for low-income residents, such as:

- Investing in affordable housing and accessible and affordable public transportation.
- Supporting and working with anti-poverty coalitions and food policy councils.

Return on Investment



- Being food insecure is strongly associated with greater use of the healthcare system. Annual health care costs are 121% higher in households with severe food insecurity.

Background

Food insecurity is a serious public health problem

1.6 million Ontarians or 1 in 8 households do not have enough money to buy food

Food Insecurity → Higher rates of
• Diabetes, high blood pressure & poor oral health in adults
• Mental health problems
• Health care use

What is the solution?
Food charity (food banks, soup kitchens) OR Adequate income (basic income guarantee)
• Charities have limited capacity to help all those in need
• Adequate income is the only way to ensure everyone has enough money

When someone is too poor, people do not have enough for rent, bills AND food

• Homeless rates → 1 out of 4 food insecure households do not go to food banks
• Food bank operating hours and services: the number of sites and the amount of food provided
• Check out food pantries daily needs list
• Understand people's dignity
• Promotes dignity when people have enough money to buy food
• Ensures the basic right to food by governments addressing the root cause of food insecurity
• Ensures decision makers have ensured the basic right to food

OSNPPH urges governments to prioritize and investigate a basic income guarantee. The only solution to food insecurity is an INCOME response.

Public Health Ontario
www.health.on.ca
alPHA
www.alpha.ca

Food insecurity is linked to...

Eating vegetables and fruit less often	Increased risk of chronic disease like diabetes	Social exclusion
Poorer mental health in adults and children	Behavioural, emotional, and academic barriers in children	Increased health care costs

- Food insecurity is a determinant of health and impacts health equity.
- Lacking sufficient money for food takes a serious toll on people's health. Adults in food insecure households are more likely to suffer from chronic conditions such as diabetes, and high blood pressure; children are more likely to suffer from mental health problems and teenagers are at greater risk of depression, social anxiety and suicide.
- Food insecurity – not having enough money to buy food – is a serious social and public health problem in Ontario, affecting 1 in 8 households. One in 6 children in Ontario lives in a food-insecure household.
- The root cause of food insecurity is poverty. Income-based solutions are needed to address food insecurity. Food charity and community food programs are ineffective responses to food insecurity. Current social assistance rates are not enough – 64% of Ontario households reliant on social assistance are food insecure.
- Incomes are not enough for many working people. Almost 60% of food insecure households in Ontario have employment income, yet they still have difficulty having enough money for food.
- Regular monitoring of food affordability and household insecurity is critical to inform and evaluate policies, programs and services.



Association of Local
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STRONG LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH

Strong Local Public Health

- Ontario’s 444 Municipalities benefit from the many public health programs and services that keep them healthy.
- Under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, municipalities in a health unit are responsible for paying the expenses of the health unit in the performance of its functions and duties that are largely mandated by the province.
- Ontario’s 35 public health units work hard to deliver these essential programs and services to prevent disease and promote health in local communities.
- For more than 180 years, Ontarians have enjoyed a strong public health system that puts local communities and their health at the front and centre.

Other Key Public Health Issues



While we have highlighted the health issue on the reverse as a particularly important topic you should be aware of, there are a host of other broad public health issues that may also affect the overall health in your community. Here are a few:

- Tobacco endgame
- Oral health for adults
- Cannabis
- Opioids
- Mental health
- Alcohol
- Food insecurity

About alPHa



Association of Local
PUBLIC HEALTH
Agencies

- The Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa) is a not-for-profit organization that provides leadership to the boards of health and public health units in Ontario.
- Membership in alPHa is open to the 35 public health units in Ontario and we work closely with board of health members, medical and associate medical officers of health, and senior public health managers in each of the public health disciplines – nursing, inspections, nutrition, dentistry, health promotion, epidemiology and business administration.
- The Association works with governments, including local government, and other health organizations, advocating for a strong, effective and efficient public health system in the province.
- Through policy analysis, discussion, collaboration, and advocacy, alPHa’s members and staff act to promote public health policies that form a strong foundation for the improvement of health promotion and protection, disease prevention, and surveillance services in all of Ontario’s communities.