

September 12, 2025

Via Email

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario

Subject: Working Together to Reduce Food Insecurity in Ontario

Dear Premier Ford,

On behalf of the Board of Health of Algoma Public Health (APH), please accept our appreciation for the provincial government's efforts to support vulnerable Ontarians, including tying ODSP rates to inflation and increases to minimum wage. These steps are positive, and we hope they signal a continued commitment to addressing the root causes of poverty and food insecurity.

At the same time, we are deeply concerned about the rising rates of food insecurity across Ontario. Between 2022 and 2023, the rate of severe household food insecurity rose from 4.8% to 7.8%⁽¹⁾. This trend has serious implications for public health, as food insecurity is strongly linked to chronic conditions like diabetes, poor mental health, and increased health care use⁽¹⁾.

We know that food insecurity is fundamentally an income issue. While food banks and community programs provide essential short-term relief, long-term solutions require policies that improve a household's financial stability. Research consistently shows that increasing social assistance rates and aligning minimum wage with a living wage can significantly reduce food insecurity⁽²⁻⁴⁾.

In Algoma, our monitoring food affordability data shows that current social assistance rates fall short of covering basic needs like food and housing⁽⁵⁾. We also know that employment alone is not always protective – over half of food-insecure households in Ontario rely primarily on wages or self-employment income⁽³⁾.

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At its meeting on May 28, 2025, the Algoma Board of Health passed the following motion:

That the Board of Health for the District of Algoma Health Unit continue to advocate for income-based responses by calling on the provincial government to:

- 1. Recognize and acknowledge food insecurity as an income-based problem that requires income-based solutions;***
- 2. Set targets to reduce food insecurity; and***
- 3. Engage with all levels of government, private and non-profit sectors, and people with lived and living experiences, to implement progressive economic policies that increase household income (i.e., living wage, indexing all social assistance to inflation, and using monitoring food affordability data to set adequate social assistance rates).***

We believe these actions align with your government's stated goals of building a stronger, more resilient Ontario. By investing in income-based solutions, we can reduce pressure on our healthcare system, improve quality of life, and ensure that all Ontarians have the opportunity to thrive.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with your government on this important issue and would be pleased to provide further data or insights from our region.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Trivers,
Chair, Board of Health,
Algoma Public Health

cc: Dr. K. Moore, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Heather Schramm, Director, Health Promotion and Prevention Policy and Programs Branch,
Ministry of Health
Susan Stewart, Chair, Health Promotion Ontario Executive Committee
Dr. Michael Sherar, President and Chief Executive Officer, Public Health Ontario
MPP Chris Scott, Sault Ste. Marie
MPP Bill Rosenberg, Algoma-Manitoulin
David Thompson, Chair, Algoma Food Security Network
All Ontario Boards of Health

References

1. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). Food insecurity & food affordability in Ontario. Toronto, ON: King's Printer for Ontario; 2025. Available from: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/Health-Topics/Health-Promotion/Healthy-Eating>
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3. Li T, Fafard St-Germain AA, Tarasuk V. Household food insecurity in Canada, 2022. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). 2023. Available from: <https://proof.utoronto.ca/resource/household-food-insecurity-in-canada-2022/>
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5. Algoma Public Health. Food Affordability & Food Insecurity in Algoma: The 2024 Nutritious Food Basket Results and Recommendations. 2025. Available from: <https://www.algomapublichealth.com/healthy-living/food-insecurity-in-algoma/>