

**Board Correspondence**  
June 2020

<b>Date</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>Subject</b>
April 30, 2020	Peterborough Public Health	Ltr to Minister of Health – Provincial leadership in the monitoring of food affordability and food insecurity.
May 14, 2020	Min. of Children, Community and Social Services	Response Ltr to submission re: poverty reduction strategy.
May 20, 2020	Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit	Ltr to Prime Minister of Canada, Deputy Prime Minister – Basic income for income security during covid-19 pandemic and beyond.

April 30, 2020

The Honourable Christine Elliott  
Minister of Health  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hepburn Block  
80 Grosvenor Street  
Toronto ON M7A 2C4  
**Sent via e-mail: [Christine.elliott@pc.ola.org](mailto:Christine.elliott@pc.ola.org)**

Dear Minister Elliott:

**Re: Provincial Leadership in the Monitoring of Food Affordability and Food Insecurity**

Household food insecurity is a serious public health problem in Ontario. Household food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints, and is experienced by 13.3% of Ontario households (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). Monitoring local food insecurity and food affordability is critical for Peterborough Public Health and local public health agencies (LPHAs) across Ontario to assess trends over time, identify community needs, and support access to safe healthy food. The Board of Peterborough Public Health is also required to monitor Food Affordability, as specified by the Ontario Public Health Standards.

Health Canada recently updated the National Nutritious Food Basket based on the 2019 Canada's Food Guide. A Reference Guide and spreadsheet were released in February 2020. In order for this to be used for data collection, protocols must be developed at the regional/territorial level. We ask that the Ontario Ministry of Health take leadership in developing a protocol in collaboration with Ontario's LPHAs and the Ontario Dietitians in Public Health.

Peterborough Public Health would also like to express the importance of availability of local Household Food Insecurity data from the Canadian Community Health Survey. We ask that Household Food Insecurity be included as a core module in Ontario, and that Ministry release 2018 Household Food Insecurity Data to Ontario LPHAs. This is critical for our board of health to conduct population health assessment and interventions to address local needs.

Thank you for your attention to supporting local boards of health in addressing the important issues of food insecurity and food affordability.

Sincerely,

***Original signed by***

Mayor Andy Mitchell  
Chair, Board of Health

cc: Dr. David Williams, Ontario, Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health  
Local MPPs  
France G  linas, MPP, Health Critic  
John Fraser, MPP, Health Critic  
Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Ontario Boards of Health

Reference: Tarasuk V, Mitchell A. (2020) Household food insecurity in Canada, 2017-18. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>

**Ministry of Children,  
Community and Social  
Services**

Minister's Office

438 University Avenue  
7<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1N3

Tel.: (416) 325-5225  
Fax: (416) 325-5240

**Ministère des Services à  
l'enfance et des Services  
sociaux et communautaires**

Bureau du Ministre

438, avenue University  
7<sup>e</sup> étage  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 1N3

Tél. : (416) 325-5225  
Télééc. : (416) 325-5240



127-2020-7138

May 14, 2020

Mr. Carman Kidd  
Board Chair, Timiskaming Health Unit  
coter@timiskaminghu.com

Dear Mr. Kidd:

Thank you for your letter and submission on behalf of the Timiskaming Health Unit concerning our new Poverty Reduction Strategy.

I appreciate the time you have taken to share your feedback, and to participate in the important process of developing this strategy. Your submission has been shared with appropriate staff in my ministry and will be taken into consideration as our work continues.

Again, thank you for writing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Todd Smith', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Todd Smith  
Minister

May 20, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., MP  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, P.C., M.P.  
Deputy Prime Minister  
Privy Council Office  
Room 1000  
80 Sparks Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A3

The Honourable Bill Morneau, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Finance  
90 Elgin Street, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G5

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau, Deputy Prime Minister Freeland and Minister Morneau:

**Re: Basic Income for Income Security during Covid-19 Pandemic and Beyond**

On behalf of the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) Board of Health, I am writing to convey our strong support for the evolution of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) into a basic income for all Canadians, during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

While we commend the federal government for the economic measures that have been put into place to support Canadians during this unprecedented time of the COVID-19 pandemic, we also know that many are falling through the cracks. Measures such as the CERB, the Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) and the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), though necessary and very important, have left many Canadians, who do not qualify for or not able to access these programs, vulnerable to household food insecurity and the negative consequences of income insecurity and poverty such as inadequate or unstable housing, and poorer mental and physical health, including chronic diseases. A basic income would address these gaps, offering support to the most vulnerable Canadians.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, many Canadians were already experiencing household food insecurity. In 2017-18 approximately 4.4-million (1 in 8) Canadians reported being food insecure, including 1.2 million children under the age of 18.<sup>1</sup> As a result of COVID-19, this number is predicted to increase as many individuals are facing precarious employment, have had their hours reduced or have lost their jobs altogether. Many are relying on food banks and other charitable programs, however, this only meets the need on a temporary basis and is not a long term solution.

☐ **Barrie:**  
15 Sperling Drive  
Barrie, ON  
L4M 6K9  
705-721-7520  
FAX: 705-721-1495

☐ **Collingwood:**  
280 Pretty River Pkwy.  
Collingwood, ON  
L9Y 4J5  
705-445-0804  
FAX: 705-445-6498

☐ **Cookstown:**  
2-25 King Street S.  
Cookstown, ON  
L0L 1L0  
705-458-1103  
FAX: 705-458-0105

☐ **Gravenhurst:**  
2-5 Pineridge Gate  
Gravenhurst, ON  
P1P 1Z3  
705-684-9090  
FAX: 705-684-9887

☐ **Huntsville:**  
34 Chatley St.  
Huntsville, ON  
P1H 1K1  
705-789-8913  
FAX: 705-789-7245

☐ **Midland:**  
A-925 Hugel Ave.  
Midland, ON  
L4R 1X8  
705-526-9324  
FAX: 705-526-1513

☐ **Orillia:**  
120-169 Front St. S.  
Orillia, ON  
L3V 4S8  
705-325-9565  
FAX: 705-325-2091

Examples of key Canadian initiatives that demonstrate the positive impact of basic income-like programs on health and well-being include the Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement through Canada's public pension system, the Canada Child Benefit, and the Newfoundland Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Basic income pilots for working-age adults in Canada have also led to promising findings, including the Mincome pilot in Manitoba and the recent Ontario Basic Income Pilot. The research study, *Southern Ontario's Basic Income Experience* released in March 2020, is based on Ontario's pilot. This pilot was implemented in three Ontario cities in 2018 by the provincial government, and the project was terminated in 2019 following a change in government. While the formal pilot evaluation was cancelled, this research study made use of surveys of individuals from Hamilton, Brantford and Brant County who had been enrolled in the pilot (217 individuals participated out of 1000 enrolled households), and interviews with 40 participants. Some of the key findings cited by participants in this report include improvements in physical and mental health; increased labour market participation; moving to higher paying and more secure jobs; reduced household food insecurity; housing stability; improved financial status and social relationships; less frequent visits to health practitioners and hospital emergency rooms; improved living standards; and an improved sense of self-worth and hope for a better future.

Additional evidence supporting the potential of a basic income for reducing the prevalence and severity of household food insecurity is presented in: *Implications of a Basic Income Guarantee for Household Food Insecurity*, a research paper prepared for the Northern Policy Institute based on the Ontario Basic Income Pilot.

Moving forward during and following the COVID-19 pandemic is an opportune time for the federal government to take action to evolve the CERB into a basic income. This would provide income security to all Canadians during the economic challenges of the pandemic itself, the post-pandemic recovery, and into the future. This is particularly pertinent given the dramatic shifts in the labour market in recent decades, such that full-time permanent employment is no longer the norm. The current CERB has helped demonstrate the logistical feasibility of delivering a basic income, and it could be readily evolved into an ongoing basic income for anyone who falls below a certain income floor. There is evidence of growing support for this concept, as outlined in Appendix A. The Basic Income Canada Network has outlined key features of basic income design for Canada, which we support.

The SMDHU has been a strong proponent of basic income repeatedly since 2015. This includes having sponsored a resolution at the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (ALPHA) general meeting endorsing the concept of basic income and requesting the federal and provincial governments jointly consider and investigate a basic income policy option for reducing poverty and income insecurity (2015), and expressing support and input into the Ontario Basic Income Pilot (2017). SMDHU has also been encouraging advocacy for income solutions to household food insecurity through our No Money for Food is Cent\$less initiative since 2017.

In keeping with this, we strongly recommend your government take swift and immediate action on the evolution of the CERB Benefit into legislation for a basic income as an effective long-term

response to the problems of income insecurity, persistent poverty and household food insecurity, as well as a response to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

**ORIGINAL Signed By:**

Anita Dubeau  
Chair, Board of Health

AD:CS:cm

Encl. (1)

cc. Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario  
Simcoe and Muskoka MPs and MPPs  
Simcoe Muskoka Municipal Councils  
Association of Local Public Health Agencies  
Ontario Public Health Association  
Ontario Boards of Health

## **Appendix A: Examples of Support for Basic Income in Response to COVID-19 and Beyond**

On April 21, 2020, 50 members of Canada's Senate wrote a [letter](#) to the federal government calling for a restructuring of the CERB into a minimum basic income to "ensure greater social and economic equity", especially for those who are most vulnerable. In support of this letter, Senator McPhedran's Youth Advisory Council, the Canadian Council of Young Feminists, in collaboration with the Basic Income Canada Youth Network, sent their own [letter](#) to the federal government.

In our region, Simcoe North MP Bruce Stanton has expressed agreement that it's time to consider basic income. He is quoted as saying "Based on my reading of this, like Senator Boniface, I am persuaded that it could be very good public policy" ([News Story](#)).

The Ontario Dietitians' of Public Health (ODPH) have also written a [letter](#) to the federal government stating "We ask that you take immediate action to enact legislation for a basic income guarantee as an effective long-term response to the problem of persistent poverty and household food insecurity as well as shorter-term consequences of the economic fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic".

The Board of Health of the Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox and Addington Health Unit in Ontario also passed a motion requesting the federal government to provide a basic income support to all Canadians ([News Story](#)).