

Peterborough Food Action Network

April 25, 2019

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building,
Room 281, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1
doug.ford@pc.ola.org

The Honourable Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
College Park, 5th Floor, 777 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 2J3
christine.elliott@pc.ola.org

The Honourable Lisa MacLeod
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
Hepburn Block, 6th Floor
80 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9
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Dear Premier Ford and Honourable Ministers,

On behalf of the Peterborough Food Action Network (PFAN), I am writing in support of *Bill 60 - Ministry of Community and Social Services Amendment Act*. The proposed Act would develop a Social Assistance Research Commission.

PFAN includes a broad sector of food and agricultural organizations engaged in addressing and building community food security as part of local poverty reduction efforts. PFAN brings together representatives from health, education, agriculture, social agencies and people with lived experiences in both the City and County of Peterborough.

Our region experiences some of the highest food insecurity rates in Ontario, with 16.5% of households in Peterborough facing food insecurity (Canadian Community Health Survey 2011-14). This represents 1 in 6 households! A high risk of food insecurity is disproportionately experienced by social assistance recipients. In fact, in 2013-14 in Ontario, 64% of [households on social assistance](#) experienced food insecurity. Furthermore, social assistance recipients experience [11 times the national rate of severe food insecurity](#). Here, in Peterborough, our nutritious food basket data collected by Public Health, shows that a single man living on Ontario Works has a *deficit* of \$198 after paying for shelter and healthy food alone. Similarly, a family of four on Ontario Works, after paying for shelter and healthy food, has only \$494 remaining for all other expenses

for the month. We know that, in order to cover expenses like rent and utilities, people with insufficient incomes will often compromise their food budgets. Food insecurity is a serious local and provincial problem that our social assistance safety net is failing to catch.

Food insecurity is also expensive. In Ontario, the healthcare costs of adults in severely food insecure households are 76% higher than those of adults in food secure households. And yet the rate of food insecurity drops precipitously once households' incomes improve.

A Social Assistance Research Commission, including members who understand the experience of living on social assistance, could provide the Ontario Government with informed direction for social assistance in Ontario. Given the strong link between food insecurity and the receipt of social assistance, we encourage you to:

- support the passing of bill 60;
- coordinate with the federal government poverty reduction strategy, including the Market Basket Measure;
- draw on the work being done by Ontario local public health agencies, such as nutritious food basket data collection; and,
- commit to acting on recommendations made from the committee, to ensure that people living on social assistance have sufficient income to meet their basic needs.

Thank you for investing in the health and well-being of Ontarians.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Rosana Salvaterra, MD, MSc, CCFP, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health, Peterborough Public Health
Chair, Peterborough Food Action Network

cc: Paul Miller, MPP Hamilton East-Stoney Creek
Robert Bailey, MPP Sarina-Lambton
Dave Smith, MPP Peterborough-Kawartha
Dave Piccini, MPP Northumberland-Peterborough South
Laurie Scott, MPP Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock