

October 2, 2024

The Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
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The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance
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The Honourable Mark Holland
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The Honourable Steven MacKinnon
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Peter Julian
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Standing Senate Committee on National Finance
nffn@sen.parl.gc.ca

RE: Support for Bills S-233 and C-233 “An Act to develop a national framework for a guaranteed livable basic income”

Dear Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Minister of Health, House Leaders, and National Finance Committee:

Peterborough Public Health (PPH) agrees with our peers in Middlesex-London, Ottawa Public Health and Thunder Bay Public Health Units, in our support for a guaranteed livable basic income as a policy option for addressing poverty, income and food insecurity and for boosting opportunities for people with lower incomes. We urge you to support Bills S-233 and C-233 “An Act to develop a national framework for a

guaranteed livable basic income”, currently being considered by the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance and in the process of the second reading in the House of Commons. These Bills are designed to ensure progress towards developing a basic income model that will be effective in moving individuals and their families out of poverty.

An agreed model, when implemented, will impact many lives. In 2022, 10.9% of Ontarians lived in poverty based on the Market Basket Measure, an increase from 7.7% in 2021.¹ In 2022, 16.2% of Peterborough households, with or without children (20,210 people), were low income based on the Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT).² Nearly one in five (19%) local households live in a food insecure household.³ PPH conducts the Nutritious Food Basket survey annually to monitor the affordability of food in Peterborough City and Region. The 2023 results, with its various case studies, demonstrate that incomes, particularly when dependent on social assistance, are not adequate for many residents of Peterborough and its region to afford basic needs.⁴

As our Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Thomas Piggott pointed out at a recent local Symposium on Healthy Incomes: “All paths to health lead to income.” The evidence to support this assertion is significant:

The link between income and health or well-being

- Income has a critical impact on health, with better health outcomes associated with higher income levels, and poorer health outcomes associated with lower income levels.⁵
- Income increases access to other social determinants of health (e.g., education, food, housing).⁵ In fact, income is understood as having the strongest socioeconomic determinant of food insecurity.^{6,7}
- Children living in poverty have an increased risk for cognitive shortfalls and behavioural conditions, and an increased risk of negative health outcomes into adulthood (e.g., cardiovascular disorders, certain cancers, mental health conditions, osteoporosis and fractures, dementia).^{8,9,10}
- Food insecurity is associated with an increased risk of a wide range of physical and mental health challenges, including chronic conditions, non-communicable diseases, infections, depression, anxiety, and stress.^{11,12,13,14,15,16}
- Among young children, food insecurity is also associated with poor child health, low birth weight, chronic illness, developmental risk, and poor cognitive outcomes, including vocabulary and math skills.^{17,18,19}

Findings from interventions

Evidence from Canadian trials and internationally suggests that basic income positively impacts health and wellbeing.^{20, 21} Successful examples of a Canadian basic income include the Old Age Security (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). In a cohort of individuals over 65 receiving OAS/GIS, compared to a cohort aged 55-64 years, the probability of food insecurity was reduced by half, even when age, sex, income level, and home ownership were considered.²² In addition, evidence suggests income supplementation reduces food insecurity for low-income Canadians and positively impacts childhood health outcomes (e.g., birth weight, mental health).²³ Early findings about the impact of cash transfers in British Columbia also indicate reduced homelessness and substance use for people recently unhoused.²⁴

Upstream income-based solutions, such as a guaranteed livable basic income, are needed to address poverty, income insecurity, and household food insecurity and their significant impacts on health and well-being.

Sincerely,

Original signed by
Councillor Joy Lachica
Chair, Board of Health

cc: Michelle Ferreri, Member of Parliament, Michelle.Ferreri@parl.gc.ca
Philip Lawrence, Member of Parliament, Philip.Lawrence@parl.gc.ca
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References:

- ¹ Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0135-01 Low-income statistics by age, sex and economic family type. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25318/1110013501-eng>.
- ² Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0018-01 After-tax low-income status of tax filers and dependants based on Census Family Low Income Measure (CFLIM-AT), by family type and family type composition. DOI: [After-tax low income status of tax filers and dependants based on Census Family Low Income Measure \(CFLIM-AT\), by family type and family type composition \(statcan.gc.ca\)](https://doi.org/10.25318/1110013501-eng)
- ³ This number is a 3-year average from the Canadian Income Survey (CIS) that needs to be interpreted with caution due to a small sample size and variability in the sample. Food insecurity numbers may be underestimated as CIS samples do not include unhoused individuals or Indigenous Peoples living on-reserve.
- ⁴ Peterborough Public Health. Addressing Food Insecurity in Peterborough – An Urgent Call to Action. December 2023.
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- ⁶ Men, F., Fafard St-Germain, A., Ross, K., Remtulla, R., Tarasuk, V. (2023). Effect of Canada Child Benefit on Food Insecurity: A Propensity Score-Matched Analysis. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 64(6): 844-852.
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- ⁸ Lee, H., Slack, K. S., Berger, L. M., Mather, R. S., & Murray, R. K. (2021). Childhood poverty, adverse childhood experiences, and adult health outcomes. *Health & Social Work*, 46(3), 159-170.
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