

October 17, 2022

RE: *Chew on This!* Open Letter to Address Food Insecurity in Canada

Dear Honourable Deputy Minister Freeland, Minister Gould, Minister Fraser, Minister Hussen, Minister Qualtrough, Minister Hajdu, Minister Vandal, and Minister Ien,

October 17 is the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Dignity for All, along with [*Chew on This!*](#) supporters across the country are calling on the federal government to implement equitable and effective policies to eradicate poverty and food insecurity.

Canada has signed international human rights commitments and has a duty to uphold the rights of all people in this country. In 2015, Canada adopted the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, which include targets for (1) No Poverty and (2) Zero Hunger. Reports from ESDC say they are on track to meet, or even exceed, the targets of their Poverty Reduction Strategy. But even with these improvements, **millions are being left behind.** Rates of food insecurity have continued to climb, with a provincial average of 15.9% in 2021 (approximately 1 in 6 households), and even higher rates in the territories.

Poverty and food insecurity disproportionately impact people who are Black, Indigenous, or disabled, and people with precarious immigration status. 28.9% of Black households and 28.2% of Indigenous households live with food insecurity, compared to just 11% of white households.¹ Food insecurity rates intensify for people with intersecting forms of oppression, such as those who are 2SLGBTQ+, women, single mothers, and young adults.

Food insecurity is not about a lack of food, it is about a lack of income and access. Social assistance rates (including welfare and disability supports) fall short of the poverty line in every province and territory² with 63.1% of recipients' households experiencing food insecurity.³ But this issue must be tackled by the federal government as well. 13.7% of households whose main source of income is employment are also food insecure.⁴ Inadequate wages and income supports are compounded by high costs of housing, childcare, medical needs, and other essentials, leaving millions of people sacrificing their food budgets when there isn't enough money to pay for rent and other "non-negotiable" expenses.

Food charity is not the solution. Food security requires food systems that provide safe working conditions for all workers, and can adapt to climate change pressures. Food security requires

¹ Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), 2017-2018

² Maytree Foundation, Welfare in Canada (2021). Retrieved from <https://maytree.com/welfare-in-canada/canada/>

³ Tarasuk V, Li T, Fafard St-Germain AA. (2022) Household food insecurity in Canada, 2021. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>

⁴ Same as above.

income security and affordable housing. It requires empowering and funding community-led local and sustainable solutions. It requires recognizing food sovereignty for Indigenous and Black people.

We have outlined 4 policy recommendations that address some of the underlying causes of food insecurity in Canada and its disproportionate impacts among equity-seeking groups.

1. **Increase income security:** Increase federal income benefits, including Employment Insurance, the Canada Worker's Benefit, Canada Disability Benefit, Guaranteed Income Supplement, Canada Housing Benefit, and the Canada Child Benefit, to reflect current gaps and inadequacies. Expand eligibility to ensure all people living in Canada are automatically enrolled for benefits.
2. **Status for All:** Give everyone living in Canada permanent resident status to ensure that they have access to fair wages, worker protections, healthcare, EI, and other government benefits and programs.
3. **Subsidise Food Shipping Costs to the North:** While this recommendation will not address all forms of food insecurity in northern communities, increasing government subsidies for food shipping expenses will make food costs immediately more affordable for residents.
4. **Support Community-led Programs & Food Sovereignty:** Provide stable, adequate funding to community-run and non-profit food programs (particularly for Indigenous and Black-led organizations), recognizing community members with lived experience of food insecurity as experts in what services and food options are needed.

This letter has been endorsed by organizations and advocates across the country and across sectors (please see the full list of signatures below). We would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you to provide more information specific to your respective mandates and our policy recommendations.

We look forward to working with you towards our human rights commitments.

Dignity for All Co-Leads

Natalie Appleyard
Citizens for Public Justice
natalie@cpj.ca
613-232-0275 ext. 222

Emilly Renaud
Canada Without Poverty
emilly@cwpcsp.ca
613-789-0096

Leila Sarangi
Campaign 2000
LeilaSa@familyservicetoronto.org
416-595-9230 ext. 250

National/International Endorsements

Canadian Mental Health Association

Advancement Women of Halton (AWH)

UNICEF Canada

Food Secure Canada

Unifor

Accessible Housing Network

Basic Income Canada Network

Martha Justice Ministry, Sisters of St. Martha, Antigonish

Disability Action Hall

West Coast LEAF

Canadian Association of Social Workers

Grand(m)others Act to Save the Planet (GASP)

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Family Service Canada

Leading in Colour

Greenwood United Church Peterborough

Child Welfare League of Canada

The Disabled Women's Network of Canada (DAWN Canada)

Co: Culture Collective

Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness

Federation of Sisters of St. Joseph of Canada

Public Service Alliance of Canada

Richmond Poverty Reduction Coalition - BC

The Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action

Council of Canadians with Disabilities

PovertyTalks!

Provincial/Municipal Endorsements

Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg

Antigonish Coalition to End Poverty

Attachment Leadership

BC Poverty Reduction Coalition

City for All Women Initiative (CAWI) / Initiative: Une Ville pour Toutes les Femmes (IVTF)

Grey Sisters

Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination

Guelph Community Health Centre

Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition

Mom2Mom Child Poverty Initiative Society

NB Common Front for Social Justice/Front commun pour la justice sociale du NB

New Tecumseth Climate Action

ODSP Action Coalition

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health

Parkdale Food Centre

Poverty Free Halton

Red Bear Healing Home Society

Reducing Poverty Together Oxford (community collaborative)

Social and Environmental Action Committee, Neighbourhood Unitarian Universalist
Congregation

Social Justice & Advocacy Committee, Anglican Diocese of Toronto

Social Planning Council Oxford

United Way Guelph Wellington Dufferin

Voice of Albertans with Disabilities

YWCA Niagara Region