

From:

Address:

Date:

To:

I am writing to you as a community member deeply concerned about household food insecurity in North Muskoka.

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit officials, in a February 2023 report, noted the skyrocketing cost of living has made it nearly impossible, if not entirely impossible, for a rising number of community members to put basic healthy food on the table. With the cost of healthy food for a family of four reaching \$1,191 a month in Muskoka, many people, especially those who rely on social assistance or minimum wage work, are not able to make ends meet:

“A reference family of four with income from Ontario Works would spend 95 per cent of their income on healthy food and rent while an adult in a bachelor apartment with income from Ontario Works would need 161 per cent of that income to pay for just healthy food and rent,” states the health unit. “When earnings from one full-time minimum wage job are the income source for a family of four, 66 per cent of the family’s income would be needed to pay for healthy food and rent alone.”

Poverty should not exist. Financial instability and food insecurity have profound adverse effects on people’s physical, mental, and social determinants of health, which adds burden to our social, economic, and health systems and communities. Food charity is not a solution.

Our community members need your help. I urge you to take action on this serious public health issue with policies and programs that improve incomes and end poverty:

- Secure, quality jobs that pay livable income and benefits
- Social assistance programs with livable income and benefits
- Income tax reductions for the lowest income households
- A basic income guarantee
- Affordable housing, transportation, and child care

Such policies and programs address root causes, give choice of which foods to buy, preserve dignity, and ensure the basic right to food.

As an elected representative, I call on you to make food security a reality through real action. You have the power to make our province and country a better, more equitable place for everyone to lead healthier and happier lives.

Signed,

References:

Ontario Dietitians in Public Health (2023). No Money for Food is Cent\$less. URL: <https://www.odph.ca/centsless>

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Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (2023). The real cost of unaffordable food. URL: <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/HealthyEating/The-Real-Cost-of-Unaffordable-Food>