

April 22, 2026

Dear Members of Huron Perth Councils,

At the April 10, 2026, meeting of the Huron Perth Public Health (HPPH) Board of Health, the Board received a staff report: *Household Food Insecurity* with recommendations to direct staff to share the Board of Health report (including appendix) to all municipalities in Huron and Perth Counties. This report outlines the public health concerns of food insecurity which often leads to poorer physical and mental health outcomes and higher healthcare utilization.

Supported by HPPH, municipalities can support policies and initiatives to reduce food insecurity through various evidence-informed income strategies as outlined in the [Food Insecurity: A Primer for Municipalities](#).

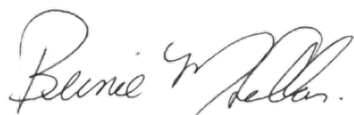
Municipalities can act by advancing poverty reduction plans, supporting partnerships, promoting living wages, expanding tax-filing supports, increasing affordable housing, improving service affordability, and raising awareness that food insecurity is an income issue.

Municipalities can also champion stronger provincial and federal income policies, including higher minimum wages, increased OW/ODSP rates, enhanced federal benefits, and exploration of basic income.

The resource, [Food Insecurity: A Primer for Municipalities](#), aims to continue the conversation about food insecurity and the strategies to reduce food insecurity in our local communities. HPPH will continue to monitor data trends, emerging concerns, health inequities, and opportunities for collaboration across Huron and Perth Counties.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Bernie MacLellan, Chair
Huron Perth Public Health Board of Health

Huron Perth Public Health | Staff Report

Report to HPPH Board of Health | April 10, 2026

Date submitted:

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Subject: Food Insecurity (including a Primer for Municipalities and alPHa Resolution)

Report Recommendation

1. That the Huron Perth Public Health Board of Health (BOH) receives this report for information purposes and directs staff to share this report (including appendix) to all municipalities in Huron and Perth counties on behalf of the BOH.
2. That the Huron Perth Public Health Board of Health co-signs the Association of Local Public Health Agencies' draft Resolution submission AXX-2026, *Enhancing the Ontario Works Benefit*, led by Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU), with endorsement from Southwestern Public Health and Windsor Essex County Health Unit.

Background

Household food insecurity, defined as inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints, is a significant public health issue across Canada. Food insecurity is associated with poorer physical and mental health outcomes and higher healthcare utilization.¹ Public health units monitor food insecurity and food affordability to support health equity and the conditions required for residents to meet basic needs.² Huron Perth food insecurity and affordability data was published in the HPPH report, [The Real Cost of Eating, 2024](#) and shared with HPPH's Board of Health in April 2025.

Food insecurity is fundamentally an income problem, not a food supply or food literacy issue. Charitable food programs may reduce short-term hunger but do not reduce food insecurity prevalence. Sustainable improvement comes from income-based policies, such as adequate wages, social assistance rates, tax credits, and income supports.²

Municipalities influence key social determinants of health through housing policy, transportation systems, local economic development, childcare availability, and access to municipal programs and services. Rising housing and transportation costs reduce the resources households have available for food.²

Food Insecurity: A Primer for Municipalities (appendix) was developed by Ontario Dietitians in Public Health and adapted by Huron Perth Public Health to support municipalities in implementing evidence-informed, income-focused strategies. These include strengthening local poverty reduction plans, supporting living wage initiatives, enhancing affordable housing supply, improving access to municipal programs, and championing provincial and federal policies that strengthen income security.²⁻³

Across Ontario, several municipalities have passed motions recognizing food insecurity as an urgent issue, endorsed basic income, adopted living wage employer status, or expanded affordability policies such as reduced-income transit and recreation programs. This demonstrates growing momentum for local action.

Discussion

Given the significant health impacts of food insecurity and the opportunities for municipal partnership, this report presents key evidence and recommended strategies to support local and provincial governments in addressing the financial conditions that underpin food insecurity. Public health is positioned to provide data, leadership, and health equity expertise to support long-term solutions.²

Household Food Insecurity in Huron and Perth

Food insecurity remains a persistent issue that reflects household financial strain. Locally, one in four households (or 26.1%) are food insecure.⁴ Monitoring Food Affordability in Ontario (MFAO) data show that rising housing costs leaves many households with insufficient resources for food and other essentials.²

Association of Local Public Health Agencies: Household Food Insecurity

alPHa previously endorsed various resolutions in support of social assistance reform and income-based solutions to household food insecurity including:

- [A24-05: Early Childhood Food Insecurity: An Emerging Public Health Problem Requiring Urgent Action](#)
- [A23-05: Monitoring Food Affordability in Ontario and Inadequacy of Social Assistance Rates](#)
- [A18-02: Public Health Support for a Minimum Wage that is a Living Wage](#)
- [A18-04: Extending the Ontario Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Nutritional Allowance to 24 Months](#)
- [A15-04: Public Health Support for a Basic Income Guarantee](#)
- [A05-18: Adequate Nutrition for Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program Participants and Low Wage Earners](#)

Key Considerations

Public Health contributes to household food insecurity work by providing local data and analysis, supporting municipalities with evidence and policy options, and sharing evidence-informed solutions with decision makers. Food insecurity results from inadequate income. Community food programs cannot address the underlying economic causes of food insecurity. Income-focused municipal strategies can improve residents' financial security.² Municipal policies influence housing supply, transit affordability, childcare access, recreation fees, and financial supports – all of which affect disposable income.⁵⁻⁸

The following are key considerations for evidence-informed municipal actions, drawn from *Food Insecurity: A Primer for Municipalities*:³

- **Poverty Reduction Strategies:** Develop or refresh municipal plans with clear targets and actions.
- **Partnerships:** Support and participate in local poverty, food system, and income-security tables.
- **Living Wage:** Explore municipal certification and encourage uptake among local employers.
- **Income Tax Filing Clinics:** Expand access, locations, navigation support, and transportation options.
- **Affordable Housing:** Utilize planning tools to increase supply and diversity, support the Housing First approach, protect affordable stock, and coordinate supportive housing investment.
- **Municipal Service Affordability:** Expand reduced-income transit fare programs, childcare subsidies, recreation supports, and navigator roles.
- **Public Awareness:** Communicate that food insecurity reflects income inadequacy, not gaps in food literacy or availability.
- **Champion income policies:** Municipalities may communicate to provincial and federal leaders, that income policies to reduce food insecurity are required, including:
 - Adequate minimum wage
 - Increased and indexed OW/ODSP rates
 - Enhanced federal benefits (e.g., CCB, CDB)
 - Exploration of basic income models

Conclusion

Household food insecurity has significant health impacts and is driven by inadequate income rather than lack of food availability. Municipalities have practical, evidence-based levers to reduce financial strain and improve affordability for residents. All municipalities in Huron and Perth can play an essential role in advancing poverty reduction, improving access to affordable housing and services, supporting living wage

initiatives, strengthening income-support mechanisms, and raising awareness of food insecurity as a community priority.

Sharing [Food Insecurity: A Primer for Municipalities](#) with municipal partners will help strengthen a consistent, informed local approach. HPPH will continue to monitor data trends, emerging concerns, health inequities, and opportunities for collaboration across Huron and Perth Counties.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Board of Health Priorities

This report supports Focused Program Delivery, helping ensure HPPH programs remain evidence-based and responsive to community needs.

Supporting Documentation

- Appendix A: [Food Insecurity: A Primer for Municipalities](#)

References

1. Tarasuk V, Cheng J, de Oliveira C, Dachner N, Gundersen C, Kurdyak P. (2015). [Association between household food insecurity and annual health care costs.](#)
2. Huron Perth Public Health. (2025). [The real cost of eating: Food insecurity in Huron and Perth, 2024.](#)
3. Huron Perth Public Health. (2026). [Food insecurity: A primer for municipalities.](#)
4. Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (Public Health Ontario). (2025). [Snapshots data file for household food insecurity \(2019 to 2024\).](#)
5. Canadian Centre for Housing Rights. (2022). [Policy Advocacy.](#)
6. Whitzman C. (2024). [Homeward Bound: How to Create Deeply Affordable Housing.](#)
7. Acorn Canada. (2025). [Ontario ACORN Provincial Platform.](#)
8. Association of Municipalities of Ontario. (2022). [A Blueprint for Action: An Integrated Approach to Address the Ontario Housing Crisis.](#)