

Peterborough Food Action Network

September 15, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Justin.Trudeau@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Minister of Finance, Deputy Prime Minister
Chrystia.Freeland@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos
President of the Treasury Board
Jean-Yves.Duclos@parl.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau, Ms. Freeland, Mr. Duclos:

We are writing on behalf of the Peterborough Food Action Network (PFAN), a broad community network focused on everyone having enough healthy food to eat as part of a long-term food security strategy. PFAN brings together agencies and individuals to build community food security as part of local poverty reduction efforts.

Now is the time for designing and implementing a permanent Guaranteed Basic Income (GBI). The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) has helped many pay for food, shelter, childcare, and any outstanding debt. CERB has been an effective short-term solution to some very real problems, for which we thank you, as we do for the newly announced Canada Recovery Benefit (CRB).

However, with the COVID-19 pandemic, Canada has seen increased rates of food insecurity, a compromise in the quality or quantity of food consumed.^[i] Food insecurity is also defined as the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints, and is a serious problem linked to poor physical and mental health, premature death, and general material deprivation.^[ii] Food insecurity affects Canadians unequally, with a higher prevalence of food insecurity in households with children, low income households, lone-parent led families, those who rent rather than own their housing, and those who identify as Indigenous or Black.^[iii] Food insecurity research supports that an income guarantee could address this problem.^[iii] **Establishing a Guaranteed Basic Income as an income floor is a bold solution to help all Canadians meet their basic needs and put food on the table in ways that allow for cultural expression, nutritional adequacy, and human dignity during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. No one should be left behind.**

As a group that works towards healthy, sustainable food systems, we support a Guaranteed Basic Income as a policy to assist those who work across all areas of the food system including farmers, farm workers, food processors, food distributors, food artisans, food service workers, restaurant operators, and eaters, many of whom have faced even more challenges and precarious circumstances as a result of the pandemic. Income supports are also needed at this time to stimulate the Canadian Economy and the local food industry as they allow funds to be invested back into the economy. For example, through income supports provided through the Canada Child Benefit every \$1 disbursed to Canadian families corresponded with a \$1.97 contribution to national GDP through direct, indirect and induced effects.^[iv]

Peterborough Food Action Network

We support principles outlined by Coalition Canada, indicating that a Basic Income should be available to everyone when needed; subject only to residency and income; sufficient to live in dignity and security; respectful of autonomy; complementary to social services; and reliable.^[v] A Guaranteed Basic Income can build on successes of CERB, to effectively support Canadians moving forward during the pandemic, and in resilience during future crises.

As you lead our Nation through this crisis, we are asking you, with the support of your colleagues, to ensure that Canadians can benefit from a Guaranteed Basic Income immediately, and that this be included in the September 23rd Speech from the Throne, announcing government priorities.

Thank you for your dedication to well-being of all Canadians. A guaranteed basic income is an important step forward, as we walk through and beyond the pandemic, together.

Sincerely,

Joëlle Favreau, Lauren Kennedy, and Mary Anne Martin

Working group representatives, on behalf of the Peterborough Food Action Network

Cc: Hon. Carla Qualtrough, Hon. Patty Hajdu, Hon. Marc Miller, Hon. Ahmed Hussen, Hon. Dominc LeBlanc, Hon. Erin O'Toole, Yves-Francois Blanchet, Jagmeet Singh, Elizabeth May, and local MPs, Hon. Maryam Monsef, Philip Lawrence, and Jamie Schmale

References:

[i] Statistics Canada (2020). Canadians experiencing food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic, May 2020. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-627-m/11-627-m2020042-eng.htm>

[ii] Tarasuk V, Mitchell A. (2020). Household food insecurity in Canada, 2017-18. Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>

[iii] Tarasuk, Valerie (2017). Implications of a Basic Income Guarantee for Household Food Insecurity. Research Paper 24. Thunder Bay: Northern Policy Institute. Retrieved from <https://proof.utoronto.ca/>

[iv] Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis (2019). Economic Contribution of the Canada Child Benefit: A Basic Income Guarantee for Canadian Families with Children. Retrieved from <https://www.ubiworks.ca/ccb>

[v] Coalition Canada (2020). The Basic Income we Want. Retrieved from <https://basicincomecoalition.ca/basic-income/basic-income-we-want-for-canada/>