

An Open Letter and Question from the Peterborough Food Action Network (PFAN) to MPP Candidates for the 2025 Ontario Election for:

- **Peterborough – Kawartha**
- **Northumberland – Peterborough South**
- **Haliburton – Kawartha Lakes – Brock**

Dear Candidates for Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP):

As members of the Peterborough Food Action Network (PFAN), we are growing in concern about the levels of household food insecurity in our communities and across Ontario.

As you may know, household food insecurity is defined as, “inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints.”¹ Like many of the challenges currently faced by people in our communities, household food insecurity is driven by a number of intersecting root causes, including:

- insufficient income to buffer impacts of rising food prices and other expenses;
- inadequate levels of social assistance;
- income instability; and
- lack of affordable housing.

These factors are contributing to an increasing instability that cannot and should not be addressed by emergency food solutions. While these interventions such as food banks may serve the immediate purpose of temporarily alleviating hunger, they fail to address household food insecurity and are buckling under the weight of a growing and relentless demand.

There are many compelling statistics that we can share with you, but it is likely that you are already aware that:

- A record number of individuals in Ontario (22.9%) reported some level of food insecurity in 2023;²
- In 2023, 70% of households relying on Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program, were food-insecure;³
- Nearly 1 in 5 households faced food insecurity in Peterborough County and City between 2021 and 2023;⁴
- The province with the greatest number of individuals living in food insecure households is Ontario at 2.8 million;⁵
- Household food insecurity adversely affects physical and mental health, including that of children; healthcare system usage and costs increase as food insecurity becomes more severe;⁶ and
- Poverty, which is at the root of food insecurity, costs Ontario approximately \$33 billion per year.⁷

Such startling statistics have yet to spur the kind of action required to ensure meaningful policy interventions. Substantial change has not occurred, in spite of the ongoing clear articulation of policy solutions that have the potential to introduce greater dignity and stability to people’s lives, such as:

- social assistance, benefit rates, minimum wage rates, and targeted benefits that match the cost of living;
- living wages;
- a guaranteed livable basic income to ensure stability for all Ontarians;
- prioritizing the development of affordable housing; and
- reinstating and strengthening rent control policies.

The need is urgent, and it is no longer possible to ignore or minimize the suffering happening in our communities. These are our neighbours, friends, family members, and colleagues, and they are deserving of the time, energy, and resources needed to increase their stability and belonging.

In recognition of this urgent need for change, we pose the following question to you:

What policy changes will your party make to implement long-term solutions that will help Ontarians facing household food insecurity chart a course to stability?

We ask that in addition to considering the relevant elements of your platform, you look inward and think deeply and personally about an approach to bettering the lives of Ontarians facing household food insecurity that conveys hope, dignity, and belonging. There is no time to waste!

We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Members of the Peterborough Food Action Network

The Peterborough Food Action Network (PFAN) has a vision that everyone in Peterborough City and County will have 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. Learn more at www.foodinpeterborough.ca

¹ PROOF (2021). Provincial Policy Levers to Reduce Household Food Insecurity. Retrieved from: https://proof.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PROOF_FACTSHEET_Provincial-policies-052021.pdf

² Sustain Ontario (2025). Poverty Policy Summary. Retrieved from: <https://sustainontario.com/custom/uploads/2025/02/Poverty-Policy-Summary.pdf>

³PROOF (2025). Ontario Election 2025: Putting a plan for adequate social assistance on the table. Retrieved from: <https://proof.utoronto.ca/2025/ontario-election-2025-putting-a-plan-for-adequate-social-assistance-on-the-table/>

⁴ Peterborough Public Health (2024). Addressing Food Insecurity in Peterborough. Retrieved from: <https://www.peterboroughpublichealth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2024-Report-Addressing-Food-Insecurity-in-Peterborough.pdf>

⁵ Dietitians of Canada (2024). Dietitians of Canada Position Statement on Household Food Insecurity in Canada. Retrieved from: https://www.dietitians.ca/DietitiansOfCanada/media/Images/DC-Household-Food-Insecurity-Position-Statement_2024_ENG_1.pdf?ext=.pdf

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Income Security Advocacy Centre (2025). ISAC Recommendations for the Ontario 2025 Budget. Retrieved from: <https://incomesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/ISAC-Recommendations-for-the-Ontario-2025-Budget.pdf>