



Health
Canada

Santé
Canada

Health Products
and Food Branch

Direction générale des produits
de santé et des aliments

February 5, 2020

Mrs. Rosana Salvaterra,
Chair, Peterborough Food Action Network
Medical Officer of Health, Peterborough Public Health

Mrs. Mary Drummond,
Chair, Durham Food Policy Council
Durham Region

Dear Mrs. Salvaterra and Mrs. Drummond,

Thank you for your correspondence sent on January 23, 2020, co-addressed to the Minister of Health and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food, regarding *A Food Policy for Canada*. It is my pleasure to respond on behalf of the Minister of Health.

I would like to commend the work of Peterborough Food Action Network and Durham Food Policy Council. Thank you for sharing your views and perspectives regarding *A Food Policy for Canada*.

The December 2019 mandate letter addressed to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food instructs the Minister to continue with the implementation of the new *Food Policy for Canada* by advancing areas of near-term action such as helping Canadian communities access healthier foods and supporting food security in Northern and Indigenous communities. The Health Portfolio will continue to work closely with our colleagues at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and with other federal government departments, including the Public Health Agency of Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, to support the rollout of this policy.

Health Canada shares your concerns regarding the challenges faced by Canadians experiencing food insecurity. Addressing the determinants of health and reducing health inequities is crucial to help support Canadians in making healthy food choices that are aligned with the new Food Guide. These considerations are discussed in detail in Canada's Dietary Guidelines. In developing the new Food Guide, we considered factors such as cost, access, and availability of foods, and the cultural, social and historical context of Indigenous Peoples.

We agree that monitoring the extent and nature of food insecurity in Canada is an essential component to developing evidence-informed policies. As such, Health Canada will continue to support our Government's efforts in monitoring food insecurity and consider the results in our healthy eating policy and program decisions.

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Effective programming to support healthy eating is a crucial component in maintaining the health of the Canadian population, especially for those experiencing food insecurity. You may be interested to know that the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) invests \$27 million annually through the *Healthy Living and Chronic Disease Prevention - Multi-sectoral Partnerships* (MSP Program). The MSP Program provides the co-investment needed for effective programming that encourages healthy lifestyles and healthy eating among all Canadians. For example, PHAC's investment of \$1.2M in the Community Food Centres Canada *FoodFit* project supports low-income adult community members across Canada with a program that includes hands-on food skills activities, preparing affordable and nutritious meals, and group physical activity sessions to help people achieve their healthy eating and healthy living goals. More information on MSP funded projects can be found here: <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/msp/>.

You may also be interested to know that PHAC's Pan-Canadian Health Inequalities Reporting Initiative, a collaborative undertaking by PHAC, the Pan-Canadian Public Health Network, Statistics Canada, the Canadian Institute for Health Information, and the First Nations Information Governance Centre, produces evidence on health inequalities, including health determinants such as food security by sociodemographic subgroups of the Canadian population. This evidence supports action to more effectively reduce health inequities in Canada and monitor progress. To access data and key results from this initiative, including the report entitled *Key Health Inequalities in Canada: A National Portrait* that includes a chapter on household food security, please visit: <https://infobase.phac-aspc.gc.ca/health-inequalities/>.

Thank you for taking the time to share your comments with us. I hope that my comments will be helpful in addressing your concerns.

Yours sincerely,



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