

Media Release



Food Insecurity in Timiskaming - 2019

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Struggling to afford food – a reality for many in Timiskaming

About 1 in 10 families in Timiskaming struggle to afford food, a problem known as household food insecurity (HFI). The rising cost of living increases the risk of HFI for people with low income. This Nutrition Month, Timiskaming Health Unit reminds us that poverty is the root cause of HFI and an opportunity to advocate for effective, income-based solutions is before us with the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy consultation.

The Nutritious Food Basket 2019 (NFB) results showed the cost of food was \$950/month for a family of four, a \$12 increase over the past two years. Housing expenses also increased in the same period, with the average monthly rent for a two bedroom unit now \$100 higher. Rising costs of living are harder on low income households, like those on social assistance or minimum wage. After paying for housing, a family of three on Ontario Works would have \$850 a month left to cover other expenses such as health or childcare.

Tight budgets mean tough decisions, such as choosing between food and medical bills. This leads to poorer health and, among adults, higher risk of disease such as diabetes. Among children, HFI seriously affects mental health, an impact that extends into adulthood. And when some people in a community are unhealthy, everyone is affected.

Responses to HFI often focus on community charity and food-based initiatives. However, since these initiatives do not address poverty itself, they only temporarily lessen food insecurity. Ending HFI will only come with poverty reduction. Consultations for a new [Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy](#) are now open to individuals, service providers and employers. Submissions can be emailed to prso@ontario.ca or by taking an online survey at [Engage Ontario](#), by March 30th.

The proposed strategy focuses on job creation, supports and services and a lower cost of living. While these are important, people in Timiskaming need a more comprehensive strategy with income-based solutions such as a realistic minimum wage, fair social assistance rates and affordable housing and childcare.

Every year in Canada, March is Nutrition Month. This year, the Timiskaming Health Unit (THU) is focusing on food insecurity by responding to the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy consultation and with a campaign to raise awareness of food insecurity in Timiskaming. The campaign will include social media and two online presentations open for all members of the community (March 12, 11-12 pm and March 24, 1:20-2:30 pm). THU will also continue to work with partners on activities that focus on increasing food literacy, improving food systems and promoting social well-being. To register and learn more about food insecurity visit <http://timiskaminghu.com/444/No-money-for-food-is-CENTLESS>.

www.timiskaminghu.com

For more information

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