

August 3, 2018

The Honourable Lisa MacLeod
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services
80 Grosvenor Street, 6th Floor, Hepburn Block
Ministry of Community and Social Services
Toronto, ON M7A 1E9

Sent via email: lisa.macleodco@pc.ola.org

Dear Minister MacLeod:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Health for Peterborough Public Health to urge you to reconsider the recent decision to cancel the Ontario Basic Income Pilot Project. We feel strongly that the Pilot Project offers a well-designed, cost-effective and unique opportunity to determine the contribution of a Basic Income to improving a range of economic, social and health outcomes in Ontario. The 4,000 pilot participants, including 2,000 participants in our neighbouring community of Lindsay, have entered into significant future commitments since the launch of the project, and in good faith have agreed to provide important data on the impact of this poverty reduction approach. We feel it is ethically essential to honour the promise of a full pilot program to them.

Peterborough Public Health has actively supported the concept of the basic income guarantee for many years. In September, 2015, [our Board urged the provincial government](#) to undertake a Basic Income initiative in order to address extensive health inequities in our province. Dr. Salvaterra, the Medical Officer of Health, has provided public information and support for the concept in [local media](#). Public health staff also participate in the local Basic Income Peterborough Network. The Network has hosted a number of public education events, including an event featuring Dr. Evelyn Forget to share her analysis of the basic income project in Dauphin Manitoba, which predated the Ontario pilot.

There is an abundance of evidence on the powerful link between income and health, which is supported by [data from our local community](#). Fifteen per cent of the population of Peterborough City and County live in low income. Those living with a lower income in our community are more likely to die earlier than people who are better off financially – females in the highest income group live eight years longer than those in the lowest income group, while males in the highest income group live fourteen years longer than males in the lowest income group. Similarly, individuals living with the lowest incomes have higher rates of chronic disease. Self-reported diabetes in Peterborough among adults aged 50+ in the lowest income group (18%) is more than double that of the highest income group (8%).

It has also been well documented that food insecurity is closely related to poorer health outcomes and higher health care costs. The most recent edition of the [Peterborough Limited Incomes/Nutritious Food Basket Report](#) reported that 16.5% of people in Peterborough City and County experience food insecurity. The Report clearly demonstrates that incomes from current social assistance programs and minimum wages from often precarious employment, are insufficient to meet people's basic needs. A Basic Income Guarantee has the potential to dramatically reduce food insecurity in our communities.

Previous research has shown that improved health outcomes are obtained when people receive a liveable basic income. Residents of Dauphin, Manitoba, for instance, saw an 8.5% reduction in hospitalization rates (primarily due to fewer accident and injury hospitalizations and fewer hospitalizations due to mental health issues). These improvements are direly needed in our current situation of significant health inequities.

We firmly believe that the Ontario Basic Income Pilot Project has enormous potential to inform the development of an effective income support system which will directly impact a wide range of key determinants of health and health outcomes. We ask that you allow the pilot and its planned evaluation to proceed as planned and fulfill its considerable potential.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Councillor Henry Clarke,
Chair, Board of Health

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cc: Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario
Honourable Christine Elliott, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care
Dr. David Williams, Chief Medical Officer of Health
Roselle Martino, Assistant Deputy Minister, Population and Public Health Division
Loretta Ryan, Executive Director, Association of Local Public Health Agencies
Pegeen Walsh, Executive Director, Ontario Public Health Association
MPP David Piccini
MPP Laurie Scott
MPP Dave Smith
Central-East Local Health Integration Network
Ontario Boards of Health