



April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022

The Honourable Jill Dunlop  
Minister of Colleges and Universities  
5<sup>th</sup> Floor, 438 University Ave  
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

**Re: Call to Address Campus Food Insecurity across Ontario's Colleges**

Dear Minister Dunlop,

Across the province, growing numbers of Ontario's college students are facing hunger and food insecurity across their campuses. Statistics Canada defines food insecurity as "the inability to access sufficient quantity or variety of food because of financial constraints". According to Meal Exchange's latest 2021 survey, 57% of students reported they could not afford to eat balanced or nutritious meals, up 15% since 2020, with nearly a third reporting they skipped meals because they did not have enough money to eat.

While most students have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, low-income and racialized students have been disproportionately affected. Job losses, rising tuition levels, intensified discrimination, disrupted learning environments, and an increased cost of living have all impacted worsening levels of food insecurity, with financial instability and the lack of affordable foods as the predominant barriers students face.

To address the lack of healthy, affordable, and culturally-inclusive food options, college students have been turning to both community and on-campus food banks for help. In Toronto, the use of Food Banks has risen to unprecedented levels, with over 1.45 million visits in 2021, a 150% increase since 2010.

Unfortunately, limited external funding for on-campus food banks often forces student unions to fund and operate these emergency centres, and thus limited food resources are available to students who need assistance the most. Access to food banks should always be a last resort for students when faced with chronic stressors (including poverty, lack of affordable housing, systemic discrimination), and not act a solution for food insecurity challenges.

College students from across the province are encountering food insecurity concerns,

particularly those in rural and remote communities, which are increasingly impacted by both harvesting challenges and high shipping costs. According to Food Secure Canada, 70% of northern Ontario households face food insecurity. While many urban centres have Food Charters established, the Province of Ontario currently does not have a comprehensive provincial Student Food Charter in place that supports low-income; rural; black, indigenous & people of colour (BIPOC); or other marginalized communities. As the cost of living and other economic stressors intensify in 2022, it is important that the needs and challenges of low-income, rural, BIPOC, and other marginalized communities are included in provincial food policy.

College students are a vital part of Ontario's economy and post-secondary sector, reflecting the high-quality education offered by our Public Colleges, and serving our communities with a highly-trained, skilled workforce that continues to support Ontario's post-pandemic recovery. There is a clear economic advantage for the Ministry of Colleges & Universities to provide the necessary supports needed to ensure college students remain a vital, contributing asset to Ontario's economy.

We write to you as Ontario MPPs and leading provincial organizations requesting that you:

1. Partner with the Ministry of Health to create a new Ontario Food Standard for Public Colleges that is aligned with the Canada Food Guide, and that ensures colleges offer healthy food alternatives which are culturally-inclusive and accessible;
2. Commit to developing an Ontario Student Food Charter that reflect the needs of those most affected by food insecurity, including low-income, rural, BIPOC, and other marginalized college student communities;
3. Partner with Meal Exchange to conduct a food system analysis across Ontario's Public College campuses;
4. Establish a provincial grant specifically for on-campus food banks, which can be used to maintain infrastructure required for providing nutritious options (eg refrigerators);
5. Increase funding for Public Colleges earmarked for providing student food access initiatives, including the requirement that institutions hire a full-time campus dietician;
6. Mandate that all on-campus eateries provide nutritional facts on food items sold, including an ingredients list, nutrients, and potential allergens.

We look forward to receiving a response from you with details of further action.

Sincerely,



Eli Ridder  
President, College Student Alliance



*AGBN*

Gabi Hentschke, Director  
College Student Alliance



*Mike Schreiner*

Mike Schreiner, MPP (Guelph)  
Leader of the Green Party of Ontario



*Lindsay Walker*

Lindsay Walker, Associate Director  
Humber College, Office of Sustainability



*Kristine Galvan*

Kristine Galvan, Manager of Leadership  
& Advocacy, IGNITE



*Rossen Lee*

Rossen Lee, Networking Co-Lead  
Toronto Youth Food Policy Council



*Fateha Hossain*

Fateha Hossain,  
Good Food Markets Facilitator  
FoodShare

CC: MPP Christine Elliott, Minister of Health & Deputy Premier  
MPP France G linas, Opposition Critic for Health  
MPP Jill Andrew, Opposition Critic for Culture and Heritage, Women’s Issues  
MPP Joel Harden, Opposition Critic for Accessibility and Persons with Disabilities  
MPP Laura Mae Lindo, Opposition Critic for Colleges & Universities, Anti-Racism  
MPP Lisa Gretzky, Opposition Critic for Community and Social Services  
MPP Marit Stiles, Opposition Critic for Education  
MPP Monique Taylor, Opposition Critic for Mental Health and Addictions  
MPP Peggy Sattler, Opposition Critic for Labour, Democratic Reform  
MPP Rima Berns-McGown, Opposition Critic for Poverty and Homelessness  
MPP Sol Mamakwa, Opposition Critic for Indigenous and Treaty Relations  
MPP Suze Morrison, Opposition Critic for Urban Indigenous Issues  
MPP Taras Natyshak, Opposition Critic for Job Creation and Economic Recovery, Ethics and Accountability  
MPP Terence Kernaghan, Opposition Critic for LGBTQ

Claude Brul , President of Algonquin College  
Daniel Giroux, President of Coll ge Bor al  
Bill Best, President of Cambrian College  
George Burton, President of Canadore College,  
Craig Stephenson, President of Centennial College  
John Tibbits, President of Conestoga College  
Kathleen Lynch, President of Confederation College  
Peter J. Devlin, President of Fanshawe College  
Maureen Adamson, President of Fleming College  
Dr. Gervan Fearon, President of George Brown College  
Chris Whitaker, President of Humber College  
Lise Bourgeois, President of La Cit  Coll giale  
Rob Kardas, President of Lambton College  
Dr. Ann Marie Vaughan, President of Loyalist College  
Ron McKerlie, President of Mohawk College  
Sean Kennedy, President of Niagara College  
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Patti France, President of St. Clair College  
Glenn Vollebregt, President of St. Lawrence College  
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David Agnew, President of Seneca College  
Dr. Janet Morrison, President of Sheridan College