

September 28, 2018

The Honourable Jean-Yves Duclos, PC, MP
Minister of Families, Children and Social Development
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6
Sent by email: Jean-Yves.Duclos@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister Duclos,

Dietitians of Canada (DC) congratulates you and your department on the recent launch of Canada's first Poverty Reduction Strategy. We are writing to commend elements within this strategy, particularly as related to household food insecurity, a serious public health issue about which DC has articulated its [position](#).

DC is a [professional association](#) representing over 5,000 members across Canada. We have a strong structure supporting membership engagement, with six regional offices across Canada facilitating FPT (federal/provincial/territorial) outreach. We aim to advance health through food and nutrition, and to provide leadership in shaping food and nutrition policy. Dietitians are passionate about the power of food and its connection to health. Our influence runs deep; the diversity of our roles covers every area of food and nutrition across the country. Like all regulated health professionals, dietitians undergo comprehensive and rigorous training, both on the job and in universities. Our long-term vision shapes the future of eating and healthy living for all Canadians.

We are pleased that “a dashboard of indicators will be made available online so that Canadians can clearly see the progress that has been made”, and in particular “the reduction in food insecurity levels”. In our [June 2017 letter](#), we recommended “the annual measurement of household food insecurity in all provinces and territories, for all vulnerable populations”, emphasizing that this indicator is critical and essential, because household food insecurity is “a sensitive marker that assists governments in identifying their successes in poverty reduction and health promotion”.

Dietitians of Canada / Les diététistes du Canada

99 Yorkville Avenue, Second Floor

Toronto, Ontario, Canada M5R 1C1

TEL: 416.596.0857

FAX: 416.596.0603

EMAIL: centralinfo@dietitians.ca

In our food insecurity position, we recommended:

1. Mandatory annual data collection using a standardized tool such as the Household Food Security Survey Model (HFSSM), with sufficient sampling to measure the prevalence and severity of household food insecurity in vulnerable populations across all regions of Canada.
2. Regular analysis and public reporting of household food insecurity in Canada, with comprehensive detail by geographic regions and vulnerable populations using a framework for household food insecurity categories that includes marginal food insecurity as part of the total of food insecurity and identifies severity of household food insecurity at the levels of marginal, moderate and severe food insecurity. Data analysis and reporting should be coordinated to maximize capacity to compare data from all studies.
3. Regular evaluation of the impact of poverty reduction and other strategies to reduce household food insecurity (measured by the HFSSM) and improve selected population health indicators, with adjustments in policy to maximize reach and impact. For example, the effectiveness of government subsidy of food prices in Nutrition North Canada communities should be monitored and adjusted to ensure reduction of the alarmingly high rates of household food insecurity in these regions.

It is our understanding, based on recent follow-up inquiries we made with Statistics Canada, that measurement of household food insecurity via the HFSSM will be included in the next annual Canadian Income Survey, which will be expanded to also survey the Territories. This information will provide excellent data related to household food insecurity and variables related to income and housing. It is our hope that the analysis of this data will include a separate category for “marginal household food insecurity” – but we were not able to receive confirmation about this action. We think this category should be separated to reflect the number of households indicating that they still experience worry or anxiety about having enough money to buy food.

While we most certainly appreciate the targets of “ambitious but realistic reductions” in the poverty rate, using Canada's Official Poverty Line, we believe the current rate of moderate and severe household food insecurity (i.e., “households that do not have enough money to purchase or access a sufficient amount and variety of food to live a healthy lifestyle”) – a total of 8.3 percent of Canadian households in 2011–12 – is unacceptable since these households cannot meet the most basic need for food. We therefore recommend, as an additional target for Canada's poverty reduction strategy, that there be measured reductions in both moderate and severe household food insecurity rates in Canada, with the final target of 0% moderate or severe food insecurity in Canada. These goals are particularly critical in northern and remote regions, especially among Indigenous peoples. Indeed, it is for this very reason that we have also written to the Honourable Dominic LeBlanc, Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade, expressing our concerns about the current Nutrition North Canada program, which does not target food insecure households or provide strategies to support access to traditional/country foods.

Minister Duclos, it would be an honour and pleasure to meet with you. We welcome the opportunity for a meeting with you in the near future to introduce ourselves and discuss how our organization and members can help you address this urgent element within your mandate.

Sincerely,



Nathalie Savoie, MBA, RD
Chief Executive Officer – Directrice générale
Dietitians of Canada – Les diététistes du Canada
Tel: 514.238.9824
Email : nathalie.savoie@dietitians.ca

Cc:

The Honourable Dominic Leblanc, Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade, Dominic.Leblanc@parl.gc.ca
The Honourable Jane Philpott, Minister of Indigenous Services, Jane.Philpott@parl.gc.ca
The Honourable Ginette Petitpas Taylor, Minister of Health, Ginette.PetitpasTaylor@parl.gc.ca
Jennifer Wojcik, Senior Director, Public Affairs and Member Engagement, Dietitians of Canada, jennifer.wojcik@dietitians.ca
Pat Vanderkooy, Manager, Public Affairs, Dietitians of Canada, pat.vanderkooy@dietitians.ca