

Policy Responses to Food Insecurity in Canada

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FLEdGE (Food: Locally Embedded Globally Engaged) and Food Secure Canada

This discussion paper was developed as a part of a community-academic collaborative project between Food Secure Canada and FLEdGE (Food: Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged) to map the existing agri-food policy landscape in Canada. The views presented are those of the author and do not necessarily present those of either FSC or FLEdGE.



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Introduction

The 2015 mandate letter from the Prime Minister's Office to the federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development asked the Minister to "lead the development of a Canadian Poverty Reduction Strategy that would set targets to reduce poverty and measure and publicly report on our progress" (Prime Minister of Canada 2015). As part of this mandate, the department of Employment and Social Development launched a consultation toward a Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Minimizing food insecurity will likely be an outcome of this strategy, but this discussion paper aims to identify policy instruments, several at the federal level but primarily at the provincial-territorial level that address food insecurity. The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) borrows the World Food Summit's (1996) definition of food security: "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." (PHAC, 2016). The discussion paper on Northern, Remote, and Indigenous Food Sovereignty addresses the specific context of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples in terms of food security.

To frame this conversation, we draw from André-Anne Parent's evaluation of public health programming in Quebec (2015) to present food security policies along a policy continuum:

- Food assistance, such as food banks, refers to a charity-based approach that distributes agri-food products donated by food processors and retailers, often because goods are unfit for sale. Initiatives include core funding models for food banks as well as fiscal incentives to agri-food operators.
- Food access policies and programs that adopt a place-based approach to social development and community empowerment (referred to in this discussion paper as Community Development). These approaches focus on self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and mutual support (Winne, 2011; Tarasuk, 2001). Interventions include food education and skill building activities (e.g. cooking, gardening) as well as collective models of service delivery and social entrepreneurship such as collective kitchens, consumer cooperatives, and farmers markets. They are situated at the juxtaposition between chronic disease prevention, community economic development, poverty reduction, and social inclusion strategies and programs.
- In contrast with previous approaches, income support strategies do not rely on the delivery of health and social services by community groups, but focus on social assistance rates, addressing income as the main driver of food insecurity (PROOF, 2014). Mechanisms include food allowance measures, monitoring household food insecurity, and research on impacts resulting from income supports. (This scan does not focus on other social determinants of health, such as housing and education.)

To start, we offer a few general observations on authority and jurisdiction over food security for as Koç highlights, "over the years, the federal government¹ has expanded its jurisdiction over income tax, unemployment insurance, social welfare programs, and a national health care plan. Yet, the administration of many food-related levers, such as education, labour, health care, agriculture, and social legislation has remained under provincial jurisdiction" (Koc et al. 2008, 126).

- The Government of Canada does not legally guarantee food as a human right, nor is food considered a public good. For example, the Right to Food has never been enshrined in the

¹ I.e. Canada Child Tax Benefit, GST Tax Credit, Working Income Tax Benefit, and Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors.

- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom (De Schutter, 2012, 5).
- In the absence of a national Poverty Reduction Strategy following the abolition of the Canada Assistance Plan in 1996, provinces and territories have implemented their own strategies and programs. Resources for social, health, and educational programming are allocated based on a federal-provincial/territorial (FPT) cost-sharing arrangement: the Canada Social Transfer (CST) and the Health Transfer (HST) (De Schutter, 2012, 5). With the FPT model, the CST and Canada Health Transfer (CHT) “reduce federal conditions on how provinces and territories spend federal funds, allowing them to make significant cuts to social assistance rates at their own discretion” (De Schutter, 2012, 5)
 - Urban and rural municipalities² and regional authorities are increasingly paying attention to food security and partnering with community groups in the development of food charters, strategies, or councils (MacRae and Winfield, 2016; MacRae and Donahue, 2013; Bissardon and Boulianne, 2016). Policy levers may include zoning and programming (environmental, health, educational, and socio-economic) (Mah et al., 2016). However, urban and rural municipalities and regional authorities’ policies are outside the scope of this discussion paper.

Methodology

Policy Responses to Food Insecurity in Canada is one of six discussion papers on the current landscape of Canadian food policy and institutions. The research was the result of a partnership between Food Secure Canada³ (FSC) and [Food : Locally Embedded, Globally Engaged](#) (FLEdGE), led out of Wilfrid Laurier Universities’ Centre for Sustainable Food Systems.

The research questions, analysis, and results were developed with community leaders in FSC’s network. The aim of the research is to better understand good practices and enabling frameworks, as well as gaps, and obstacles in Canadian food policy.

Policy Responses to Food Insecurity in Canada aligns with FSC’s mission of zero hunger. Zero hunger is a cornerstone of the People’s Food Policy⁴ (2011) and the Eat Think Vote (2015) campaign.

To develop this paper, we drew from semi-structured interviews with six informants from British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Yukon. We also relied on informal scoping conversations and available documentation. Draft policy maps were presented in two workshops (October 2016), and were circulated to provincial/territorial networks, which provided opportunity for feedback. The first draft of this discussion paper was also reviewed by Rhonda Barron, Advocacy and Policy Manager with Community Food Centres Canada and Susan Belyea, doctoral candidate at Queen’s University.⁵

Particular attention was paid to the relationship between provincial/territorial and federal jurisdictions to identify best practises for the development of a joined-up food policy. Because of the author’s familiarity

² Municipalities are outside of our research scope, as is the relationship related to fiscal authority and public services between municipalities, regional counties, and provincial/territorial governments. The decentralization of authority accompanied by reduced funding creates a stress on local governments.

³ FSC is a national coalition of individuals and organizations working towards zero hunger, healthy and safe food, and sustainable food systems. See: foodsecurecanada.org.

⁴ See <https://foodsecurecanada.org/resources-news/newsletters/discussion-papers-peoples-food-policy>.

⁵ The author would also like to acknowledge the contributions of FSC staff in editing and formatting the final draft of this paper.

with the context in Quebec, this case will serve as a backdrop to this discussion.

The reader can refer to the Summary Policy Table and Maps, a policy table s which were designed to summarize and illustrate the discussion paper. The Summary Policy Table provides both a federal and inter-provincial/territorial outlook. The policy maps mirror each section - food assistance, food access, and income support.

Complementary discussion papers that were developed as part of the research partnership between FSC and FLEdGE include: Northern and remote Indigenous food sovereignty; Territorial food systems; Sustainable agriculture; New farmers and; Healthy school food.

Food assistance⁶

Since the 2008 economic crisis, there has been an increasing number of Canadian households that are using food charity organizations and services. It is well documented that since the 1980s, food donation interventions have shifted from being an emergency response to a common practice. The “food charity paradigm” remains the dominant policy discourse and the primary response to food insecurity ([Mah et al., 2016](#)). Despite this, studies show that the majority of food insecure households do not rely on food banks ([Rainville & Brink 2001](#)).

Core funding models

In Canada, food banks generally do not receive core funding from any level of government, with the exception of Quebec and New Brunswick, where provincial funding is available. Due to hybrid parameters and evolution of many food banks, their programs take both food assistance and food access (community development) approaches. In cases where core funding is provided to food banks, this practice originates from poverty reduction efforts. In Quebec, however, this responsibility was transferred to public health, into a program specifically designed to recognize community groups as partners in the delivery of health and social services.

Case Study: New Brunswick

New Brunswick has had a core funding model for food assistance since 1983 called the Community Volunteer Action Program (CVAP). Over time, the CVAP has become inconsistent and unding has not been adjusted for inflation since 1983, which has limited the accessibility of funding for new actors. In 2014, the New Brunswick government and civil society actors initiated consultations to transition to a community development model. More details of this process can be found in the next section, Food donation incentives (I.16).

Case Study: Quebec

From 2001-2003, Quebec’s Poverty Reduction Strategy⁷ invested \$34.8 million into food security initiatives on a non-renewable basis, two-thirds of which went into targeted school meal programs and the

⁶ See map 1 in annex “Traditional responses to food insecurity.”

⁷ In 2001, the provincial government was the first to pass a law against poverty and social exclusion . It states: “actions (...) should aim to favor dignified access to people and households living in poverty, at a reasonable cost, as well as access to information that is simple and reliable to enable enlightened food choices.” ([Government of Quebec 2016](#)).

To read more, see [Hamelin and Bolduc, 2003](#).

remaining one-third to the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MHSS) ([MSSS 2008](#)). In 2005, the MHSS announced an annual sum of \$3.4 million being directed to regional public health authorities⁸, twenty-five percent of which were transferred to the another public health program⁹ to fund food assistance activities at a regional level. The MHSS partnered with provincial food bank associations¹⁰ through both core and project funding until 2009. Core funding was \$15,000 per year with an annual increase capped to \$25,000 until 2009. Project-based funding ranged from \$75,000 to \$85,000 per year, for three years ([MSSS 2008](#)). We do not know whether this was renewed, but it is unlikely.

Food donation incentives

The growing demand for food banks and the limited funding support available in most provinces, has led to an increased reliance on food donations from the agri-food industry. Several provincial governments have implemented policies that support food assistance programming through tax credits for farmers and food operators that donate food to charities.

These tax credits generally provide a twenty-five percent return on the market value of the food that is donated. These financial incentives were first legislated in 2013 by Ontario ([Bill 36, Local Food Act](#)) and Nunavut ([Bill 46, Food Donation Act](#)); followed by three additional provinces amending their respective income tax laws or modifying their fiscal budgets in 2015-2016: [Quebec](#) (which provides a fifty percent return), [Nova Scotia](#), and [British Columbia](#).

Community development and healthy eating¹¹

Community empowerment aims at providing people with skills and social networks to increase their food security. Solidarity payment schemes, alternative food distribution, collective kitchens, consumer buyer's clubs, and neighborhood or city-wide food strategies are examples of a community development approach. Historically, this approach has been promoted by food security groups and organizations to go beyond charity-based approaches aimed at relieving immediate hunger ([Winne, 2011](#); [Engler-Stringer, 2006](#); Dieticians of Canada, n.a.)

A community development approach emphasizes the active role of volunteer community members, the community economic sector, and the social economics sector in the delivery of a public service. This place-based approach underscores the coordination of services across schools and health care institutions as well as housing rights and financial and employment support clinics. It often operates at the intersection of social inclusion and professional integration, healthy retail environments and food literacy.

Federal interventions

The Public Health Agency of Canada is responsible for food security and healthy eating programming at the federal level. The Prenatal Nutrition Program is a well-established program that is delivered through community groups and health services across the country to pregnant women. In addition, the [Healthy Weights Innovation Strategy](#) has funded national and provincial food security networks, including Community Food Centres Canada, Food Matters Manitoba, Ecology Action Centre, and the Arctic

⁸ Programme de sécurité alimentaire is a core public health program delivered by regional public health in partnership with community groups.

⁹ Programme de soutien aux organismes communautaire (PSOC).

¹⁰ l'Association québécoise des banques alimentaires et des moissons (AQBAM) is a member of Food Banks Canada.

¹¹ See map 2 in annex "Community food security."

Institute of Community-Based Research.

Provincial-territorial food security split between social development and healthy eating strategies

Community development policies were found to be split between health prevention and social development mandates. For example,

- From a health promotion/prevention perspective, community-based approaches to food security focus on behavioural (food skills and knowledge) and environmental change (access to fruits and vegetables).¹²
- From a social development perspective, approaches focus on socio-professional re-integration, participatory organizational models, and breaking social isolation. This approach is generally associated with poverty reduction/social inclusion strategies. However, it can also align with policies addressing rural and regional development, social innovation, social and solidarity economy, employment, labor, and training.

Many chronic disease prevention and poverty reduction efforts address food security using a community development approach. However, from a policy perspective, food security and healthy eating efforts are not integrated, they are subject to different policy mechanisms and arrangements. Additionally, in accordance with the Ottawa Charter on Health Promotion (1986), both skill building and community action strategies decreased from 2004 to 2010 in terms of health prevention efforts ([Maximova et al., 2015](#)).

Food security integrated into action plans/policy frameworks

The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) ([2016](#)) has identified four provincial-territorial governments that have integrated food security into their actions plans or policy frameworks: British Columbia, Nunavut, Yukon, and Manitoba.

Differing from the PHAC, our assessment identified: four provinces ([Saskatchewan](#), [Manitoba](#), [New Brunswick](#), [Ontario](#)) and two territories ([Nunavut](#) and [Northwest Territories](#)) that explicitly integrate food security as a pillar of their poverty reduction strategies, or identify substantial actions to be taken in response to food insecurity. In Quebec and British Columbia, food security programming is under the responsibility of the health ministry and regional public health authorities. In some cases, several departments are involved. For instance, there appears to be a significant level of coordination between departments in British Columbia, Nunavut, and Manitoba. In Saskatchewan and Northwest Territories, food security appears hybridized between health promotion and poverty reduction.

Furthermore, poverty reduction and health promotion strategies are targeted towards various vulnerable demographics in different provinces/territories: low income (BC, QC), children and youth (NT), and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people (NU, NT, SK, MB). The discussion focus is on British Columbia and Quebec, along with a mention of some ad hoc programming and strategies in Ontario, New Brunswick, and Northwest Territories.

¹² To read more on health promotion efforts as it relates to healthy eating, see FLEdGE summary discussion paper ([Summary](#)).

The case of British Columbia

Since the mid-2000s, [British Columbia](#) has been a provincial champion around food security programming: “Public Health has re-emerged as a driver in food security and food policy” ([Seed et al 2012, 468](#)).

Researchers identify two types of programs:

- Programs under the responsibility and leadership of Public Health. These are the [Community Action Food Initiative](#) and the [Food Security Core Public Health Program](#). These programs involve, to various degrees, the regional health authorities, community nutritionists, health and community organizations, and food security networks. There is also a [Produce Preservation Program](#).
- Programs under the responsibility of other departments include the [School Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program](#) (Ministry of Agriculture), the [Farmers Market Nutrition and Coupon Program](#) (Ministry of Agriculture), and the [Food Skills for Families Program](#) (Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance).

The case of Quebec

Quebec has also developed a series of community development initiatives:

- From 2005-2009, the MHSS partnered with the provincial collective kitchens with both core and project funding. Core funding was \$20,000 per year with an annual increase capped to \$30,000, whereas project-based funding ranged from \$70,000 to \$80,000 per year, for three years. Based on the Solidarity and Social Inclusion Strategy ([MESS 2010](#)), only a service agreement with the Regroupement des cuisines collectives du Québec (Quebec Collective Kitchens Association) to develop food safety training programs to its members remains.
- Since 2005, the provincial public health plan¹³ has integrated a Food Security Core Public Health Program, the Programme de subvention en sécurité alimentaire ([MSSS 2008](#)). Seventy-five percent of these funds are allocated to support collective forms of empowerment, defined as food autonomy¹⁴.
- Québec en Forme, a public-private partnership was created, leading to the release of the [Politique de prévention en santé](#) in 2016, which aims to improve physical access to healthy food.

The case of New Brunswick

New Brunswick has recently undergone a consultation with food banks and food security networks to address the inconsistencies of the Community Volunteer Action Program and to design a new funding framework.

- The New Brunswick Economic and Social Inclusion Corporation was established through provincial legislation acting at an arms-length from government, with the mandate of developing a [five-year action plan \(2014-2019\)](#). One action item includes partnering with the Food Banks Association and the New Brunswick Food Security Action Network (NBFSAN) to “promote [the] transition of food banks to community-based food centres¹⁵.”

¹³ The objective was to reduce the proportion of people (12 yrs and older) living in food insecure household to less than 4.5%.

¹⁴ To read a definition of food autonomy, see <http://www.rccq.org/fr/a-propos/autonomie-alimentaire/>.

¹⁵ Community-based food centres refers to the a model integrate healthy food access, education, and community engagement under one roof. “Like libraries, but for food literacy... where people exchange recipes, seeds, stories and support,” ([Palassio 2016](#)). See <https://cfccanada.ca/>.

- Three existing mechanisms that distribute funding and food were examined: the management of the Community Volunteer Action program, of the national food sharing program, and a 2\$ coupon-based donation drive by the food bank association.
- The NB Department of Social Development contracted the NBFSAN to consult with food banks. “We needed to redesign the program, there was no strategic outline or conceptual framework” (116, 2016). After visiting fifty of the fifty-six food banks in the province over the course of the year, buy-in was generated to shift from a core funding model to a needs-based approach as a means to evaluate local capacity for joint programming¹⁶ (115, 2016).

There are two other notable ad hoc programs in New Brunswick:

- The [Community Food Mentor Program](#) (CFM) which hires and trains community leaders to address food security in their communities. This program was originally developed in Ontario¹⁷ (1992) as the Community Food Advisor Program, and subsequently adapted by regional public health authorities in Nova Scotia (2007). The CFM Program was piloted in NB in 2010 and was expanded in 2012.
- The [Community Food Action Program](#) (CFA): this program provides up to \$5,000 in grant funding to community food security actions. This program is part of the Wellness Strategy (Department of Healthy and Inclusive Communities, Public Health)

Other cases

Ontario

- The 2016 mandate letter calls on the Ontario Minister of Housing and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy to, “Develop a food security strategy that addresses physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food, including in remote First Nations communities, working with the ministers of Community and Social Services, Health and Long-Term Care, Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, and Children and Youth Services.”
- This strategy would add onto existing policies adopted by the government of Ontario that integrate food, including the Local Food Strategy and the Healthy Kids Strategy.

Northwest Territories

- The [Small Scale Foods Program](#) provides funding to communities outside of urban centres to support the establishment of self-sufficient community-based gardens and greenhouses as spaces for community educational activities. This program makes connections with agriculture and receives resources from Growing Forward (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada). The government of NT is in the process of adopting an [Agriculture Strategy and Food Production Plan](#).

Yukon

- The [Local Food Strategy](#) mentions existing government initiatives, such as the Agriculture Development Program, the Garden Link Program, the Seed Library, and the Master Gardener Course as policies to increase community and backyard food production.
- The Yukon Government has established an Interdepartmental Food Security Committee.

¹⁶ The new framework was still in development when we conducted our research.

¹⁷ Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Ministry of Health.

- (To read more on access to traditional food in the context of northern and remote indigenous people in Manitoba, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories, see the Policy landscape for northern and remote Indigenous food sovereignty discussion paper)

Income assistance¹⁸

Community development, as a policy approach to public health and fighting social exclusion, looks at empowering communities through the development of new skills and social networks. However, poverty is at the root of food insecurity and community development as a policy framework does not guarantee economic access. Additionally, it falls short of addressing structural barriers like the price of food and social determinants of health (Tarasuk, 2001; Parent, 2015).

The final strategy for addressing food insecurity explored in this discussion paper is income assistance. The federal government has jurisdiction over income security programs¹⁹ and, as noted in the introduction, a poverty reduction strategy is under development.

Measuring food security

- The most reliable data on food security in Canada can be found in the Household Food Security Survey Module in the annual Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) administered by Statistics Canada.
- The food security module was optional for the years 2013 and 2014, and British Columbia, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Yukon “chose not to include the measurement of food insecurity for their populations” (Tarasuk et al., 2014). Data will, however, be generated for all provinces and territories for 2015.
- Other tools exist, such as the Nutritious Food Basket, food consumption survey, health indicators, program audits, and/or community assessments. However, there is little consensus on how to use this “disparate array of measurement approaches” in a comprehensive way (Mah et al, 2014).

Provincial and federal experiences and pilots

The Canada Social Report²⁰ (CSR) provides an up-to-date summary of social assistance rates, including data for specific demographics, such as the unemployed, persons with disabilities, children, and parents. When consulting the CSR provincial report card, we found that three provinces and territories (NWT, QC, and PEI) mention that fiscal budgets include some sort of direct payment to households to subsidize their food purchases (i.e. food allowance measures). We have not found evidence or research on the topic. There is also a special diet allowance in [Ontario](#).

Research coming out of PROOF: Food Insecurity Policy research (University of Toronto and Calgary) demonstrates there is evidence in support of income-based solutions to food insecurity. Specifically:

- Newfoundland and Labrador cut rates of food insecurity among social assistance recipients by almost half (2007-2012) through interventions that included increasing income support and indexing rates to inflation (Tarasuk et al 2014).
- Emery et al. (2013, 2) presents lower food insecurity rates among seniors that are 65 years old or

¹⁸ See Map 3 in annex: “Household food insecurity.”

¹⁹ Canada Child Tax Benefit, GST Tax Credit, Working Income Tax Benefit, and Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors.

²⁰ Developed by the National Council of Welfare and the Caledon Institute of Social Policy.

more as “largely the result of a shift in income source for these Canadians, from employment and various income assistance programs, to federal public pensions” (i.e. to Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement).

The research suggests that income assistance is the most promising strategy to tackle hunger in Canada and improve overall health (Tarusak et al, 2014, [MPI, 2015](#)). Until now, however, these measures remain targeted to a specific geographic area and/or age groups. Guaranteed income pilots are underway in Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and British Columbia.

Discussion

What can we learn from the experiences of provincial, territorial, and federal policies and programs addressing food security ?

Best Practices

- Social development and health/wellness departments are recognizing food security as part of their mandate which can be a springboard for other departments to be involved (e.g. education, indigenous, rural development, agriculture).
- Regional and provincial public health authorities provide funding and support to community-based food security initiatives through core government programs (e.g. BC, QC).
- Health/wellness ministries have developed Healthy Eating Roundtables (e.g. BC, QC) or Interdepartmental Food Security Committees (e.g. YT, NL) to support planning and outreach (I1; I10; I12, 2016).
- Community economic development intermediaries can foster community leadership, facilitate socio-professional integration, and create self-employment and collective business opportunities (e.g. QC, NB, MB).
- There are many place-based, novel practices aimed at educating and empowering communities from the ground-up.
- Provincial food security networks are increasingly called to partner with either provincial and federal governments (and sometimes both) around outreach (e.g. ON, NL, NS) and joint programming (e.g. MB, BC). (I1; I10; I16, 2016).
- Northern and remote provinces are starting to integrate community food production into their agri-food import substitution strategies (e.g. YT, NT, NL) (I10, 2016).
- Applying income-based policy tools to address food insecurity (e.g. NL, federal government).

Gaps

- The “food charity” approach to food insecurity continues to guide policy making. For instance, the establishment of fiscal incentives aligns with this lens (e.g. QC, BC, NS, NU, ON).
- Governments adopt targeted programs to specific demographics (e.g. children, young mothers, indigenous people).
- Public health responses to food insecurity focus on education, promotion, or empowerment through community initiatives however, the service delivery innovations in food access and food literacy are carried out at the margins of the existing policy frameworks.
- Community initiatives are ad hoc and unsustainable without a stable and streamlined funding and removal of administrative red tape. Furthermore, governmental support may be compromised by electoral change (e.g. MB).
- Overall, community initiatives do not address the underlying structures and policies that cause food insecurity ([Tarasuk, 2001](#); Parent, 2015).
- Other policy levers are neglected, such as establishing fiscal (dis)incentives and changing governance of food production and consumption ([Garnett, 2015](#)).
- There is only limited engagement of civil society in program evaluation and policy change, which largely remain top-down and driven by a technocratic mindset.
- Funding allocation and short-term arrangements are a source of tension. Respondents highlighted that sustainable funding is an important condition for capacity building (I5, 2016). It was also

acknowledged that full government support can be jeopardized if there is a change of governing party (15). Furthermore, community initiatives may be compromised when funding ends which highlights the need to develop resilient economic models (16).

- Investment in prevention as a health care strategy remains marginal compared to the medical health care sector. In this context, the connection between food and health is neglected.
- There are few policy connections between food security and agriculture and rural development.
- Health and wellness promotion efforts emphasize the adoption of healthy eating behaviors and lifestyles, but neglect food insecurity as a facet of malnutrition.
- Policies do not sufficiently draw the connection between the lack of income (i.e. poverty), food insecurity rates, and its effects on the health care system.

Opportunities

How could food security, from a community development approach, be integrated in the federal government's mandate?

- The upcoming federal Poverty Reduction Strategy ([Minister of Families, Children and Social Development](#)) could recognize food security as a full-fledged pillar and include food insecurity reduction targets to assess the impacts of federal and provincial poverty reduction strategies and social policies. This would lead to a greater likelihood that all provincial and territorial governments prioritize food security in their respective plans.
- The upcoming Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy could identify the existing hybrid community/social business models evolving in healthy food access and see them as an extension of public health service delivery.
- The upcoming revision of Canada's Food Guide (in the context of the [Health Eating Strategy](#)) could improve the breadth and impact of healthy eating guidelines (i.e. food literacy), making important connections in supporting local agriculture and the need to address barriers to healthy food access for those living in poverty. The implementation phase has the potential to improve healthy food environments in schools and healthcare institutions and build community food security ([Minister of Health](#)).
- The renegotiation of the Canada Health Transfer could integrate food security as an opportunity to address chronic disease prevention (11, 2016) and recognize community groups as an extension of a decentralized public health service delivery model.
- A national food policy could be a place to recognize community-based and civil society efforts in preventative public health strategies and social inclusion strategies drawing connections between poverty, health, and the food systems ([Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food](#)).

Research: ideas for next steps

This discussion paper provides a overview of food security efforts across provinces, territories, and federal government however, municipal and regional efforts have not been addressed. An investigation into municipal and regional food security efforts has the potential to provide evidence of good practices that could be scaled.

Currently, there is a lack of reporting mechanisms that are systematic and coordinator, both in terms of measuring food insecurity measurements (Mah et al., 2014) and evaluating policy initiatives.

There are a number of provincial and territorial roundtables on healthy eating and food security, but there are no mechanisms to facilitate knowledge exchange. Participatory research could help address this gap.

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