

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Food insecurity feature #2**

Wednesday, April 26, 2017

Media Coordinator  
705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520

John Challis (x 7239)  
Kathy Dermott (x 7864)

---

**Old age security: an income support that works**

The announcement on April 24 of a pilot project to study the effects of a guaranteed income is an exciting development. Providing funds that will keep any individual's income—from whatever sources—above a certain minimum is a way to provide people with the ability to buy essentials including healthy food, to cover schooling and transit and have safe shelter.

It may seem like an idea that's come out of the blue, but in fact, it's not new in the world; other countries have brought in programs like it. And something similar is already in place in Canada, for senior citizens.

Canada's Old Age Security benefits and Guaranteed Income Supplement for seniors work to bring older citizens above the poverty line. Does it work?

Using costs calculated in Simcoe Muskoka, a man in his 60s living in a rooming house would spend 132 per cent of his Ontario Works income on housing and food alone. The local food bank, hot meal programs and other local charitable organizations would be regularly needed to cover food, clothing and money for transportation.

Enjoying a meal, knowing it's healthy food, is out of the question; this man would eat whatever is available to quell the hunger pangs.

However, once that individual turns 65, he will be eligible to apply for Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement. Those additional funds will cover the costs of a one-bedroom apartment, food, clothes, transportation and other bills.

Thanks to these income supports, poverty among seniors in Ontario is less than half of what it is for other age ranges. Ontario has Canada's second lowest percentage of seniors below the low-income measure after taxes.

This type of income solution is what could unfold for other age groups in the lowest income levels, if the province's basic income pilot project succeeds.

While the three pilot sites are located outside Simcoe Muskoka, the health unit here is working with many local organizations to push for income solutions that will bring all age ranges out of household food insecurity. If you'd like to get involved, visit [www.smdhu.org/centsless](http://www.smdhu.org/centsless) or call Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

