

Working Together to End Food Insecurity in Algoma

An Open Letter and Invitation to the Government of Ontario and to the People of Algoma

Nov 24, 2025

To:

Hon. Michael Parsa, Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

Hon. Sylvia Jones, Minister of Health

Hon. Rob Flack, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Hon. Trevor Jones, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness

Hon. Greg Rickford, Minister of Indigenous Affairs and First Nations Economic Reconciliation

Hon. George Pirie, Minister of Northern Economic Development and Growth

Hon. Peter Bethlenfalvy, Minister of Finance

Cc:

Premier of Ontario

Bill Rosenberg, MPP for Algoma-Manitoulin

Chris Scott, MPP for Sault Ste. Marie

Matthew Shoemaker, Mayor of Sault Ste. Marie

Norman Mann, Chair, Algoma District Services Administration Board

Stephanie Pagnucco, Chair, District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Administration Board

Across the Algoma District, families are facing choices that no one should have to make. Whether to pay rent or buy groceries. Whether to skip meals so their children can eat. These are the realities confronting one in four households in our region.

We, the members of the Algoma Food Security Network (AFSN), are asking the Province to work with us and with the public to address this growing crisis. The problem is not a lack of effort at the local level. Municipal partners and community organizations are already investing time, resources, and creativity. What is missing is sustained provincial action that matches the urgency of the need.

We also invite residents across Algoma to join us in amplifying this message. You can share your support directly with your local MPP and help by donating food through our community partners. Visit <https://harvestalgoma.ca/takeaction2025> to learn how.

Algoma Food Security Network

Who We Are

The Algoma Food Security Network was formed in 2024 to unite the organizations that form the backbone of our region's food support system. Our members include Connect the Dots Community Harvest, Harvest Algoma, Kinoomaagewin - Niigaaniin Services, Salvation Army Sault Ste. Marie, Soup Kitchen Community Centre, and St. Vincent Place, with support from Algoma Public Health and Social Services Sault Ste. Marie.

Together, we coordinate food rescue, distribution, and community programming, while also advocating for policies that address the causes of food insecurity. Our collaboration is built on shared data, shared resources, and shared determination.

The Reality in Algoma

- 24.1 percent of households in Algoma experience food insecurity, higher than the Ontario average of 22.8 percent.
- A single person on Ontario Works faces a monthly deficit of \$243 after paying for food and housing.
- Households with historical experiences of racism and colonialism, and more than half of those receiving social assistance, face the highest rates of food insecurity.

These numbers represent real people. Children who go to school hungry. Parents who silently skip meals. Seniors who cannot afford both groceries and medication.

Food insecurity continues to rise year over year, and rising rent has only made things worse. In Sault Ste. Marie and surrounding communities, housing costs have soared while housing allowances and senior income supports have not kept pace. Food insecurity is a symptom of poverty, and any solution must also address the growing gap between wages, benefits, and the cost of living.

These realities also impact health and quality of life across the lifespan. People living in food insecure households are more likely to suffer from physical and mental health conditions, leading to greater need for healthcare services, higher rates of hospitalization, and elevated risk of premature death. Children in food insecure households are more likely to have poorer overall health, including greater risk for bone fractures, asthma, and mental health conditions such as social anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation.

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Our Collective Effort

Local organizations are doing everything possible to meet the need.

- Connect the Dots Community Harvest has rescued more than 200,000 pounds of food since 2017. In 2025 alone, it has rescued over 130,000 pounds, which is a ten-fold increase over any previous year.
- Harvest Algoma distributed 287,584 pounds of food in 2024 and has already surpassed 424,563 pounds this year.
- Salvation Army Sault Ste. Marie provided over 240,000 meals and 36,000 food bank visits last year, and distributes an average of 43,000 pounds of food each month.
- Soup Kitchen Community Centre served 34,620 lunches and grew 12,000 pounds of produce through its Food Bank Farm Project.
- St. Vincent Place distributed 125,000 pounds of food and 16,000 meals, serving thousands of individuals, most living on ODSP or Ontario Works.

Municipal partners have strengthened coordination and supported food infrastructure, but community organizations are stretched to the limit. The gap cannot be closed through local effort alone.

A Call to the Province

We are asking the Province to take leadership in addressing food insecurity as a systemic issue, not a temporary one.

We urge the Government of Ontario to:

1. Recognize food insecurity as both a public health and economic issue, requiring coordination between Health, Children, Community and Social Services, and Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness.
2. Double Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program rates (+100 percent increase) to bring them in line with the actual cost of living, and index both programs annually to inflation.
3. Develop and implement a new poverty reduction strategy with clear, measurable targets for reducing food insecurity and improving the financial stability of very low-income households.

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4. Invest in regional food systems that increase access to healthy food and reduce waste, including food rescue logistics, infrastructure, and community food hubs.
5. Advocate for stronger provincial housing policy, including a coordinated approach to address homelessness and stabilize funding for affordable and supportive housing.
6. Fund long-term community partnerships that bridge food access, education, and local economic development.

Ontario's communities have shown what collaboration can accomplish. What we need now is a provincial partner equally committed to ensuring that no family is left behind.

Moving Forward Together

The Algoma Food Security Network is building the foundation for a coordinated, data-driven approach to food access across Algoma. We are ready to work with the Province to design solutions that address the causes of food insecurity, not just its symptoms.

Local leaders, volunteers, and municipalities have stepped up. We now need provincial leadership to match that same courage and urgency. Food insecurity is eroding health, opportunity, and dignity across our region. It does not need to continue.

Together, we can end food insecurity in Algoma and build a model of resilience for all of Ontario.

Signed,
The Algoma Food Security Network

Members:

Connect the Dots Community Harvest • Harvest Algoma • Kinoomaagewin - Niigaaniin Services • Salvation Army Sault Ste. Marie • Soup Kitchen Community Centre • St. Vincent Place

Supported by:

Algoma Public Health • Social Services Sault Ste. Marie

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