

Household Food Insecurity in Algoma: Background for 2026 Municipal Candidates

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About this paper

One in four Algoma households could not afford the food they needed in 2023-2024. The Algoma Food Security Network, a collaboration of organizations across the Algoma District, is asking every mayoral and council candidate in the October 26, 2026 municipal election what they would do about it.

This paper gives candidates the local facts behind the survey. It also lays out what a municipality can and cannot do, since most income supports are set by the province and federal government.

Answers are limited to 200 words per question. The online survey will not accept longer answers, and any answer sent another way will be published up to its first 200 words. Within that limit, every response will be published as written, grouped by municipality and ward. Candidates who do not respond will be listed as "no response received." The network does not rate, rank or endorse candidates.

- **Survey opens:** Monday, October 5, 2026
- **First answers posted:** Friday, October 9, 2026. Later answers are added as they arrive, up to election day, October 26.
- **Questions:** David Thompson, dthompson@harvestalgoma.ca

What household food insecurity is

Household food insecurity means a household does not have enough money to buy the food it needs. People in these households may eat less than they need, skip meals, or go a full day without eating. They may also be unable to afford food that meets their cultural or dietary needs.

The effects reach well past the kitchen. Food insecurity is linked to poorer physical and mental health, and it makes it harder for people to take part in community life.

Some households face higher risk because of social and systemic inequities, including racism and colonization. Those at higher risk include:

- lower-income households
- female lone-parent families
- people who rent
- Indigenous Peoples
- African, Caribbean and Black people
- other people facing marginalization

Because food insecurity is driven by low and unstable income, food programs alone cannot solve it. Income-based solutions are needed.

What it looks like in Algoma

In 2023-2024, 25.6% of Algoma households were food insecure. A single adult on Ontario Works runs \$449 short every month after paying for food and rent alone, before transportation, phone, heat or anything else.

The table below uses Algoma Public Health’s food costing to show what each household has left after food and rent.

Household	Monthly income*	Food and rent	Left for everything else
Single person, Ontario Works	\$916	\$1,365	-\$449
Single person, ODSP	\$1,558	\$1,365	\$193
Single pregnant person, ODSP	\$1,598	\$1,389	\$209
Family of four, Ontario Works	\$3,036	\$2,672	\$364
Single parent, two school-age children, Ontario Works	\$2,799	\$2,362	\$437
Single senior, OAS, Guaranteed Income Supplement and GAINS	\$2,144	\$1,239	\$905

*After tax, including all available benefits and credits. Source: Algoma Public Health, [The Cost of Eating Well 2025](#).

Ontario Works pays a single adult a maximum of \$733 a month, the same as in 2018. ODSP has been indexed to inflation since 2023, but it still falls short: a single person on ODSP has \$193 a month left after food and rent.

Getting to food costs time and money too. For example, a guest who lives on Breton Road and comes to a meal program five days a week spends four hours a day and \$35 a week in bus fare to get there. After recent route changes, each trip starts with a walk out of the neighbourhood to reach a stop, which is especially hard in winter for guests who use a cane, walker or wheelchair.

What municipalities can do

Municipalities do not set social assistance rates or food prices, but they control wages, land, fees, local taxes and how people get around, and they have a strong voice with the province. Ontario municipalities, including some in Algoma, already use each of these tools.

Tool	What it can look like	Survey question
Wages	Paying all municipal staff, including part-time, seasonal and student workers, at least the northern Ontario living wage. Region of Waterloo is a certified living wage employer.	4
Housing	Requiring affordable units when municipal land is sold or housing grants are given, with non-profit and co-op providers as partners.	5
Getting around	Routes, fares and winter access that let people reach food, health care and services. In smaller towns, rides and volunteer drivers.	3
Provincial advocacy	Council resolutions, carried through FONOM and AMO, asking the province to raise Ontario Works and ODSP rates. Many Ontario councils have passed one.	6
Property taxes	Relief for low-income seniors and people with disabilities, plus measures that reach renters. Sault Ste. Marie offers a partial deferral of tax increases ; Greater Sudbury also offers a credit.	7

Other steps within municipal reach include a local poverty reduction strategy with public targets, free income tax clinics in libraries and town halls, help applying for benefits, and recreation fee assistance for low-income residents.

The survey questions

Please answer each question in 100 to 200 words. Answers over 200 words cannot be submitted. For questions 4 to 7, choose support, oppose or unsure, then explain why.

Open questions

1. In your own words, what is food insecurity, and what do you see as its main cause(s) in your municipality?
2. What are your top three priorities for addressing the cost of living in your municipality?
3. Many low-income residents struggle to reach food, health care and other services, especially in winter and when using walkers, canes or wheelchairs. What would you do to make getting around your municipality more accessible and affordable for them?

Policy questions

4. Do you support or oppose paying all municipal workers, including part-time, seasonal and student staff, at least the northern Ontario living wage?
5. Do you support or oppose requiring some affordable units when your municipality sells land or gives grants for housing?
6. Do you support or oppose council passing a resolution asking the province to raise Ontario Works and ODSP rates? In your answer, describe what you see as a councillor's role in advocating to the province.
7. Do you support or oppose expanding property tax relief for low-income seniors and people with disabilities? Renters don't receive a property tax bill, so please also explain how your cost-of-living plans would reach them.

Sources and further reading

1. Algoma Public Health. *The Cost of Eating Well 2025: Monitoring Food Affordability in Algoma*. 2026. [algomapublichealth.com](https://www.algomapublichealth.com)
2. Li T, Fafard St-Germain AA, Tarasuk V. *Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2022*. PROOF, University of Toronto; 2023. proof.utoronto.ca
3. Dietitians of Canada. *Position Statement on Household Food Insecurity in Canada*. 2024. [dietitians.ca](https://www.dietitians.ca)

4. Public Health Ontario. *Food Insecurity and Food Affordability in Ontario*. 2025.
5. City of Sault Ste. Marie. [Property tax financial assistance](#).

About the Algoma Food Security Network

The Algoma Food Security Network is a collaboration of organizations across the Algoma District that feed people, run meal and food programs, and work on the causes of hunger. Members include:

- Harvest Algoma
- St. Vincent Place
- the Soup Kitchen Community Centre
- The Salvation Army Sault Ste. Marie
- Niigaaniin Services
- Algoma Public Health
- the Wawa Food Strategy

The network is chaired by Dave Thompson, Executive Director of Harvest Algoma. Questions about this paper or the candidate survey can go to dthompson@harvestalgoma.ca.