

# YOUR FOOD

*"The question of hunger is not a technical question, it's a political question..."*  
**(Oliver De Schute, UN Special Rapporteur, Food)**

Food plays a powerful role in our daily lives. Not enough or not the right kinds of food shapes whether we'll be healthy or sick. Simply having access to good food isn't as easy as it sounds. The complex web of where our food is cultivated, manufactured, bought and sold all have a profound impact on our day-to-day lives, especially our health.

This is why food security – the ability to access good, affordable food – is such an important determinant of health.

*Food security is when everyone has access to an adequate supply of nutritious, affordable, and culturally-appropriate food.*



## IS THERE HEALTHY FOOD WHERE I LIVE?

28% of adults reporting lowest household incomes experienced food insecurity, more than twice the Ontario average.

*"Food insecurity is largely the result of low income and financial insecurity."* Public Health Agency of Canada

### TORONTO FOOD DESERT MAP

Adapted from Martin Prosperity Institute, 2010

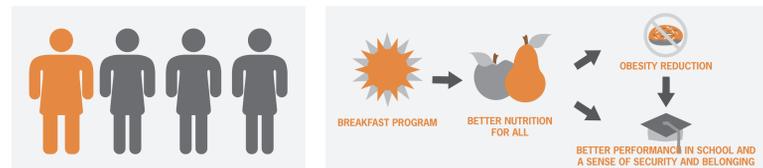


It's easier to grab a slice of pizza after a long day if the pizza place is much closer to home than the grocery store. Access to fresh, affordable and healthy food is a growing problem in Toronto. **Urban sprawl** makes it hard to buy groceries without a car, and **inner city congestion** leaves little room for farmers' markets. Fried, salty and sugary take-out is a faster solution that really turns into the problem.



Is there healthy food in your neighbourhood?

## BREAKFAST FIRST: BATTLING CHILDHOOD HUNGER AND OBESITY WITH THE ONTARIO STUDENT NUTRITION PROGRAM



One in four children in Ontario is clinically obese. Children are finding it hard to focus in the classroom. **41%** of 8th graders in the province skip breakfast.

A consequence of food insecurity is giving up daily breakfast – a small step that has big consequences for our children's health.

Breakfast maintains essential glucose, vitamin B, and other nutrient levels that significantly raise cognitive performance and decrease irritability, aggression, and personality changes. Nutritious morning meals also reduce dietary fat, snacking on sugary foods, and obesity levels.

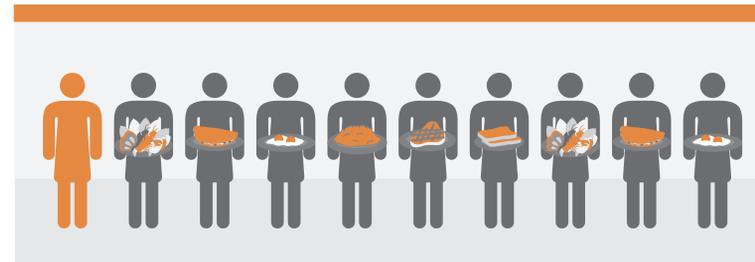
### DID YOU KNOW?

Ontario is tackling children's health in the classroom with **Student Nutrition Programs (SNPs)** where breakfast is given to students for just \$1.46 a day.

The meals provided by these programs help to prevent obesity, early-onset diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and boost performance in class.

Today there are over 600,000 kids and youth in Ontario getting essential nutrients and building better communities through SNPs.

## FOOD SECURITY: THE DROUGHT IN CANADA

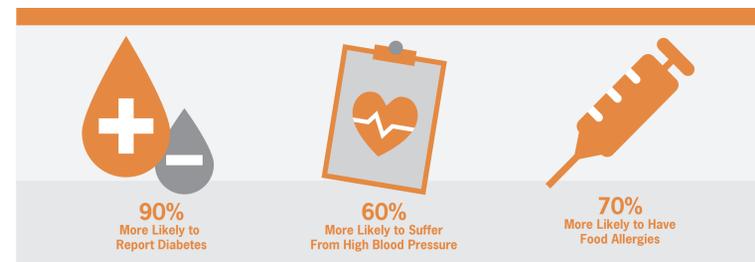


1 in 10 Canadian households, or 2.7 million Canadians are food insecure, or, worried about where their next bag of groceries or next meal will come from.

It isn't just any 1 person in 10. Canada is rich in agriculture and we pride ourselves on our abundant natural resources and food. In Canada, there is more than enough healthy food for all... theoretically. There are other factors at play when it comes to accessing good, healthy and affordable food.

## FOOD AND YOUR HEALTH

People whose diets are deficient in nutrients and healthy variety are:



Food insecurity has also been linked to obesity and childhood developmental problems. People who experience food insecurity are often anxious about where their next meal will come from, or how they'll feed their children. This can be stressful and can lead to mental health problems.

## WHAT CAN WE DO?

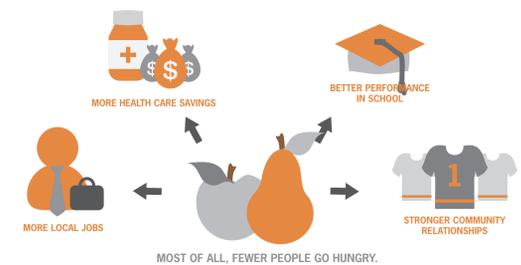
- ✓ Food banks provide short-term emergency food relief. True food security brings together healthy food, affordable food, the skills to grow and cook food, and sustainable agricultural practices. At the very least, access to fresh healthy affordable food is key to promoting health and well-being.
- ✓ Finding solutions to food security comes from both important policy changes, like providing students with breakfast, and community initiatives like food centres and community gardens.
- ✓ Community gardens do more than just provide fresh local food. In Toronto, the **Stop Community Food Centre** has moved beyond a food bank to become a community hub where people access healthy food, and develop relationships by cooking, eating, and even gardening together. The community that these programs build make a huge impact on food security, especially for the low-income and diverse communities in Ontario.
- ✓ Join or access a local food initiative like: Food Forward, Foodshare, Evergreen, Live Green, Greenest City, or North York Harvest Food Bank.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT THE CITY OF TORONTO HAS A FOOD CHARTER?

Toronto's Food Charter was created in May 2000 as a promise to advocate for "the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger" by making Toronto a food-secure city. This means ensuring:

- The availability of a variety of foods at a reasonable cost;
- Ready access to quality grocery stores, food service, etc.;
- Sufficient personal income to buy adequate foods for each household member each day;
- The freedom to choose personally – and culturally – inclusive foods;
- Legitimate confidence in the quality of the foods available;
- Easy access to understandable, accurate information about food and nutrition;
- The assurance of a viable and sustainable food production system.

## TORONTO'S COMMITMENT TO FOOD SECURITY IS A GOOD POLICY GOAL ON ALL FRONTS:



DO YOU FEEL LIKE TORONTO HAS KEPT ITS PROMISE TO YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?

## MAKING THE CONNECTIONS



- Studies have shown that child nutrition and learning are closely linked. Kids who don't have a healthy start in the morning suffer for it all day. These impacts can follow children throughout their education.
- Food is a social connector and a community builder. It brings people together and celebrates diversity and community.
- Reducing the distance that food travels through interventions such as urban gardens means cleaner air for the city and fresh local food that is more affordable and available. Increased greening of our cities also reduces the urban heat island effect and makes our neighbourhoods more liveable.
- Those with poor diets have worse health outcomes, longer hospital stays and access health care services more often. Food security reduces the need for medical care.