



For Immediate Release

New Report from NPI says Basic Income Guarantee is an Effective Strategy to Reduce Food Insecurity

June 15, 2017 – Household food insecurity—the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints—affects almost one in eight households in Ontario. The latest report from Northern Policy Institute's *B.I.G. Series* argues that a basic income guarantee would be an effective policy solution to reduce household food insecurity among those most vulnerable to this ongoing problem.

Implications of a Basic Income Guarantee for Household Food Insecurity by Valerie Tarasuk makes the case for a B.I.G. by contrasting it with alternative strategies, such as an increased minimum wage, more affordable housing, and public food support programs. She ultimately concludes that a universal intervention, like a B.I.G., would be much more effective in tackling the issue of food insecurity, than targeted policies that are piecemeal and limiting at best.

Tarasuk explains, “Problems of food insecurity are not limited to any single population subgroup defined by household structure, main income sources, or some other socio-demographic characteristic - the only common denominator is inadequate, insecure incomes.” She continues, “A major advantage of a B.I.G. over policy initiatives tailored to specific population subgroups such as seniors, social assistance recipients, working families, or youth, is that a B.I.G. can reach all individuals and households who are vulnerable to food insecurity by virtue of inadequate, insecure incomes,” states Tarasuk.

The report also addresses the issue of provincial health care spending related to food insecurity, citing research that shows total health care costs of adults in severely food insecure households were 76 percent higher than the costs for adults in food secure households. It argues that addressing food security is critical to improve health outcomes for Ontarians.

This paper is the third of a series that explores the various topics presented at NPI's Basic Income Guarantee conference in October, 2016. Report topics include food insecurity issues, potential models for a B.I.G. pilot, tax implications, and the potential impact on social innovators and First Nations.

To read the full report, visit www.northernpolicy.ca. To view presentations from the NPI's BIG conference and explore comments and feedback from participants, visit www.northernpolicy.ca/big

Media Interviews: Author Valerie Tarasuk, and NPI President & CEO, Charles Cirtwill are both available for comment.



To arrange an interview, please contact:

Katie Elliott
Communications Coordinator
705-542-4456
kelliott@northernpolicy.ca

About Northern Policy Institute:

Northern Policy Institute is Northern Ontario's independent think tank. We perform research, collect and disseminate evidence, and identify policy opportunities to support the growth of sustainable Northern communities. Our operations are located in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, and Sudbury. We seek to enhance Northern Ontario's capacity to take the lead position on socio-economic policy that impacts Northern Ontario, Ontario, and Canada as a whole.

About the author:

Dr. Valerie Tarasuk is a professor in the Department of Nutritional Sciences and Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto. Much of Dr. Tarasuk's research is focused on food insecurity. Over the past two decades, she has conducted a number of studies to determine the scope and nature of household food insecurity in Canada, identify the household characteristics and contextual factors associated with vulnerability to this problem, and examine the impact of community responses to problems of food insecurity. Most recently, she has led PROOF, an interdisciplinary research program funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and designed to identify effective policy approaches to reduce household food insecurity in Canada. This research has established food insecurity as a potent social determinant of health and health care costs, but also demonstrated that both the prevalence and severity of household food insecurity in Canada are highly sensitive to policy decisions that impact household finances.

About the Basic Income Guarantee (B.I.G.) Series:

Northern Policy Institute's B.I.G. Series explores various policy topics related to the implementation, and potential economic and social impacts of a basic income guarantee in Ontario. Research and analysis offered in the reports were first presented at NPI's Basic Income Guarantee conference in October, 2016. Report topics explored by multidisciplinary researchers and authors recognized in their field include food security, potential models for a B.I.G. pilot, tax implications, and the potential impact on social innovators and First Nations.

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