

# Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit

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## Health Unit Supports Investigation into Basic Income Guarantee

Last month, the Health Unit reported a 20% increase in food costs in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark since 2010 and identified poverty as the root cause of hunger. One way to help reduce poverty is a concept called Basic Income Guarantee. This would establish a minimum guaranteed annual income, regardless of work status. It would also ensure that Canadians have enough income to meet their basic needs for food, shelter, heat and clothing, and live with dignity. It has the potential to help individuals and families deal with financial setbacks when they most need it.

At the November 19th meeting, the local Board of Health approved a motion to write a letter urging the federal and provincial governments to prioritize a joint investigation into a Basic Income Guarantee as a policy option for reducing poverty and income insecurity.

In Leeds, Grenville and Lanark, 12.6% of the population is living with low income as are 16.5% of children under 18. "Not having enough money for basic needs can lead to poor health outcomes," says Dr. Paula Stewart, Medical Officer of Health for the area. "In Canada, people living in poverty have a shortened life expectancy and are at far greater risk for a range of preventable medical conditions, including cancer, diabetes, heart disease and mental illness."

With the security of a regular adequate income, people could have a better chance of managing their own circumstances to recover from financial setbacks, illness or injury, balance shifting employment and family care needs. They could also choose to get more education or try out new job opportunities. Pilot programs in Canada and other countries suggest that a Basic Income Guarantee has many positive effects including: improved physical and mental health for adults and children; increased high school graduation rates; increased employment in single-parent households; reduction in hospitalizations and crime and an increase in business start-ups.

For more information about Basic Income Guarantee or to find out how you can support this idea, visit: <http://www.basicincomecanada.org/>. You can also get more information about health equity at <http://www.healthunit.org/healthequity/>.

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Contact: Danika Wentzel, Public Health Nurse, 613-345-5685  
or Susan Healey, Communications Co-ordinator, 613-802-0550