

## **Eat Think Vote Guelph Event Transcript**

*Hosted on August 13th, 2019 at the Guelph Community Health Centre by The Arrell Food Institute (Jeanna Rex, Kiana Gibson and Madeleine Arseneau) and The SEED (Becca Clayton). Moderated by Kate Vsetula.*

**Phil Loring:** Provided an overview of food insecurity in the Guelph region which affects predominantly low-income individuals, First Nations and students.

**Maria Corradini:** Food security is not just about quantity, it's about quality and we must take many steps to make a food secure community, something Arrell Food Institute strives for through advancing research on food from several perspectives and foster collaborations.

### **Candidates**

*In attendance:*

NDP - Aisha Jahangir

Liberal - Lloyd Longfield

Green - Steve Dyck

*Not in attendance (submitted answers online after the event):*

Peoples Party - Mark Paralovos

\*submitted videos via YouTube

Conservatives - Ashish Sachan

\*submitted written responses to the questions

### **Predetermined Questions:**

#### **1. What aspects of food insecurity do you see as the federal government's responsibility?**

AISHA: The federal government has the ability to ensure everyone in Canada have access to food without having to worry about when/where they can eat next. Food insecurity is a poverty issue. NDP commits to a National Food Policy, basic income project, Food waste strategy, Pharmacare, Universal childcare, fare free public transit. Committed to having a comprehensive plan that will tackle all aspects of food insecurity. Indigenous communities are especially hindered by food insecurity – injustice is getting worse; we need to ensure a better government response. My own work as a registered nurse helps to understand the value in root causes of solving issues rather than a band-aid solution. The NDP philosophy is that government can and should help people break the cycle of poverty. People first, not corporations. Corporate welfare issues of companies like Loblaw affect the middle/lower class. Breaking the cycle of poverty with a comprehensive and holistic approach.

LLOYD: Sat on an agriculture committee and studied food policy. One thing he heard loud and clear is trying to answer questions we are talking about today. Food is affordable in Canada, but not everyone can afford food, the root problem is poverty. How do we reduce poverty? Liberals have a National poverty reduction strategy; reduce poverty by 20% by 2020. This goal has already been achieved. The next goal is 50% poverty reduction by 2025. Canada child benefit and economic policies have already brought 300,000 children out of poverty. It's not all about economics, it is also about housing and homelessness. Working on getting people into jobs where they can use skills to get paid and afford food. Access through things like community gardens, initiatives to grow in our communities and get it on people's plates that need it. Evan Fraser wants a Canada food advisory council which is in formation. Experts must help us answer these questions and grassroots organizations to deliver the solutions. We also must work with Indigenous, provincial and territorial governments to succeed in these communities.

STEVE: We can grow an abundance of food in this area. Our system is broken. Too much of the food we grow is wasted and people who need food don't have access to it. We need to do better. It's mostly a poverty issue but we also need additional infrastructure, more kitchens, Greens would create jobs, involve people. Having food ready for people to eat. Guelph is fortunate to have participated in the federal government's smart cities challenge and obtained this grant. It will have great technology coming out of the project like using the internet to ensure food is wasted less. Green part has a fully developed plan on having more local food production, more farmers, more food.

MARK: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P\\_DoA2m0KCc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P_DoA2m0KCc)

(Transcribed audio): Food security is defined as: According to the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, food security exists when people are able to access enough safe and nutritious food to live a healthy life. This food can be produced domestically, imported, or arrive through food assistance. Food Security is about having enough money to buy the foods that you and your family prefer to eat. And fundamentally that it won't run out before you have enough money to buy more. The 2009/2010 data shows that 5.5 % of households in Ontario are moderately food insecure and 3.0 (8.5 cumulative) are severely food insecure. I think making the cost of everyday living lower is the responsibility of the federal government. I think this can be done with good policies like removing the carbon tax. It does not reduce emissions; it just increases the price to the consumer. We can also lower the prices of everyday grocery items by unwinding supply management responsibly and allowing our milk, poultry and eggs to be sold at competitive market prices. Making things more affordable increases the food security for all.

ASHISH: (Written response) Everyday Canadians are finding it harder to get ahead, their food security is at risk and so we need to ensure our taxes are affordable and our tax dollars are used carefully, so that they are available for the programmes Canadians rely on. This is a matter of fiscal policy. And also, the federal government has a leading role in supporting policies that encourage trade, investment and job creation in Canada. Overall, the federal government

must ensure that foods produced and consumed are safe, balanced, and adequate for every Canadian.

The complexity of the food security issue, to have consistent access to adequate food, is evident from the fact that we are talking about food insecurity in 2019 in a country that is as rich as Canada, and as advanced and developed as Canada. Obviously, the policies and the priorities the governments pursued over the years have not entirely worked as intended. The policies that consider the existing food insecurity must also address the root causes of food insecurity.

**2. What policies will you champion that would make a difference for food insecure populations? What are your target outcomes of these policies?**

LLOYD: One strength Guelph has that Canada can benefit from is having Canada's food university here and the investment of the Arrell Food Institute. Research is key to solving food insecurity and social scientists working with the community. The circular food economy piloting in Guelph, competing against a few hundred communities. Looking to reduce food insecurity and increasing access to food by 50% by 2025, reducing food waste by 50%, creating 50 new businesses or partnerships, community based projects based on food policy and will inform food policy and committee going forward, launching local food infrastructure fund, 25,000 that committees can apply for. The talent and collaborations in Guelph positions use well and people want to solve these problems together.

STEVE: Green Party has a host of plans and three big ideas. It is the government's job to take the bounty that this land can create. Guaranteed livable income is key, being able to go to support people's ability/dignity to buy healthy, culturally appropriate food and all need a place to live, clothing transportation and afford general living costs. 200 mile diet – we should be able to grow enough food in Canada. Create local farm systems to ensure we are creating enough food locally that everyone has access to nutritious food. Our soils are losing carbon content. We need better farming practices to ensure our carbon is coming back to the soil. Champion organizations like the SEED to ensure we have less waste, implementing proper infrastructure like methods of storage and ensuring everyone has access.

AISHA: So many things need to be done. A national strategy to reduce food waste. There is no reason we should be throwing out food at the residential and industrial level when we have ways to use it. Supply management to ensure stable pricing for working farmers and National food strategy that supports local organizations like the SEED. Work with Indigenous peoples and uphold food sovereignty. Colonization has resulted in decline of food security, the decline of traditional food practices. Reform nutrition in the north, targeting poverty as the root cause. Committed to making life in Canada more affordable. The best way to prevent food insecurity is to put money in the pockets of people. Use universal dental and Pharmacare put money in the pocket of the people.

MARK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-sMcucWPQss>

(Transcribed audio): We would repeal supply management in a responsible way. We would repeal the carbon tax. The outcomes would be two-fold. Removal of the carbon tax would decrease the cost of consumer goods across the board. Repeal of supply management would reduce the price of staples like milk poultry and eggs. We would also instruct the bank of Canada to have a target inflation of zero instead of the 2% it currently is at. This helps households and it helps businesses keep their costs low for necessary expenses. Here's an article from CBC talking about how Amazon is more reliable and cheaper than Canadian government food subsidies. Link will be included in my written notes, but it says: The consensus in Iqaluit seems to be that everyone with a credit card has an Amazon Prime membership. That's because people can often find groceries cheaper online than in local stores, despite government food subsidy programs. "Amazon Prime has done more toward elevating the standard of living of my family than any territorial or federal program. Full stop. Period," a local principal, who declined to speak further, said on Facebook. Pampers on the shelf at Northmart in Iqaluit. On Amazon, similar size boxes are around \$35. (Sara Frizzell/CBC) With an annual fee of about \$80, Amazon Prime members can get free and faster shipping. In 2015, Amazon re-evaluated its shipping to remote locations and dropped many Nunavut communities, but kept Iqaluit. Now, Iqalummiut live in perpetual fear that they will be next to get cut off by Amazon. "We'd be limping," said Rhoda Cunningham outside the post office in June. People's Party Tax reforms and repeal of the carbon tax will make it more financially viable for companies like Amazon to keep servicing hard to serve areas in Canada.

ASHISH: (Written response) Food insecurity and elimination of resultant malnutrition is a complex issue comprising of several interrelated factors. Policies should focus on building a robust national economy (inclusive economic growth), improving household incomes, focus on the elimination of poverty and its root causes, and prevention of food wastage.

The issue of food wastage is more of a logistical issue rather than a broader policy issue and can provide a response to the food insecurity issues. Current food production can effectively address the issue of food insecurity, provided food does not get wasted during the stages of production, storage, transport, processing and at the level of the consumer. Nearly a third of the food grown globally never reaches the table. Annually, more than half the food, worth billions of dollars annually, is not consumed in Canada. The negative repercussions are not only on human health but also on the environment. Much research has been done, however much more needs to be done and the government will continue to play a vital role through vigorous research grants to encourage technology driven solutions.

**3. Approximately 1 in 6 children in Canada live in food insecure households, and the majority are not meeting fruit and vegetable guidelines. Is your party committed to funding a national school food program?**

STEVE: Yes! Absolutely. We need a national school food program. America has it, a lot of reasons why people do this. It's quite embarrassing that we don't have one. Studies show that if children are hungry, their brains aren't ready to receive information. Great way to connect local farms with markets. We in Guelph will work with local community initiatives that are already under way. I.e., programs that have kids growing food, GCVI (local Guelph school) students

would grow food, cook it, eat it; we need more programs like this. We need programs like food for kids. Breakfast programs for kids so they are not hungry, and their brains are being fed. France is a great example. They make this part of their education process, no cheap food to kids, food is essential. Great chefs giving great food. We need that here in Guelph. Local farmers producing great, nutritious food, coming from great soil. Carbon in the ground equals to nutritious food, more support of best farming practices.

AISHA: One of the most exciting parts of the NDP platform is the commitment to help in combating childhood food insecurity with initiatives. Our program would enhance programs already available to children. We would follow the Canada food guide to ensure nutritious food. A study by UNICEF rated Canada 37 out of 41 for access to food for children. This is a poverty issue pure and simple. Failure of successive governments that fail to address the roots causes. If young people do not have access to healthy food, they are likely to be trapped in poverty causing lifelong issues and greater risk of physical and mental health issues. Great example of preventative healthcare making sure healthy food is readily available so they can be successful.

LLOYD: The Liberal party is committed to working with provinces and territories to ensure school programs, rotary club supporting Guelph, children's foundation, Trees for tots etc. to be able to aid to help with school food programs. We need to look at food policy for Canada. Consultations across Canada food security for children came up very high. Agriculture committee studies this as one of 40,000 consultations. Something we are missing in our society is wrap around support for children. Everyone at the table and there is a carve out for this for school programs. We need a national breakfast program. Food insecurity for students – money was put behind it in the budget, Guelph 'fingerprints' all over it. Community gardens at a school in Guelph, seniors interacting with students, national food guide used in classrooms, different cultures growing different foods and sharing with the community. Having a mixture of food on the plate. Bangladeshi community in Guelph growing food, should put it across the county and share this federally. Creative solutions in Guelph need to be spread across Canada. Arrell food institute and seed project starting a longer adventure and people need our support.

MARK: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-hnn\\_ubSAo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h-hnn_ubSAo)

(Transcribed audio): We would not bring forward a plank on that during this election cycle. We have a lot of other things to focus on.

ASHISH: (Written response) It is immensely important for children to have the food security that comprehensively addresses their childhood developmental requirements. Every child must have a balanced nutrition to make the best out of school. We are aware that the quality of food and its constant access is important for children's memory, behaviour and overall academic performance. Balanced, nutritious and safe food is not only essential during the child's developmental stages but also has a bearing on children's health later in their adult life. Considering children are the bearers of the future of Canada and its leadership role in the World, the importance of healthy children (given the long term negative effects of childhood food insecurity) cannot be overstated.

**4. Do you see food insecurity as a healthcare issue? How are you/your party making it a part of healthcare policy discussions?**

AISHA: Absolutely! As a health care provider I see it daily. Those who are food insecure are likely to use healthcare, are more likely to suffer mental and physical health issues. We need to help people early on in the struggles, prevent them from further crisis that needs more attention. I have personally seen the impact that a lack of adequate health services can have on people. This is not just a food access issue; to solve food insecurity we need a holistic approach and understand how different policies intertwine. Working towards fare free public transit will allow people to travel easier to place of public support like food banks and other community supports.

LLOYD: Cannot separate food from health. Diabetes, obesity, lack of vitamins, what it does to people's health. We are not eating well in one of the richest countries in the world with some of the richest agriculture. Sometimes it's a financial thing, sometimes information is needed. Looking for package indicators for food that are high in sugar and sodium so people can make decisions at the grocery store. Food fraud – is the food we are buying what we think we are buying? Must reinforce investments in Canadian food inspection agency and get on top of issues as they occur so the food supply is healthy. Outbreak of tuberculosis – how do we get on top of this to ensure people are getting healthy food?

STEVE: Yes. Food security is a health concern. Low cost solution by getting better access to healthy food. When we talk about health, we talk about illness prevention. Keeping people healthy so they never end up in the hospital. Eating healthy makes people healthier. Corporations receive a tax benefit for advertising their junk food to our children and this is something that needs to stop. Diabetes rampant in Canada. We need to do better by our children. Literacy is aligned with health foods i.e. people who can read and write. Reward our farmers for best farm practices. We need many more farmers bringing local food and making it readily available.

MARK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zVbGIRjVWI8>

(Transcribed audio): Interesting. I think access to food is important and access to information for citizens about healthy food and the right food amount is important. Healthcare is a provincial jurisdiction, though, so adding it to the healthcare policy will be their purview, not the federal government's.

ASHISH: (Written response) Food insecurity is linked to negative health outcomes - both physiologically and psychologically. Food security is essential for all Canadians at all stages of their life and for all age-groups- pregnant mothers, infants, children, adults and senior citizens. Having enough to eat, having safe foods, and eating the right foods are all central to human health and ensuring this is important to the Canadian government. The negative effects of food insecurity on a population adds added pressure on the health care system of our country.

Policies not only should address food insecurity but also hunger as a result of poverty and ensure that balanced and nutritious and safe food is available to all. Technologies to prevent

food wastage are important, and Canadian scientists have a leadership role to play for sustainable global food security, through scientific and technological innovations.

**5. What is your party committed to doing to further reconciliation in the food system with FN, Metis and Inuit populations?**

\*No time to answer questions at the event.

MARK: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSpU4X2EGTQ>

(Transcribed audio): You guys say on the website under the 5 big ideas banner:

<https://foodsecurecanada.org/policy-a...> Food was often used as a tool of oppression and marginalization but has the potential to be a tool for healing and reconciliation. Indigenous food systems are deeply connected to Indigenous economies, cultures, health, and well-being A national food policy for Canada must acknowledge the history and ongoing legacy of colonialism and prioritize reconciliation and decolonization as key guiding principles of our food system. I think removing unnecessary taxes and unnecessary costs associated with food access will help all Canadians. I think making it more viable for private companies to serve the northern parts of Canada is an important step forward that has been ignored. This includes removing things like the carbon tax and making the environment more business friendly. I'm not aware of any modern examples of food being used as a tool of oppression by governments. Further, I'm not sure how a federal government would balance the needs to be culturally sensitive while also facilitating the independent indigenous economies, culture, health and wellbeing. The PPC isn't a government that will pander to special interests. I'm interested in making life better for ALL Canadians, everywhere

ASHISH: (Written response) First Nations Reconciliation is important to the Conservative Party. Like for all Canadians, I believe the issues of food security - ensuring personally and socially acceptable food - is important for the First Nations, Metis and Inuit populations in Canada - all the while taking into consideration the unique cultural and geographical aspects of the indigenous populations. In this, we should look to how we can support community-based strategies.

## Public Q&A

**Q: Share thoughts on marketing restrictions to children with regards to healthy food, and uphold that in legislation?**

LLOYD: We have had several meetings over the past few years and it is something senate has been studying. In terms of sugar and salt advertising to children and not being able to advertise to children. Policy is going through Canada right now. It has not come to the house for debate, but the heart and stroke foundation is very behind it. Strong liberal caucus includes a lot of talent in the room. How do we stop children from seeing these advertisements and are given the right tools to make the right decisions? Senate taking the lead. There is advertising program for kids in development for this fall.

STEVE: Really important kids are not exposed again and again. Grew up on a farm and was exposed to local food and wasn't exposed to advertising that kids are now subject to. So many ways in which our society is really challenged. This corporate driven food structure targets our young children and we need to develop a culture of healthy food. Healthy food is delicious and makes us feel great.

AISHA: It is important that as adults or parents we set limits to exposure of these marketing schemes. Having open conversations with our children of what foods may not be helping and encouraging the school system to also have those conversations, engaging the children. Every opportunity we can get to engage our children. The marketing is out there, and as adults as role models and parents we need to open a dialogue and let them know.

**Q: Targeted at Steve - talked a lot about farming best practices – how do we incentivize farmers?**

STEVE: Having a national school program as a way to influence the practices that are used to grow our good. By creating better food were creating better soil/ environment. Rewarding farmers for environmental benefits like making sure our soil content is carbon rich. We need programs to do this that reward farmers. Getting carbon out of the atmosphere and growing better food are complementary.

AISHA: From a healthcare perspective, best practice guidelines need evidence and a demonstrated need, and ensuring everyone at the table has the opportunity to participate

LLOYD: Soil and water management on the farm studies. Research for improving root architecture, driving roots deeper into soil so carbon is sequestered deeper into the soil. Making root structures go deeper for sequestering carbon. Farmers need more access to regulatory approvals that allow them to use technology developed at places like the University of Guelph. Looking at riparian zones of trees along streams, and keeping nutrients on field, using precision agriculture, only putting fertilizer where its needed so it's not entering streams, comes down to soil management. Soil management is a science, and farmers are on top of it. Need the opportunity for education. a soil conference last year in Guelph with people from all over North America talking about this as a science. Things like zero till. Farmers will respond, we just need to give them the tools to do that.

**Q: Has your party considered the impact of climate change on food security?**

AISHA: Using a national food waste strategy to address this.

LLOYD: Climate change driving drought, forcing farmers to move to coastal areas – it is a global problem. Food security absolutely impacted by climate change and we need research to combat this.

STEVE: Carbon content in soil, increased water content in soil. Need more varieties of food ready to combat these issues. Need to store food. Form relationships in communities so we know what we like, and we are closer connected.

**Q: As a First Nations, buzz word ‘best practices’, what safeguards do you have in place to ensure there are safeguards against colonial views of this?**

LLOYD: Made a mistake in the committee studying food – vertical farming, we need greenhouses up north – was wrong, we don’t need green leafy vegetables, we need caribou, arctic char availability. We need to listen first, ask questions.

STEVE: Forcing solution on top of another nation – politicians not treating each other with respect. Not answering each other. No one person or one party has all the answers. Need a culture of consultation. Desperately important that we get this right.

AISHA: Reconciliation – for the NDP this is the heart of our platform. The rights of the indigenous and treaties need to be upheld. UNDRIP needs to be followed and upheld.

**Q: How will the government create incentives for industry to change food waste and other issues?**

STEVE: Profit driven motive – we need solutions that work with markets. Need to change the rules of the game, and this is the role of the government.

AISHA: When we talk about food waste, Canada and other wealthy countries have the highest amounts – we should maybe consider fines or punishment for this.

LLOYD: The industrial ecosystems – taking what would have been waste from one company that another company needs for input. Creating businesses and partnerships. One company funding from the federal government is taking McDonald coffee grounds converting to oils for the automotive industry.

#### **Media:**

Sustain Ontario (July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

<https://sustainontario.com/2019/07/26/arrell-food-institute-to-host-guelph-eat-think-vote-event-aug-13th/>

CFRU 93.3FM Food Farm Talk Radio (August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 10 a.m)

[http://www.cfru.ca/2019/08/page/11/?post\\_type=mcm\\_recording](http://www.cfru.ca/2019/08/page/11/?post_type=mcm_recording)

Guelph Mercury (August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

<https://www.guelphmercury.com/news-story/9543966-guelph-federal-candidates-to-speak-on-food-issues-at-eat-think-vote-event/>

CBC Kitchener Waterloo Radio (August 13th, 2019)

<https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-104-the-morning-edition-k-w/clip/15732147-guelph-federal-candidate-debate-to-discuss-food-insecurity>

CBC News (August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/kitchener-waterloo/guelph-food-insecurity-debate-federal-election-1.5244802>

Guelph Mercury (August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

<https://www.guelphmercury.com/news-story/9549222-guelph-federal-candidates-talk-food-insecurity/>

Guelph Today (August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

<https://www.guelphtoday.com/local-news/aaaaand-theyre-off-the-guelph-federal-election-campaign-sees-its-first-all-candidates-forum-1638346>

Global News August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/5765340/guelph-federal-candidates-food-insecurity/>

CFRU 93.3FM Food Farm Talk Radio (August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at 10 a.m)

[http://www.cfru.ca/2019/08/page/4/?post\\_type=mcm\\_recording](http://www.cfru.ca/2019/08/page/4/?post_type=mcm_recording)