SUBJECT: Nutritious Food Basket - BOH09024 (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That Report BOH09024 regarding the cost of a Nutritious Food Basket be received;

(b) That the Board of Health write to the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Community and Social Services to request that the Province act on the following components of the Poverty Reduction Strategy as soon as possible:

   i) Establish an independent committee including low-income people, policy experts and advocates to develop rational and just criteria for determining Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) rates;

   ii) Implement OW and ODSP rates that reflect the real cost of living and are indexed annually to reflect inflation, including the findings of yearly Nutritious Food Basket surveys conducted by local Boards of Health based on protocols established by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; and

   iii) Set the shelter component maximum for OW clients at 85 percent of the median market rent for each local housing market, based on annual surveys conducted by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation;

(c) That the Board of Health request that all levels of government make significant investments in affordable housing.

Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC
Medical Officer of Health
Public Health Services
This report provides information on the cost of a Nutritious Food Basket in Hamilton for 2009, and recommends that the Board of Health advocate to the government of Ontario to implement poverty reduction strategies as soon as possible, so people can have an income that allows them to buy nutritious food.

The Nutritious Food Basket is a survey tool that is a measure of the cost of basic healthy eating. The average monthly cost for a family of four in Hamilton in 2009 is $701.89.

When housing costs and other basic living expenses are considered, many individuals and families with a limited income do not have adequate funds to purchase nutritious food on a consistent basis; this predisposes them to obesity and chronic disease.

The attached seven 2009 Nutritious Food Basket Scenarios (Appendix A) compare the income available for rent and the purchase of healthy food for families and individuals depending on Ontario Works, minimum wage, Ontario Disability Support Program, and the Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement. After these expenses, there is very little, if any, money left for clothing, transportation and other basic needs.

The Ontario Public Health Standards, 2008, requires Boards of Health to monitor food affordability in accordance with the Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) Protocol. The Nutritious Food Basket is a survey tool that measures the cost of basic healthy eating and represents current nutrition recommendations and average food purchasing patterns.

This year, the tool changed to reflect an eating pattern that meets the updated 2007 Canada’s Food Guide and eating behaviours reflective of the Canadian Community Health Survey 2.2 results. A complete list of the foods surveyed appears on Health Canada’s website for the (new) National Nutritious Food Basket.¹

The 67 foods surveyed represented:

- Vegetables and Fruit
- Orange Vegetables and Fruit
- Dark Green Vegetables
- Whole Grains/ Whole Wheat Products
- Non Whole Grain Products
- Milk and Milk Alternatives
- Meat, Poultry, Legumes, Eggs and Fish

¹ www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/surveill/basket-panier/index-eng.php
Foods containing higher amounts of fat and sugar were dropped from the tool. These changes are consistent with the latest research linked to optimal health. Items in the NFB reflect the lowest price available in the store surveyed in a specified purchase size, regardless of brand. The total cost includes an additional calculation of 5% to cover common food items used in meals (spices, seasonings, condiments, baking supplies, soups, coffee and tea).

Note that the food items on the survey require food preparation skills. The survey does not make allowances for special dietary needs of individuals, differences in activity levels, or cultural food choices. It does not allow for eating out or inviting friends or other family members over for a meal. The NFB does not include processed convenience foods, snack foods, foods of little nutritional value, or purchases commonly made at grocery stores like laundry detergent, toilet paper, or soap.

On May 25 and 26, 2009, Registered Dietitians from Hamilton conducted food pricing in six grocery stores across the City of Hamilton as instructed in the newly updated Nutritious Food Basket Protocol.²

The food prices are used to estimate the average cost of feeding up to 22 different age and gender groups and a reference family of four (a man and woman each aged 31 to 50 years; a boy 14 to 18 years of age; and a girl four to eight years old.)

The average cost of the nutritious food basket for 2009 cannot be compared with previous survey years due to the changes in the survey tool.

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

**How Much Does It Cost to Feed a Family?**

In 2009, an average family of four, (a man and woman each aged 31 to 50 years; a boy, 14 to 18 years of age; and a girl, four to eight years old) living in Hamilton needs $701.89 a month to buy the quantity of basic foods in the Nutritious Food Basket to meet nutrition recommendations.

The consumer price index, published by Statistics Canada, reports that the cost of food purchased from stores rose 7.4% in May 2009, compared with May 2008.³ This price increase was led by a 16.4% increase in fresh vegetables, and a 13.9% increase in fresh fruit.

Surveys indicate that approximately 4.1% (Confidence interval ±1.5%) of all households in Hamilton did not have enough food to eat because of a lack of money.⁴

For those who must follow a strict budget, the choice is not between a generic and name brand product. It means the choice between food and hunger.

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³ Statistics Canada, Consumer Price Index for May 2009

⁴ Use caution when interpreting due to high sampling variability

⁴ Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS), City of Hamilton, Waves 90 to 96, June to December, 2008
Housing
The cost of housing is the largest expense for most low income residents. The average monthly rental cost for a three-bedroom apartment in Hamilton was $900.00 in 2008, yet the maximum monthly shelter allowance from Ontario Works is only $660.00 for a family of four. In 2006, in Hamilton, 20.6% of renter households spent more than 50% of their income on shelter.

This situation is compounded by a shortage of affordable rental housing in Hamilton and a long waiting list for social housing. As of July 31, 2009, there were 4,930 active applications for social housing on the Access to Housing waiting list. The 2008 Ontario Association of Food Banks Report notes that a lack of affordable housing is a key cause of hunger in Ontario.

Trade-offs” or “compromises” required among the poorest households in Hamilton often involve decisions like paying the rent or hydro, instead of buying food.

Social Assistance in Hamilton
Sixty one percent of social assistance recipients are food insecure.

In June 2009, the number of beneficiaries who received Ontario Works assistance in Hamilton was 21,976. Scenario 1, in Appendix A, compares the cost of rent and food for a family of four to the total income available from Ontario Works. These families are required to spend 50% of their income on housing and 39% on food, leaving little for other basic needs.

In Hamilton, 22,170 individuals are beneficiaries of Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) in June 2009. Hamilton has a higher percentage of clients in receipt of ODSP than the Ontario average. Scenario 6, in Appendix A, illustrates the income and expenses for a male aged 31-50 years on ODSP. He is required to spend 49% of his income on rent and 22% for healthy food.

Food bank use was up over 20% from March 2008 to March 2009 in Hamilton. This translates into 19,602 visits in March 2009 alone. Some agencies have reported another 30% increase in numbers during July and August. Of those who accessed

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5 Community Services Department, City of Hamilton, Housing Division
6 Social Assistance, Pension and Tax Credit Rates, Ministry of Community & Social Services, July –September 2009
7 Refers to the proportion of average monthly total household income (reported for the year 2005) which is spent on gross rent. The reference period for shelter costs (i.e. gross rent) data is 2006.
8 Statistics Canada, 2006 Census Catalogue no. 97-554-XCB2006051_CSD, City of Hamilton
9 Community Services Department, City of Hamilton, Housing Division
10 Our Choice for a Better Ontario, The Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB), August 19, 2008
11 Incomes and Poverty in Hamilton Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton, April 2009
12 Analysis of Ontario Sample in Cycle 2.2 of the Canadian Community Health Survey (2004)
13 Community Services Department, City of Hamilton, Actual caseload June 2009
14 Community Services Department, City of Hamilton
15 % of Hamilton Population on ODSP in June 2009 = 4.2%; % of Ontario Population on ODSP in June 2009 = 2.7%; Community Services Department, City of Hamilton
16 Assessment of Food Bank Inventory Shortage (CS09046), Community Services Department, Housing Division, June 17, 2009
17 Hamilton Food Share, communication August 20, 2009
food from food banks in 2008, 54% were receiving Ontario Works assistance and 21% were living on disability support.\textsuperscript{18}

For a family of four living on income from Ontario Works, the estimated monthly cost of housing and a Nutritious Food Basket leaves little money at the end of the month. In 2009, $202.11 per month was left to cover other basic necessities, such as hydro, heat, basic phone service, transportation, household and personal care items, clothing and childcare.

**Minimum Wage**
Fifty five percent of food-insecure households in Ontario are reliant on salaries or wages.\textsuperscript{19}

Scenario 2, in Appendix A, illustrates the high cost of rent and food for a family of four living on a single minimum wage of $9.50 per hour. The total income per month is $2,279.00, and after paying rent and food, the family has $677.11 left to cover all other expenses such as transportation, clothing and personal products. In recent years, statistics show that 10% of Hamilton food bank users have paid employment.\textsuperscript{20}

**Extent of Low Income in Hamilton**
Those living on income assistance are very likely to report food insecurity. 18.1% of Hamilton residents subsist on an income below the before-tax low income cut off measures.\textsuperscript{21}

Low Income Cut Offs (LICOs) represent levels of income where individuals and families are expected to spend approximately 20 percentage points more than the average family on food, shelter and clothing. On average, families under the LICO spend 63% of their after-tax family income, or 55% of their before-tax family income, on food, shelter and clothing. These figures are based on the size of the family and the size of the city of residence.\textsuperscript{22} When the incomes in social assistance and minimum wage scenarios presented in Appendix A are annualized, all fall below the Statistics Canada 2006 LICOs.\textsuperscript{23}

The community’s unemployment rate increased from 6.7% in April 2008 to 8.1% in April 2009.\textsuperscript{24} Hamilton has also seen a corresponding increase in Employment Insurance beneficiaries from 6,141 in May 2008 to 12,480 in May 2009.\textsuperscript{25}

Thousands of Hamilton residents increasingly have to choose between eating healthy food and paying the shelter costs of rent, hydro and heat.

\textsuperscript{18} Hunger Count 2008, Hamilton Food Share  
\textsuperscript{19} Analysis of Ontario Sample in Cycle 2.2 of the Canadian Community Health Survey (2004)  
\textsuperscript{20} Hunger Count 2008, Hamilton Food Share  
\textsuperscript{21} Census 2006 – local level data  
\textsuperscript{22} Low income cut-offs for 2004 and low income measures for 2002, Statistics Canada, 2005  
\textsuperscript{23} Statistics Canada, Census of Population 2006  
\textsuperscript{24} Assessment of Food Bank Inventory Shortage (CS09046), Community Services Department, Housing Division, June 17, 2009  
\textsuperscript{25} Source: Statistics Canada, 2009, Number of individuals receiving regular Employment Insurance (EI) benefits in the Hamilton CMA,\texttt{http://www.myhamilton.ca/myhamilton/CityandGovernment/CityDepartments/CorporateServices/FinanceBudgetTaxes/CommunityWellness.htm}
Food Insecurity and Health

Individuals in food insufficient households are more likely to report poor general health, major depression and distress, and multiple chronic conditions including more heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and food allergies.\(^{26}\)

The study “Sick and Tired” (from the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, Wellesley Institute, and University of Toronto),\(^{27}\) found that people with low incomes had worse health on many indicators when compared with the non-poor. The poorest one-fifth of Canadians, when compared to the richest twenty percent, have:

- More than double the rate of diabetes and heart disease;
- 60% greater rate of two or more chronic health conditions;
- More than three times the rate of bronchitis;
- Nearly double the rate of arthritis or rheumatism
- A staggering 358% higher rate of disability
- 128% more mental and behavioural disorders;
- 95% more ulcers;
- 63% more chronic conditions; and
- 33% more circulatory conditions.

Canadian adults and adolescents in food insecure households have lower intakes of fruits, vegetables and milk products, lower vitamin and mineral intakes, and a greater risk of inadequate nutrient intakes. The higher estimated prevalence of nutrient inadequacy is widespread and most marked for protein, vitamin A, thiamin, riboflavin, vitamin B-6, folate, vitamin B-12, magnesium, phosphorus and zinc.\(^{28}\)

CCHS 2.2 data shows that men & women who reported food insecurity had significantly lower intakes of vitamin A, magnesium & calcium.\(^{29}\)

There is growing evidence that families who cannot afford to buy adequate amounts of nutritious food respond by buying and consuming more energy-dense, nutrient-poor food products (fats, sweets and snacks), and that this is contributing to the rising incidence of obesity.\(^{30, 31}\) Low household income is a marker for increased risk of overweight and obesity in Canadian and Nova Scotia children alike.\(^{32}\) Obesity is one more risk factor for poor health and chronic disease.

Families need adequate incomes that allow them to buy nutritious food if they are to reduce their risk of health problems, limit nutrient deficiencies and decrease their incidence of obesity.

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\(^{29}\) Analysis of Ontario sample in Cycle 2.2 of the Canadian Community, Health Survey (2004), J. Vogt and V. Tarasuk, December 18, 2007


Provincial Advocacy
An Ontario-wide advocacy campaign for a Healthy Food Supplement called Put Food in the Budget was launched in February, 2009 by several agencies including the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction, the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHa), the STOP Community Food Centre, and Toronto Public Health. They called on the Ontario Government to introduce into the Spring budget a $100 monthly supplement to the basic needs allowance for all adults receiving social assistance. Because the budget passed without including the Healthy Food Supplement, a new campaign Do the Math is currently soliciting support from the public to urge the Ontario Government to implement the healthy food supplement.

Hamilton Advocacy
Members of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction aspire to make Hamilton the best place to raise a child. They are working with community partners to drive forward change in Hamilton around poverty reduction. Members have engaged volunteers and 900 organizations to contribute to poverty reduction efforts through links to collaborative planning tables and community organizations. Notable accomplishments are the launch of the Change Framework, and the Starting Point Strategies.

The Roundtable is working with Hamilton’s Community Legal clinics and representatives at McMaster University in the development of an economic case for the implementation of a social assistance rates board that would establish rates based on the ‘real’ cost of food, housing and other necessities. The Roundtable is further engaged with Partners in Nutrition around expanding nutrition programs within Hamilton’s schools.

Food and income security are two critical elements of a poverty reduction strategy. Children and families who have adequate and sustainable levels of financial resources have the increased capacity to live a healthier quality of life. Research shows that children who have access to nutritious food perform better in school, have less demand on the health system, and exhibit fewer negative psycho-social behaviours.

Registered Dietitians in Public Health Services have developed a factsheet, ‘The Cost of Basic Nutritious Food’ (Appendix B), to support the advocacy efforts of community organizations and/or groups involved in poverty reduction.

Public Health in Hamilton also calls on the province to increase social assistance and minimum wage rates, and to champion efforts to reduce poverty rates. These

33 www.dothemath.thestop.org
34 http://www.hamiltonpoverty.ca/
measures can have a significant impact on the health and learning potential of our residents with low incomes.

Concluding Comments
When housing costs and other basic living expenses are considered, many individuals and families receiving Ontario Works assistance, Ontario Disability Support Programs or working in minimum wage jobs do not have an adequate income to purchase nutritious food on a consistent basis. In fact, these individuals often face the difficult choice between meeting their basic shelter needs and meeting their nutritional needs. Income is a key determinant of health and being poor is associated with more health problems.

There is ongoing evidence that affordable housing, increased OW and ODSP income and increased minimum wages are required to help improve access to nutritious food. Given the numbers of people in Hamilton on social assistance, it is imperative that social assistance rates provide an adequate standard of living.

It is therefore recommended that a letter advocating increases to social assistance and minimum wage levels be sent to the Premier of Ontario and the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Alternatives for Consideration:
The Board of Health could choose not to advocate for affordable housing and increased income that would allow residents to afford nutritious food.

Financial/Staffing/Legal Implications:
Ontario Works is cost-shared with the City. If social assistance rates increase, this would increase the levy portion as well as the provincial portion, at whatever rate of increase was implemented.

Policies Affecting Proposal:
Social assistance benefits are issued in accordance with rate schedules specified in the Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program Acts and Regulations.

Relevant Consultation:
The following people have reviewed and/or contributed to the report.
- The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction: Tom Cooper
- Community Services staff: Louisa Wong, David Brodati, Gillian Hendry, Robert McKnight, Heather Russell, Mark Weingartner
- Public Health Services staff: Katrice Edgar
- Food Security Work Group of the Ontario Public Health Association: Tracy Woloshyn, Chair

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:
Monitoring of the NFB creates value across two of the three bottom lines (community and economic well-being.) The NFB provides information that can be used to address personal health and welfare and demonstrate need for increased support for families living in poverty.

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes  ☐ No

- Provides information for development of and advocacy for healthy public policy.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced.  ☐ Yes  ☑ No

Economic Well-Being is enhanced.  ☑ Yes  ☐ No

- Improved access to food for all citizens is key to their participation in both training and employment opportunities.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines?

☐ Yes  ☑ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants?

☑ Yes  ☐ No

- The recommendations in this report enhance community and economic well-being of Hamiltonians, and they help make Hamilton a city of choice in which to work, live, and play.
### Monthly Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Family of Four, Ontario Works</th>
<th>Family of Four, Minimum Wage Earner (Full-time/Full-year)</th>
<th>Family of Four Median ONTARIO Income (after tax)</th>
<th>Single Parent Household with 2 Children, Ontario Works</th>
<th>One Person Household, Ontario Works</th>
<th>One Person Household, ODSP</th>
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### Selected Monthly Expenses

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<th>(3 Bdr.)</th>
<th>(3 Bdr.)</th>
<th>(2 Bdr.)</th>
<th>(Bachelor)</th>
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<td>$172.61</td>
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### Total Expenses

| $1,601.89 | $1,601.89 | $1,601.89 | $1,306.58 | $742.76  | $742.76    | $809.61    |       |

### Monthly Funds Remaining (for other basic needs e.g. telephone, transportation, child care, household and personal care items, clothing, school supplies etc.)

| $202.11 | $677.11 | $4,179.11 | $375.42 | $150.76  | $304.24    | $389.39    |       |

### Note:
- All dollars rounded to nearest whole number.

### Scenario References:

Scenario 1 - Family of four (a man and a woman, aged 31 to 50 years, a boy 14 to 18 years of age, and a girl age 4 to 8 years old) on Ontario Works (OW)

Scenario 2 - Family of four (a man and a woman, aged 31 to 50 years, a boy 14 to 18 years of age, and a girl 4 to 8 years old) income is based on one minimum wage earner, 40hr/wk, $9.50/hr.


Scenario 4 - 1 adult (female aged 31-50), 2 children (girl age 8, boy age 14); on Ontario Works

Scenario 5 - 1 adult (male aged 31-50); on Ontario Works

Scenario 6 - 1 adult (male age 31-50); on Ontario Disability Support Program

Scenario 7 - 1 adult (female age 70+); income based on Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement (OAS/GIS)

a - Basic and maximum shelter allowance. OW and Ontario Disability Support Payment (ODSP) rates effective May 2009.


h - Rental Market Reports, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, October 2008. Some communities may need to add utility costs.

The Cost of Basic Nutritious Food

Can People in Hamilton Afford a Nutritious Diet in 2009?

Many people in Hamilton with a limited income often face the daunting task of choosing between eating well or paying the rent to survive. The increasing cost of living, balanced against the low-income of many individuals and families living on minimum wage or social assistance, does not leave enough money to buy food. The following report discusses the cost of nutritious food, the ways that people cope with a limited income, and some suggestions on how to improve food access in Hamilton.

Balancing Bills and Nutrition

Every year, as mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, and the Ministry of Health Promotion, Registered Dietitians in Public Health Services conduct a Nutritious Food Basket survey to determine the average lowest cost of a nutritious diet. In 2009, six local grocery stores were surveyed to find the lowest price of 67 commonly purchased and nutritious foods based on Canadian eating patterns and buying habits as well as nutritional value.

In 2009, an average family of four, (a man and woman each aged 31 to 50 years; a boy, 14 to 18 years of age; and a girl, four to eight years old) living in Hamilton, needs $162.10 a week, or $701.89 a month, to meet their nutritional needs.

The Nutritious Food Basket does not include convenience foods, snack foods, or other purchases such as toilet paper or dish soap. It also makes the assumption that most people have the skills necessary to prepare and store foods, and does not include eating out or cooking for additional friends or family.

The Hamilton Nutritious Food Basket survey reflects a similar rise in the Canadian Consumer Price Index, published by Statistics Canada. It reported that the cost of food purchased from stores rose 7.4% in May 2009, compared with May 2008. This was led by 16.4% increase in fresh vegetables, and a 13.9% increase in fresh fruit.

For low income or fixed income families, increases in food prices limit accessibility to nutritious foods.

Making Ends Meet

Most people will pay their fixed expenses such as rent, hydro and heat, first. When money is tight, it is challenging to cover other basic monthly expenses. Some of these necessities may include:

- Telephone
- Transportation
- Toiletries
- Household items
- Medications
- Clothing
- Laundry
- Child care services
- Insurance
- Unexpected expenses
Fixed Income Households

Low-income households in Hamilton often live in rental housing. In 2009, the average monthly cost for a three-bedroom apartment is $900. For a family of four receiving Ontario Works assistance, this represents 50% of their monthly income. Many individuals and families receiving Ontario Works assistance, Ontario Disability Support Programs or working in minimum wage jobs do not have enough money left to purchase nutritious food on a regular basis.

The following chart depicts the average monthly Ontario Works rates for a family of four, the cost of housing, and the cost of a Nutritious Food Basket in 2009.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>2009</th>
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<td>Monthly Income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nutritious Food</td>
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<td>What’s LEFT</td>
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Figure 2. Estimated monthly income, and costs for a family of four (a man and woman each aged 31 to 50 years; a boy 14 to 18 years of age; and a girl four to eight years old) living in Hamilton in 2009.

Many families face a precarious balancing act every day. With the increasing cost of living, small changes in their income or expenses could make the difference between food and hunger.

Our Health

Families and individuals with limited resources may have difficulty accessing healthy, nutritious food. Not being able to afford a nutritious diet can affect health.

Research shows that the poorest one-fifth of Canadians, when compared to the richest twenty percent, have:

- More than double the rate of diabetes and heart disease;
- 60% greater rate of two or more chronic health conditions;
- More than three times the rate of bronchitis;
- Nearly double the rate of arthritis or rheumatism;
- A staggering 358% higher rate of disability;
- 128% more mental and behavioural disorders;
- 95% more ulcers;
- 63% more chronic conditions; and
- 33% more circulatory conditions.

Daily Activities & Productivity

When people do not consume an adequate diet, they are often distracted and have a harder time focusing in school and at work. Many studies show that children who skip breakfast in the morning have trouble concentrating at school and are more prone to colds and infections.

Nutrients & Long-term Health

Undernourished individuals may not obtain adequate amounts of key nutrients, such as calcium or folate. If dietary intake is inadequate for an extended period of time, this may have serious health consequences. For example, an adult may increase his or her risk of developing osteoporosis with an insufficient intake of calcium and vitamin D. A pregnant woman with an inadequate intake of folate during the early stages of pregnancy is at an increased risk of carrying a baby with neural tube defects.
Emergency Food Access

In March 2009, local food banks reported 19,602 visits, up 20% from 2008. Food banks, soup kitchens and other emergency food access programs are only a temporary solution for individuals facing poverty and limited access to nutritious food. Challenges faced by emergency food providers include:

- Limited selection and variety of foods due to reliance on donations from the public and industry
- Limited cold storage for fresh vegetables and fruit, milk or meat products
- Restrictions on the amount of foods that can be provided for each client

Building a Better Future

Promoting Long-Term Social Changes

Providing food access to all people in Hamilton means promoting positive societal changes. To ensure that future generations have access to safe and nutritious foods, we can advocate for:

- Affordable housing
- Improved employment insurance coverage and benefits
- Increases in minimum wage and social assistance to adequately meet the needs for food and shelter
- Accessible and affordable child care
- Safe pedestrian and transit routes to food stores (grocery stores, farms, farmer's markets)

How Can You Help?

Learn more about poverty issues and hunger in your community.

Lead in advocating for societal change like increased minimum wage and social assistance for those in need.

Do the Math

Visit www.dothemath.thestop.org and fill in the survey to develop a monthly budget. Compare this budget to what a single person on social assistance receives each month. Send a copy of a pre-written letter to Premier Dalton McGuinty. Or, if you prefer, write your own message directly to relevant ministers.

Look for ways to support access to food, like volunteering in community gardens, community kitchens, good food box programs, or school nutrition programs.

Policy change is necessary for a secure and accessible food system that is available to all.
Your Nutritious Food Basket!

How to Calculate Your Weekly Cost

Step 1: Write down the gender and age of each person in the household.

Step 2: Use the Nutritious Food Basket Weekly Costs and write down the weekly food cost for each person.

Step 3: Add the weekly food costs together for the subtotal.

Step 4: Multiply the subtotal by the amount below for number of people in the household.

- 1 person - multiply by 1.20
- 2 people - multiply by 1.10
- 3 people - multiply by 1.05
- 4 people - make no change
- 5-6 people - multiply by 0.95
- 7 or more people - multiply by 0.90

Step 5: To find out the monthly costs, multiply your total by 4.33.

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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26.86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family of four</td>
<td>male and female, aged 31-50 years, girl, 4-8 years old, boy, 14-18 years old</td>
<td>162.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources

www.hamilton.ca/nutrition
http://foodnetontario.ca/wp
www.hamiltonfoodshare.org
www.hamiltonpoverty.ca
www.dothemath.thestop.org