SUBJECT: Nutritious Food Basket - BOH08029 (City Wide)

**RECOMMENDATION:**

(a) That Report BOH08029 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
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides information on the cost of a Nutritious Food Basket in Hamilton for 2008, 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 Ontario’s standardized food costing tool that measures the cost of healthy eating. The average monthly cost for a family of four in Hamilton in 2008 is $587.28, an increase of $19.87 or 3.5% from the 2007 survey.

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 2008 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.

BACKGROUND:

The Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) is a mandatory food-costing tool that measures the cost of healthy eating. The 1997 protocol is based on nutrition recommendations in the 1992 Canada’s Food Guide, and is due to be updated in 2009.

The food basket is a list of 66 foods that require food preparation skills. The food prices are used to calculate the estimated average cost of feeding 35 different age and gender groups and a reference family of four (Appendix B: The Cost of Basic Nutritious Food, page 4).

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. It makes no 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 calculation of the cost of a NFB does include an additional 5% to cover the cost of miscellaneous foods used in meal preparation such as spices, seasonings, condiments, soups, tea, and coffee.

The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care requires that the annual NFB costing be done in May or June because food costs in these months most closely reflect the annual average Consumer Price Index for food. From May 29 to June 5, 2008, Registered Dietitians from the City Of Hamilton Public Health Services conducted food pricing in eight grocery stores across the City.

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1 Based on reference family of four, difference of $4.59/week x 4.33 = $19.87/month.
ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

How Much Does It Cost to Feed a Family?

In 2008, an average family of four, two adults (male and female ages 25-49 years), and two children (girl age 7, boy age 13) living in Hamilton needs $587.28 a month to meet their nutritional needs. This is an increase of $19.87 (3.5%) since 2007 or an increase of $73.18 (14.23%) since 2004, as shown in Figure 1.

For those who must follow a strict budget, a minor change in food prices does not mean the choice between a generic and name brand product. It means the choice between food and hunger. Surveys indicate that 3.5% of all households in Hamilton did not have enough food to eat because of a lack of money.²

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 $907.00 in 2007,³ yet the maximum monthly shelter allowance from Ontario Works is only $647.00 for a family of four. In Hamilton, approximately 22% of renter households spend more than 50% of their income on shelter.⁴

This situation is compounded by a shortage of affordable rental housing in Hamilton and a long waiting list for social housing. As of May 31, 2008, there were 3,895 active applications for social housing on the Access to Housing waiting list.⁵ The 2008 Ontario

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² Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS), City of Hamilton, Waves 61 to 72, January to December, 2006
³ Community Services Department., City of Hamilton, Housing Division
⁴ On Any Given Night, Measuring Homelessness in Hamilton, 2007
⁵ Community Services Department., City of Hamilton, Housing Division
Association of Food Banks Report notes that a lack of affordable housing is a key cause of hunger in Ontario.\textsuperscript{6}

**Social Assistance in Hamilton**

On average, 9,290 families and individuals receive Ontario Works assistance each month.\textsuperscript{7} 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 51% of their income on housing and 33% on food, leaving little for other basic needs.

Over 14,468 families or individuals are in receipt of Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP).\textsuperscript{8} 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 age 25-49 on ODSP; he is required to spend 49% of his income on rent and 21% for healthy food.

Of the 15,511 people served at Hamilton Food Banks in March 2008, 54% were receiving Ontario Works assistance and 21% were living on disability support.\textsuperscript{9}

*Figure 2* compares the estimated monthly cost of housing and a nutritious food basket with the total monthly income for a family of four (a man and woman each 25-49 years, a girl age 7, and boy age 13) living on income from Ontario Works. In 2008, $287.72 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. Notably, the costs of these other basic necessities have also increased at varying rates over the last five years.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{food_housing_cost_graph.png}
\caption{Estimated monthly housing and food expenditures and total monthly income for a family of four (a man and a women each 25-49 years, a girl age 7, and a boy age 13) living on Ontario Works Entitlement in Hamilton, from 2004 to 2008.}
\end{figure}

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\textsuperscript{6} Our Choice for a Better Ontario, The Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB), August 19, 2008
\textsuperscript{7} Community Services Department, City of Hamilton, Actual caseload average, January to March 2008
\textsuperscript{8} Community Services Department, City of Hamilton
\textsuperscript{9} Hunger Count 2008, Hamilton Food Share
\textsuperscript{10} Monthly rental cost for a 3 bedroom apartment in Hamilton, Community Services Department
\textsuperscript{11} Nutritious Food Basket data
Minimum Wage

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 $8.75 per hour. The total income per month is $2,170.00, and after paying rent and food, the family has $675.72 left to cover all other expenses such as transportation, clothing and personal products. Consequently, 10% of Hamilton food bank users have paid employment.\(^{12}\) The province has scheduled annual increases to the minimum wage, bringing it to $9.50/hr effective March 31, 2009, and $10.25 effective March 31, 2010. These figures will be taken into consideration for analyses in future years.

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 low income cut off thresholds.\(^ {13}\) 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. These figures are based on the size of the family and the size of the city of residence.\(^ {14}\) For example, when the incomes in social assistance and minimum wage scenarios presented in Appendix A are annualized, all fall below the Statistics Canada 2006 LICOs.\(^ {15}\) The City’s poor increasingly have to choose between eating healthy food and paying the shelter costs of rent, hydro and heat.

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.\(^ {16}\)

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.\(^ {17}\)

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.\(^ {18, 19}\) Low household income is a marker for increased risk of

\(^{12}\) Hunger Count 2008, Hamilton Food Share
\(^{13}\) Census 2006
\(^{14}\) Low income cut-offs for 2004 and low income measures for 2002, Statistics Canada, 2005
\(^{15}\) Statistics Canada, Census of Population 2006
overweight and obesity in Canadian and Nova Scotia children alike.\textsuperscript{20} 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.

**Provincial Advocacy**

The Ontario Public Health Association passed Resolution \#5: Access to a Nutritious Diet for All (\textit{Appendix C}) in November, 2007, which directed the Food Security Workgroup to urge the provincial government to a call for action on access to healthy food.

**Hamilton Advocacy**

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction is working at the 'macro level' to bring public attention to the challenges and impact of poverty in Hamilton, and to monitor the City's progress towards \textit{Making Hamilton the Best Place to Raise a Child}. The roundtable aims to shift emphasis from alleviation to prevention, to think comprehensively to tackle root causes, and to work collaboratively across sectors. 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.\textsuperscript{21} 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.\textsuperscript{22, 23, 24, 25, 26}

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

Public Health Services in Hamilton also calls on the province to increase social assistance and minimum wage rates, and to champion efforts to reduce poverty rates. These measures can have a significant impact on the health and learning potential of our residents with low incomes.

**Concluding Comments**

\textsuperscript{21} http://www.hamiltonpoverty.ca/
\textsuperscript{22} King AJC, Boyce WF, and King MA. 1999 Trends in the Health of Canadian Youth. Ottawa. Health Canada.
\textsuperscript{26} Center on Hunger, Poverty, and Nutrition Policy. Statement on the link between nutrition and cognitive development in children. Medford, MA: Tufts University School of Nutrition, 1995
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.

It should be noted that Council has requested staff prepare a report on issues associated with living wage and fair wage policies, particularly as they relate to the City of Hamilton. Staff anticipate returning to Council with this report in the first quarter of 2009.

**RELEVANT CONSULTATION:**

The following people have reviewed and/or contributed to the report.
- The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction: Liz Weaver
- Community Services staff, including those from Social Development and Early Childhood Services, and Housing: Dave Brodati, Katrice Edgar, Molly Elliott, Gillian Hendrie, Robert McKnight, Barbara Powell, Heather Russell, Mark Weingartner
Food Security Work Group of the Ontario Public Health Association: Tracy Woloshyn, Chair.

**CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:**

Monitoring of the NFB creates value across all three bottom lines (community, environmental, 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 to work, live, and play.
### 2008 Hamilton Nutritious Food Basket Scenarios Based on Monthly Income and Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario 1</th>
<th>Scenario 2</th>
<th>Scenario 3</th>
<th>Scenario 4</th>
<th>Scenario 5</th>
<th>Scenario 6</th>
<th>Scenario 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family of Four, Ontario Works</strong></td>
<td><strong>Family of Four, Minimum Wage Earner (Full-time/Full-year)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Family of Four Median ONTARIO Income (after tax)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Single Parent Household with 2 Children, Ontario Works</strong></td>
<td><strong>One Person Household, Ontario Works</strong></td>
<td><strong>One Person Household, ODSP</strong></td>
<td><strong>One Person Household, OAS/GIS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Income</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income from Employment</td>
<td>$1,517.00</td>
<td>$6,175.58</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basic Allowance $^a$</td>
<td>$437.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>$372.00</td>
<td>$211.00</td>
<td>$554.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shelter Allowance $^a$</td>
<td>$647.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>$595.00</td>
<td>$349.00</td>
<td>$445.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement (OAS/GIS) $^b$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,144.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child/Family Benefits $^c$</td>
<td>$536.00</td>
<td>$536.00</td>
<td>$536.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Child Benefit $^d$</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td>$100.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal GST Benefit $^e$</td>
<td>$62.00</td>
<td>$62.00</td>
<td>$62.00</td>
<td>$20.00</td>
<td>$27.00</td>
<td>$30.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment Insurance paid $^f$</td>
<td></td>
<td>($26.00)</td>
<td>($104.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada Pension Plan paid $^g$</td>
<td></td>
<td>($61.00)</td>
<td>($283.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Income Tax Benefit $^h$</td>
<td></td>
<td>$42.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Income</strong></td>
<td>$1,782.00</td>
<td>$2,170.00</td>
<td>$5,788.58</td>
<td>$1,665.00</td>
<td>$580.00</td>
<td>$1,026.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Selected Monthly Expenses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(3 Bdr.)</th>
<th>(3 Bdr.)</th>
<th>(3 Bdr.)</th>
<th>(2 Bdr.)</th>
<th>(Bachelor)</th>
<th>(Bachelor)</th>
<th>(1 Bdr.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average Monthly Rent (may or may not include heat/hydro) $^i$</td>
<td>$907.00</td>
<td>$907.00</td>
<td>$907.00</td>
<td>$762.00</td>
<td>$501.00</td>
<td>$501.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food $^j$</td>
<td>$587.28</td>
<td>$587.28</td>
<td>$587.28</td>
<td>$430.14</td>
<td>$211.53</td>
<td>$211.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenses</strong></td>
<td>$1,494.28</td>
<td>$1,494.28</td>
<td>$1,494.28</td>
<td>$1,192.14</td>
<td>$712.53</td>
<td>$712.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(3 Bdr.)</th>
<th>$287.72</th>
<th>$675.72</th>
<th>$4,294.30</th>
<th>$472.86</th>
<th>$132.53</th>
<th>$313.47</th>
<th>$407.59</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of income required for rent</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of income required to purchase healthy food</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All dollars rounded to nearest whole number.
Scenario References:
Scenario 1 - 2 adults (male and female ages 25-49), 2 children (girl age 7, boy age 13); on Ontario Works (OW)
Scenario 2 - 2 adults (male and female ages 25-49), 2 children (girl age 7, boy age 13); income is based on one minimum wage earner, 40hr/wk, $8.75/hr.
NOTE: The After Tax income includes government transfers & Income tax, but not Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan deductions...
Scenario 4 - 1 adult (female age 25-49), 2 children (girl age 7, boy age 13); on Ontario Works
Scenario 5 - 1 adult (male age 25-49); on Ontario Works
Scenario 6 - 1 adult (male age 25-49); on Ontario Disability Support Program
Scenario 7 - 1 adult (female age 75+); income based on Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement (OAS/GIS)

i - Rental Market Reports, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, October 2007.
Healthy Living

The Cost of Basic Nutritious Food

Can People in Hamilton Afford a Nutritious Diet in 2008?

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, staff in Public Health Services conduct a survey to determine the average cost of a nutritious diet, as mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. In 2008, eight local grocery stores were surveyed to find the lowest price of 66 commonly purchased and nutritious foods based on Canada’s Food Guide.

The following graph shows a 14.2% increase in the cost of a monthly Nutritious Food Basket over the past five years for a family of four in Hamilton.

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

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.
Fixed Income Households

Low-income households in Hamilton often live in rental housing. In 2008, the average monthly cost for a three-bedroom apartment is $907. For a family of four receiving Ontario Works assistance, this represents 51% 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 over the past three years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Income</td>
<td>$1,682.71</td>
<td>$1,710.85</td>
<td>$1,782.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>$881.00</td>
<td>$903.00</td>
<td>$907.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutritious Food</td>
<td>$522.41</td>
<td>$567.40</td>
<td>$587.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s LEFT</td>
<td>$279.30</td>
<td>$240.45</td>
<td>$287.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Estimated monthly income, and costs for a family of four (a man and a women age 25-49 years, a girl age 7, and a boy age 13 years) living in Hamilton, from 2006 to 2008.

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.

Stress & Chronic Disease

Low-income individuals and families may face increased stress, as they find ways to acquire food to feed themselves and their family. Poor nutrition can contribute to high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer, osteoporosis, obesity and diabetes. Individuals may also become more susceptible to infections and colds due to decreased immune function.

Allergies & Special Diets

Specialty items such as gluten-free or milk-free products are often more expensive than regular or no-name items. People with food allergies and health conditions that require specialty foods may have difficulty eating a nutritious diet if they cannot afford the foods they need. Some therapeutic diets can be costly and difficult to afford with a limited income.

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 2008, approximately 51,276 individual hot meals were served from emergency food programs in the City of Hamilton. 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
- 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

Working Together
Beyond Emergency Food Access

Some community strategies have been initiated to improve access to healthy nutritious food. Community kitchens and community gardens provide people with social interaction and culturally appropriate foods. School nutrition programs offer healthy food for students. These types of programs reach a small number of families in need, and will not by themselves solve the issue of households lacking the income to afford a nutritious food basket. They must be part of a broader strategy, with a stronger social safety net that reduces poverty.

Building a Better Future
Promoting Long-Term Social Changes

Providing 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

How Can You Help?

Learn more about poverty issues and hunger in your community

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

Listen to the experiences of clients using emergency food programs.

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

Policy change is necessary for a secure and accessible food system that is available to all.
Appendix B to BOH08029

Nutritious Food Basket 2008

Weekly Cost in Hamilton, Ontario in 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age &amp; Gender</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2-3</th>
<th>4-6</th>
<th>7-9</th>
<th>10-12</th>
<th>13-15</th>
<th>16-18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>$ 16.06</td>
<td>$ 17.06</td>
<td>$ 22.63</td>
<td>$ 26.90</td>
<td>$ 33.38</td>
<td>$ 38.94</td>
<td>$ 45.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy 7-9</td>
<td>$ 26.90</td>
<td>$ 33.38</td>
<td>$ 38.94</td>
<td>$ 45.15</td>
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Your Nutritious Food Basket!
How to Calculate Your Weekly Cost

1. Write down the age and gender of each person you are feeding.
2. Using the table on the left, write down the cost per week for each person.
3. Add all the costs together for a subtotal.
4. Adjust the subtotal based on how many people you are feeding:
   1 person – multiply by 1.15
   2 people – multiply by 1.10
   3 people – multiply by 1.05
   4 people – multiply by 1
   5 people – multiply by 0.95
   6 people – multiply by 0.90
5. To find out the monthly costs, multiply your total by 4.33

“Example” Nutritious Food Basket Cost

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<td>Girl</td>
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Subtotal 135.63
Adjustment x 1.0 = TOTAL 135.63

Your Weekly Nutritious Food Basket Cost

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Subtotal
Adjustment x ____ = TOTAL

Resources
www.hamilton.ca/nutrition
www.FoodNetOntario.ca
www.hamiltonfoodshare.org/
www.hamiltonpoverty.ca/

“Family of four” represents the standard provincial comparison:
2 adults (male and female ages 25-49 years), and
2 children (girl age 7, boy age 13)

Produced and distributed by City of Hamilton Public Health Services, Healthy Living Division.
Contact (905) 546-3630 or visit www.hamilton.ca/nutrition.

Healthy Living Fact Sheet, 2008
RESOLUTION: # 5
Access to a Nutritious Diet for All

A Resolution adopted by the
Ontario Public Health Association

Code: 2007-05(RES) / Status: Active Access to a Nutritious Diet for All

WHEREAS a nutritious diet is a basic requirement for health and well-being; and

WHEREAS the most significant barrier to a nutritious diet is inadequate income; and

WHEREAS households on social assistance or minimum wage cannot afford a nutritious diet after paying housing costs and other fixed costs; and

WHEREAS poor nutrition leads to an increased risk for chronic and infectious diseases, which cost more to treat and manage than to prevent; and

WHEREAS ensuring that people have enough funds to purchase an adequate and nutritious diet is an effective disease prevention strategy; and

WHEREAS the following Boards of Health have endorsed measures to improve food security including increases in social assistance and minimum wage: Toronto, Thunder Bay, Middlesex-London, Peterborough, Sudbury & District, Niagara, Durham Region; and the Regional Municipality of Waterloo; and

WHEREAS the provinces of Quebec and Newfoundland/Labrador and the country of Ireland have already implemented successful poverty reduction strategies,

THAT the OPHA request, through the Food Security Workgroup, that the Province develop a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy; and

THAT the OPHA request, through the Food Security Workgroup, that the Province do the following:

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; and

iv) Implement immediately the full Ontario Child Benefit; and

v) Implement immediately a $10/hour minimum wage, and that the minimum wage be indexed to keep pace with inflation, and accompanied by a review of the Employment Standards Act to ensure vulnerable workers are protected; and

THAT the OPHA work with organizations which share these goals, such as Dietitians of Canada (DC), the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH), the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (aPHa), the Association of Ontario Health Centres (AOHC), and Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO); and

THAT a copy of the member approved resolution be forwarded to the Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario; and the Ontario Ministers of Community and Social Services, Finance, Health and Long-Term Care, Children and Youth Services, and Health Promotion; the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the Office of Nutrition Policy & Promotion, Health Canada.

Implementation Strategy
The resolution will be implemented by the OPHA Food Security Workgroup (FSWG).

Step 1.
Copies of the resolution will be sent to the Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health for Ontario; and the Ontario Ministers of Community and Social Services, Finance, Health and Long-Term Care, Children and Youth Services, and Health Promotion; the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the Office of Nutrition Policy & Promotion, Health Canada.

Step 2.
Copies of the resolution will be sent to DC, OSNPPH, aPHa, AOHC and RNAO and the aPHa/COMOH/OPHA social determinants of health work group with a request to work together on advocating for the measures identified in the resolution.

Step 3.
Letters will be sent to the appropriate provincial ministries and provincial premier, including signatures from all of the involved organizations. All letters will request a response and an invitation to meet to discuss the proposals further.

Step 4.
The FSWG will inform the press of the measures taken and the importance and urgency of the issue.
References:


Regarding Resolutions, Position Papers, and Motions:
**Status:** Policy statements (resolutions, position papers, and motions) are categorized as:

**Active,** if:
1. The activities outlined in the policy statement’s implementation plan have not yet been completed,
2. The policy statement addresses an issue that is currently relevant to public health in Ontario.

**Archived,** if:
1. The activities outlined in the policy statement’s implementation plan have been completed, or
2. The policy statement addresses an issue that is not currently relevant to public health in Ontario or is not based upon the most current evidence. The statement remains the position of the OPHA until a new statement is adopted that effectively reverses or essentially negates all or major elements of an earlier statement. In this instance, the former supercedes the latter.

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Ontario Public Health Association Resolution (2007)