

CITY OF HAMILTON

PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES
Healthy Living Division

TO: Mayor and Members Board of Health	WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: September 26, 2011	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Nutritious Food Basket (BOH11027) (City Wide)	
SUBMITTED BY: Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC Medical Officer of Health Public Health Services Department	PREPARED BY: Vicki Edwards (905) 546-2424 ext. 3632 Chwen Johnson (905) 546-2424 ext. 5020
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION:

- (a) That the Board of Health correspond with the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Community and Social Services, and the Commissioners of the provincial Social Assistance Review, to stress the immediate need for an evidence-based mechanism for setting annual social assistance rates that will meet basic living costs, including the cost of nutritious food, and allow individuals and families to live with dignity;
- (b) That the Board of Health correspond with the Premier of Ontario to request that the province develop a comprehensive Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy that will improve policies for:
 - social programs and working incomes,
 - community planning and the agri-food system, and
 - environments for healthy food and eating.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) is a survey tool used to record the cost of 67 foods that represent a nutritious diet based on Canada's Food Guide.

The estimated average cost of a Nutritious Food Basket in Hamilton for 2011 is \$718.82 per month for a family of four.¹ This is an increase over the 2010 monthly cost of \$690.59, and greater than the 2009 monthly cost of \$701.89.

The 2011 Hamilton Nutritious Food Basket Scenarios spreadsheet (Appendix A to Report BOH11027) compares the average cost of food and rent for families and individuals who receive income from Ontario Works, minimum wage, Ontario Disability Support Program, and the Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement, to families with a median Ontario wage.

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

This report recommends that the Board of Health advocate for adequate income levels that will allow all residents to buy nutritious food. Further advocacy for a comprehensive Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy is needed.

Alternatives for Consideration – See Page 8

FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS (for Recommendation(s) only)

Financial: Ontario Works is cost-shared with the City (for 2011, the city's portion is 18.8%). If social assistance rates increase, this would increase the levy portion as well as the provincial portion, at whatever rate of increase was implemented. Effective January 1, 2018, the province will assume 100% of the cost of Ontario Works basic financial assistance.

Staffing: not applicable

Legal: not applicable

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Chronology of events)

The Ontario Public Health Standards 2008, Chronic Disease Prevention Standards Requirement #2, states: The board of health shall monitor food affordability in

accordance with the *Nutritious Food Basket Protocol, 2008* (or as current) and the *Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol, 2008* (or as current).

The Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) is a survey tool that is a measure of the cost of basic healthy eating. It reflects an eating pattern that meets the recommendations from Canada's Food Guide and takes into account actual eating behaviours and food purchasing patterns found in the Canadian Community Health Survey 2.2.

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

A complete list of the foods surveyed can be found on Health Canada's website for the National Nutritious Food Basket.²

The NFB reflects the average lowest price for a specified purchase size, regardless of brand, in the stores surveyed. 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).

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 such as laundry detergent, toilet paper, or soap.

From May 2-5, 2011, Registered Dietitians, Dietetic Interns and nutrition student volunteers with Public Health Services conducted food pricing in seven grocery stores across the City of Hamilton in accordance with the Nutritious Food Basket Protocol. 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: 2 adults (male and female ages 31 to 50), 2 children (girl age 8, boy age 14).

Food costing is used to monitor both affordability and accessibility of foods by relating the cost of the food basket to individual/family incomes.

For the past five years, the Board of Health has used the Nutritious Food Basket data to advocate for increases in social assistance and affordable housing that would allow

people with limited incomes to buy nutritious food. In 2010, the Board of Health also directed staff to assess the feasibility of implementing a model program for nutritious food and report back to the Board of Health. A pilot program that provides single unattached individuals who receive Ontario Works benefits with a \$20 monthly gift certificate for a farmer's market is proposed (BOH11028). As seen in the Hamilton Nutritious Food Basket Scenarios (Appendix A to BOH11027), under Scenario 5, a single person receiving Ontario Works benefits has the most difficulty purchasing healthy food.

Registered Dietitians in Public Health Services have developed a factsheet, "The Cost of Basic Nutritious Food" (Appendix B to Report BOH11027), and have updated it annually for the past five years. It is distributed locally to community organizations and/or groups involved in poverty reduction to inform and support their advocacy efforts.

The City has done much advocacy over the years, most recently by endorsing a report on the positive economic impact of Hamiltonians living on social assistance. Councillors have written to the province emphasizing the need for an evidence-based model for setting social assistance rates (GIC report, July 4, 2011³ and Adequacy of Ontario Works Assistance Rates and Economic Impact of the Ontario Child Benefit, CS10049).

Many other groups are advocating for similar initiatives to reduce poverty and improve access to nutritious food. Examples are the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, Hamilton Emergency Food Strategy Implementation Committee, the Ontario-wide 'Put Food in the Budget' Campaign, the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health, and the Ontario Public Health Association Food Security Workgroup.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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:

- Dave Brodati, Policy & Program Specialist, Housing & Homelessness Division, Community Services Department provided the housing costs and housing wait list numbers.
- Members of the Food Security Workgroup, Ontario Public Health Association provided the Nutritious Food Basket Scenarios Template.
- Gillian Hendry, Director Social Housing & Homelessness reviewed the report, but did not contribute any additional information.

- Kerry Lubrick, Director of Employment & Income Support Division, Community Services Department, provided the details of the financial implications in the report, suggestions for content clarification, and support for the recommendations.
- Brenda Osborne, Director, CEO/City Housing Hamilton, Community Services, was consulted, but did not contribute any input.
- Tom Cooper, Director of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, supported the recommendations, especially the immediate need for increased social assistance and the development of an evidence based system to set social assistance rates. He also called for provincial support for additional programs to provide food in the community such as funding for universal Student Nutrition Programs, and a Farmer's Tax Credit for farmers who donate surplus product to food banks.

ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

(include Performance Measurement/Benchmarking Data, if applicable)

Following the eating pattern in Canada's Food Guide will help all people:

- Get enough vitamins, minerals and other nutrients
- Reduce the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, certain types of cancer and osteoporosis
- Achieve overall health and vitality

In addition, 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.^{4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9}

A woman's nutritional and overall health, before and during pregnancy, influences the health of her developing baby. Eating well, combined with taking a daily multivitamin with folic acid and iron, can give a woman the nutrients she needs to feel good, have energy, and support a healthy pregnancy.¹⁰ In addition, a woman's nutrient intake affects the lifelong health of her baby.

The estimated average cost for a family of four¹¹ to purchase the Nutritious Food Basket in Hamilton in 2011 is \$166.01 per week or \$718.82 per month. This is an increase over the 2010 monthly cost of \$690.59, and greater than the 2009 monthly cost of \$701.89. When increased rental costs are factored, the modest social assistance increase in the last year of \$12 a month for basic allowance and shelter allowance for this reference family is not enough. Families still do not have adequate income to cover all basic expenses.

Appendix A to Report BOH11027, Hamilton Nutritious Food Basket Scenarios, compares the cost of food and rent to total income available in seven different family situations. The example in Scenario 5 shows that an individual in a one-person household who receives benefits from Ontario Works has the most difficult time

affording a nutritious diet. In fact, this limited income reflects a shortfall of \$115 each month to cover rent and food in 2011.

Approximately 10% of households in Hamilton reported insufficient income to buy nutritious foods in 2007/08. These households experienced food insecurity (where they compromised the quantity or quality of food they consumed and/or changed their eating patterns) in the previous 12 months.¹² This number likely under-estimates the true prevalence of household food insecurity in Hamilton.¹³

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.

Lack of nutritious food has a huge impact on health. Individuals in food insufficient households are more likely to report poor general health, major depression and distress, and multiple chronic conditions including heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure, and food allergies.¹⁴ For women, the experience of household food insecurity has been associated with being severely obese before pregnancy, having greater weight gain during pregnancy, and having a higher risk of developing gestational diabetes and complications of pregnancy.¹⁵

Canadian adults and adolescents in food insecure households have lower intakes of fruits, vegetables and milk products,¹⁶ 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

The Canadian Community Health Survey 2.2 data indicates that Ontario men & women who reported food insecurity had significantly lower intakes of vitamin A, magnesium & calcium.¹⁸

Individuals living in food insecure households are less likely to eat vegetables and fruit the recommended five or more times a day. In 2007/08, individuals from only 24.6% of food insecure households reported that they ate vegetables and fruit five or more times a day, compared to almost 40% of those in food secure Hamilton households.¹⁹

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),²⁰ and that this is contributing to the rising incidence of obesity in food insecure households.^{21,22,23,24} Low household income is a marker for increased risk of overweight and obesity in Canadian children and youth.^{25,26} 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.

Income and Housing

A number of social determinants of health impact the ability to buy food. By far, the most significant factors are income and the cost of housing.

Income levels for too many people in Hamilton (18.1% of residents) are below the low income cut off measures.²⁷ In fact, 26.4% of children under age six in Hamilton live in poverty.²⁸

In June, 2011, there were 14,110 cases (families and individuals) that received Ontario Works (OW) financial and employment assistance in the City of Hamilton. The caseload has increased 5.2% since June 2010 and is at the highest level since the year 2000.²⁹ 16,779 cases (individuals or families) received Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) benefits in the City of Hamilton in June 2011. This is the highest level since 2007. The ODSP caseload continues to climb, and is up 2.5% compared to June 2010.²⁷

Hamilton food banks continue to grapple with system capacity issues. In March, 2011, 18,432 people used Hamilton Food Share services.³⁰ Of those who accessed food from a food bank in 2010, 52% were receiving Ontario Works assistance and 20% were living on disability support.³¹ Nine percent of households that accessed food banks in 2010 listed employment as their source of income.³² This indicates that neither social assistance nor the current minimum wage provides sufficient income to buy food after paying the rent and other fixed expenses.

The cost of housing is the largest expense for most residents with low incomes, and a lack of affordable housing is a key cause of hunger in Ontario.³³ Hamilton has a shortage of affordable rental housing and a long waiting list for social housing. The number of active applications on the Social Housing Waitlist for June 2011 was 5,743,³⁴ a four-year high. Over the last year, the Waitlist showed a steadily increasing trend.³⁵

A comprehensive Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy with multi-sectoral development, implementation and coordination has been proposed by The Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity and the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health and the Ontario Public Health Association (Food Security Workgroup).³⁶ Such a strategy would address both the sustainability of a healthy food supply and the needs of all Ontarians, particularly those with low socio-economic status.

It would include longer term broad-based food security policies for:

- Social programs and working incomes

Policies supportive of adequate income levels for all Ontarians to afford basic necessities including adequate housing and healthy eating; e.g. improved social assistance levels and minimum wage increases consistent with rises in the costs of living, and expanded incentives and tax cuts for the working poor.

- Community planning and the agri-food system
This would include policies that enhance the ability of the built environment to support healthy eating, particularly in low-income and under-served communities; e.g. grants and loans to help open new fresh food outlets (supermarkets, farmers' markets, and expanded convenience stores) in "food deserts"
- Environments for healthy food and eating
Regulations for supportive environments in schools, workplaces, and recreation settings increase access to healthy food choices and decrease access to foods of minimum health value.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

(include Financial, Staffing, Legal and Policy Implications and pros and cons for each alternative)

(a) The Board of Health can choose not to advocate for improvements in social assistance that enable recipients to buy nutritious food. However, given the health outcomes associated with poor nutrition, and the significant number of Hamiltonians who live on an income below the low income cut off measures, this alternative is not recommended.

Financial: None
Staffing: None
Legal: None

(b) The Board of Health can choose not to correspond with the Premier of Ontario to request that the province develop a comprehensive Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy. Given the small input to do this and the potential policy benefits, this is not recommended.

Financial: None
Staffing: None
Legal: None

CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN (Linkage to Desired End Results)

Focus Areas: 1. Skilled, Innovative and Respectful Organization, 2. Financial Sustainability, 3. Intergovernmental Relationships, 4. Growing Our Economy, 5. Social Development, 6. Environmental Stewardship, 7. Healthy Community

Financial Sustainability

- ◆ Delivery of municipal services in a sustainable, innovative and cost effective manner

Intergovernmental Relationships

- ◆ Influence federal and provincial policy development to benefit Hamilton

Social Development

- ◆ Residents in need have access to adequate support services

Healthy Community

- ◆ Adequate access to food, water, shelter and income, safety, work, recreation and support for all (Human Services)

APPENDICES / SCHEDULES

Appendix A to Report BOH11027

Appendix B to Report BOH11027

References:

- ¹ The reference family of four includes 2 adults (male and female ages 31 to 50), 2 children (girl age 8, boy age 14)
- ² www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/surveill/basket-panier/index-eng.php
- ³ General Issues Committee Agenda Item 6.1, Accessed on July 21, 2011 from <http://www.hamilton.ca/CityDepartments/CorporateServices/Clerks/AgendaMinutes/GeneralIssues/2011/July4GICAgenda.htm>
- ⁴ Alaimo K, Olson CM, Frongillo EA. Food insufficiency and American school-aged children's cognitive, academic, and psychosocial development. *Pediatrics*. 2001;108(1):44-53.
- ⁵ Florence MD, Asbridge M, Veugelers PJ. Diet quality and academic performance. *J Sch Health*. 2008;78:209-215.
- ⁶ Sorhaindo A, Feinstein L. What is the relationship between child nutrition and school outcomes? Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning. Institute of Education: London, UK; 2008.
- ⁷ Kleinman RE, Hall S, Green H, Korzec-Ramirez D, Patton K, Pagano, ME, Murphy JM. Diet, breakfast, and academic performance in children. *Journal of Nutrition, Metabolic Diseases and Dietetics*. 2002;46 (suppl 1):24-30.
- ⁸ Rampersaud GC, Pereira MA, Girard BL, Adams J, Metz J. Breakfast habits, nutritional status, body weight, and academic performance in children and adolescents. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2005;105(5):743-760.
- ⁹ Taras H. Nutrition and student performance at school. *J Sch Health*. 2005;75(6):199-213.
- ¹⁰ <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/prenatal/index-eng.php> Accessed August 31, 2010.
- ¹¹ The reference family of four includes 2 adults (male and female ages 31 to 50), 2 children (girl age 8, boy age 14).
- ¹² Canadian Community Health Survey 2007/08, Share File, Ontario, Ministry of Health and Long-term Care.
- ¹³ This measure of food security is a *household measure*, so it does not determine the food security status of each individual member residing in the household. It cannot be assumed that all members of a household share the same food security status. The data are weighted using Statistics Canada's household weights that are representative at the provincial level. The weights may, or may not, be representative at the municipal level so estimates should be interpreted with caution. Estimates are likely conservative because certain high risk populations are not represented in the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS). Information was not stated for 4.9% of City of Hamilton households.
- ¹⁴ Vozoris NT, Tarasuk VS. Household food insufficiency is associated with poorer health. *J Nutr*. 2003;133:120-126.

- ¹⁵ Laraia BA, Siega-Riz AM, Gunderson C. Household Food Insecurity is associated with self-reported pregravid weight status, gestational weight gain, and pregnancy complications. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2010;110(5):692-701.
- ¹⁶ Nutrition inequities in Canada. *Appl Physiol Nutr Metab.* 35:172-179, 2010.
- ¹⁷ Tarasuk V, Fitzpatrick S, Ward H. Food insecurity is associated with nutrient inadequacies among Canadian adults and adolescents. *J Nutr.* 2008;138:604-612.
- ¹⁸ Vogt J, Tarasuk V. Analysis of Ontario sample in Cycle 2.2 of the Canadian Community Health Survey(2004). 2007. Prepared for Ministry of Health Promotion. Retrieved on July 21, 2011 from <http://www.phred-redsp.on.ca/CCHSReport.htm>
- ¹⁹ City of Hamilton Public Health Services. PHacts Bulletin 2010;2(6):9.
- ²⁰ Tarasuk V, Fitzpatrick S, Ward H. Nutrition inequities in Canada. *Appl Physiol Nutr Metab.* 2010;35:172-179.
- ²¹ Kerstetter S, Goldber M. A review of policy options for increasing food security and income security in British Columbia: A discussion paper. September 2007.
- ²² Monsivais P, Drewnowski A. The rising cost of low-energy-density foods. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 2007;107:2071-2076.
- ²³ Desjardins E. Food insecurity and chronic disease, synthesis paper. Prepared for the Food Security Knowledge Initiative funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada: Revised January 2010.
- ²⁴ Food Research and Action Centre. Food insecurity and obesity: understanding the connections. 2011. Retrieved August 30, 2011 from www.frac.org
- ²⁵ St. John M, Durant PD, Campagna LA, Rehman AM, Thompson LA, Wadsworth RJL, Murphy I. Overweight Nova Scotia children and youth. *Can J Public Health.* 2008;99:4:301-306.
- ²⁶ Yu B, Pennner Protudjer JL, Anderson K, Fieldhouse P. Weight status and determinants of health in Manitoba children and youth. *Can J Diet Prac Res.* 2010;71:115-121.
- ²⁷ Source: Statistics Canada. 2008. Select characteristics for Hamilton[®] and Ontario. (table). "2006 Community Profiles." "2006 Census: Data Products." *Census.* Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa, Ontario. Statistics Canada, July 14, 2008. Retrieved May 3, 2010 from: <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92-591/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=3525005&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&Data=Count&SearchText=hamilton&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=>
- A Low Income Cut Off (LICO) is an income threshold below which a family will likely devote a larger share of its income (at least 20 percentage points more) on the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family. On average, households living under the LICO may spend 63% or more of their after-tax family income on food, shelter and clothing. The LICO thresholds are based on the size of the household and the population of the area of residence. When the incomes in social assistance and minimum wage scenarios presented in Appendix A to Report BOH11027 are annualized, all fall below the Statistics Canada 2006 LICOs.
- ²⁸ Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton. Incomes and poverty in Hamilton. April 2009.
- ²⁹ Community Services Department, City of Hamilton, Retrieved on July 18, 2011 from <http://www.hamilton.ca/CityDepartments/CorporateServices/FinanceBudgetTaxes/CommunityWellness.htm>
- ³⁰ Escott S. Food banks already feeling the effects of summer. *The Hamilton Spectator.* June 22, 2011.
- ³¹ Hamilton Hunger Count 2010, Hamilton Food Share
- ³² Hamilton Hunger Count 2010, Hamilton Food Share
- ³³ The Ontario Association of Food Banks. Our choice for a better Ontario. August 19, 2008.
- ³⁴ Correspondence from staff in Housing & Homelessness Division, Community Services Department, City of Hamilton, July 2011.
- ³⁵ Community Services Department, City of Hamilton, Retrieved on July 18, 2011 from <http://www.hamilton.ca/CityDepartments/CorporateServices/FinanceBudgetTaxes/CommunityWellness.htm>
- ³⁶ Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health and the Ontario Public Health Association (Food Security Workgroup). Call to action on food security. June 2011. Retrieved Sept.9, 2011 from <http://www.osnpph.on.ca/communications/index.php>

Hamilton Nutritious Food Basket Scenarios - May 2011

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5	Scenario 6	Scenario 7
	Family of Four, Couple with 2 Children, Ontario Works	Family of Four, Couple with 2 Children, Minimum Wage Earner (Full-time/Full-year) ^j	Family of Four, Couple with 2 Children, Median ONTARIO Income (after tax) ^k	Single Parent Household with 2 Children, Ontario Works	One Person Household, Ontario Works	One Person Household, ODSP	One Person Household, OAS/GIS
Monthly Calculations							
Income							
Income from Employment		\$ 1,777.00	\$ 6,175.00				
Basic Allowance ^a	\$ 443.00			\$ 344.00	\$ 224.00	\$ 584.00	
Maximum Shelter Allowance ^a	\$ 681.00			\$ 627.00	\$ 368.00	\$ 469.00	
Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement (OAS/GIS) ^b							\$ 1,192.00
Child/Family Benefits ^c	\$ 736.00	\$ 736.00		\$ 736.00			
GST/HST credit ^d	\$ 64.00	\$ 64.00		\$ 64.00	\$ 21.00	\$ 28.00	\$ 31.00
Ontario Sales Tax Credit ^d	\$ 87.00	\$ 87.00		\$ 65.00	\$ 22.00	\$ 22.00	\$ 22.00
Employment Insurance paid ^e		\$ (32.00)	\$ (111.00)				
Canada Pension Plan paid ^f		\$ (74.00)	\$ (297.00)				
Working Income Tax Benefit ^g		\$ 61.00					
Total Income	\$ 2,011.00	\$ 2,619.00	\$ 5,767.00	\$ 1,836.00	\$ 635.00	\$ 1,103.00	\$ 1,245.00
Selected Expenses							
Average Rent (may or may not include heat/hydro) ^h	(3 Bdr.) \$ 938.00	(3 Bdr.) \$ 938.00	(3 Bdr.) \$ 938.00	(2 Bdr.) \$ 788.00	(Bachelor) \$ 510.00	(1 Bdr.) ^l \$ 655.00	(1 Bdr.) \$ 655.00
Food ⁱ	\$ 718.82	\$ 718.82	\$ 718.82	\$ 544.08	\$ 240.78	\$ 240.78	\$ 177.44
Total Expenses	\$ 1,656.82	\$ 1,656.82	\$ 1,656.82	\$ 1,332.08	\$ 750.78	\$ 895.78	\$ 832.44
Funds Remaining (for other basic needs e.g. telephone, transportation, child care, household and personal care items, clothing, school supplies etc.)	\$ 354.18	\$ 962.18	\$ 4,110.18	\$ 503.92	\$ (115.78)	\$ 207.22	\$ 412.56
Percentage of income required for rent	47%	36%	16%	43%	80%	59%	53%
Percentage of income required to purchase healthy food	36%	27%	12%	30%	38%	22%	14%

Note: All dollars rounded to nearest whole number.

Scenario References:

Scenario 1 - 2 adults (male and female ages 31-50), 2 children (girl age 8, boy age 14); on Ontario Works (OW).

Scenario 2 - 2 adults (male and female ages 31-50), 2 children (girl age 8, boy age 14); income is based on one minimum wage earner, 40hr/wk, \$10.25/hr.

Scenario 3 - 2 adults (male and female ages 31-50), 2 children (girl age 8, boy age 14).

NOTE: Income from employment is based on median after-tax income- couple households with children; however, EI and CPP contributions are calculated using median income- couple households with children. Assumption of a dual income family with a split of 65% / 35% between partners.

Source: Statistics Canada. 2007. Ontario (table). 2006 Community Profiles. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa. Released March 13, 2007.

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed July 23, 2010).

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

Scenario 5 - 1 adult (male age 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 2011. Source: Social Assistance, Pension and Tax Credit Rates April to June 2011, Ministry of Community and Social Services.

b - Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement (OAS/GIS) rates May 2011. Source: Social Assistance, Pension and Tax Credit Rates April to June 2011, Ministry of Community and Social Services.

c - Includes maximum Canada Child Tax benefit, National Child Benefit Supplement, & Ontario Child Benefit. Effective July 2010 - June 2011. <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/clcltr/menu-eng.html> (accessed June 30, 2011).

d - Based on net annual income. GST/HST and Ontario Sales Tax Credit are issued on a quarterly basis, but calculated on a monthly basis. Figures derived from GST/HST and related provincial programs calculator, effective July 2010-June 2011. <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/clcltr/menu-eng.html> (accessed June 30, 2011).

e - Reference: Employment Insurance Premium Rates <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bsnss/tpcs/pyrll/clcltng/ei/cnt-chrt-pf-eng.html> (accessed June 30, 2011).

f - Canada Pension Plan Reference: <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bsnss/tpcs/pyrll/clcltng/cpp-rpc/cnt-chrt-pf-eng.html> (accessed June 30, 2011).

g - Reference: Working Income Tax Benefit Online Calculator . <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/wtb/menu-eng.html> (accessed June 30, 2011).

h - Rental Market Reports, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Spring 2011. Some communities may need to add utility costs.

i - Reference: Nutritious Food Basket Data Results 2011 For Your Health Unit - Includes Family size adjustment factors.

j - Reference: Minimum wage <http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/info/minimumwage/> (accessed June 30, 2011).

k - Source: Statistics Canada. 2007. Ontario (table). 2006 Community Profiles. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa. Released March 13, 2007.

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed June 30, 2011).

l - Housing for Scenario 6 has been changed from Bachelor to 1-bedroom for 2011. This change reflects a more accurate housing need for persons with a disability. This change will need to be recognized when attempting to compare 2011 results to previous years.

The Cost of Basic Nutritious Food

Nutritious Food is Essential for Health and Well-Being



Following the eating pattern in Canada's Food Guide will help us:

- Get enough vitamins, minerals and other nutrients,
- Reduce the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, certain types of cancer and osteoporosis, and
- Achieve overall health and vitality.

Well-nourished children perform better in school, have better health and exhibit less negative psychosocial behaviour than children who are undernourished.

Eating well, combined with taking a daily multivitamin with folic acid and iron, can give a woman the nutrients she needs to feel good, have energy, and support a healthy pregnancy.

Nutritious Food Basket

The Nutritious Food Basket survey determines the average lowest cost of a nutritious diet. In 2011, Registered Dietitians in Public Health Services conducted the survey in seven Hamilton grocery stores.

The 67 foods surveyed included:

- 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

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.

How Much Does Healthy Eating Cost in Hamilton in 2011?

In 2011, a reference family of four* living in Hamilton, needs \$166.01 a week, or \$718.82 a month, to meet their nutritional needs.

*2 adults (male and female ages 31 to 50), and 2 children (girl age 8, boy age 14)

Housing and Food Costs in 2011

People with low incomes often live in rental housing. In 2011, the average monthly rental cost for a three-bedroom apartment in Hamilton is \$938.00. For a family of four receiving Ontario Works (OW) assistance, this represents 47% 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 after paying the rent to purchase nutritious food on a regular basis.

Monthly income and estimated costs for a reference family of 4, 2 adults (male and female, ages 31 to 50) and 2 children (girl age 8, boy age 14) receiving Ontario Works and living in Hamilton.	
Budget Item	Cost Per Month/2011
Ontario Works income	\$1, 124.00
Income from other sources (CTB, NCBS, OCB, HST/GST, Ontario Sales Tax credit)	\$887.00
Average Hamilton rent (3 bedroom apartment)	- \$938.00
Cost of Nutritious Food Basket	- \$718.82
What's LEFT	\$354.18

Most people will pay their fixed expenses such as rent, hydro and heat, first. When money is tight, it is challenging to cover any other basic monthly expenses such as telephone, transportation, toiletries, household items, medications, clothing, laundry, child care services, insurance, and unexpected items.

Food Insecurity Affects Health

Food insecurity is defined as a limited or uncertain availability of safe and nutritious foods, or the inability to acquire foods in a socially acceptable way.

A growing body of research has found a strong relationship between food insecurity and health issues:

- Adolescents and adults from food insecure households are at increased risk for nutrient inadequacy.
- Food insecurity may act as a risk factor for multiple chronic conditions including type 2 diabetes, heart disease, obesity, cancer, and high blood pressure.
- Food insecurity is associated with various mental health problems, and is predictive of depression in both adults and children.
- Children living in food insecure households are more likely to experience nutritional, behavioural, emotional, social, and academic problems than children living in food secure households (e.g. higher prevalence of iron deficiency anemia, low serum zinc levels, more likely to gain weight, higher risk for developing depression, more difficulty getting along with other children, greater levels of absenteeism from school, and lower academic scores).



Food Security Solutions

Short-term Responses to Food Insecurity

Food banks, soup kitchens and other emergency food access programs provide immediate relief from hunger.

Food security could be jumpstarted by implementing a monthly \$100 Healthy Food Supplement for social assistance recipients.

Short-term solutions provide temporary relief for individuals facing poverty, and having limited access to nutritious food. They do not change the underlying problems. They must be part of a broader strategy, with a stronger social safety net that reduces poverty.

How Can You Help?

You can advocate for:

- Local food procurement policies.
- Community-based food programs such as good food boxes, community food centres, food co-ops, community gardens, and community kitchens.
- A healthy food supplement to make Ontario fresh vegetables and fruit available in low-income communities.
- Expansion of the Student Nutrition programs to all elementary and secondary students.
- Education about food in the school curriculum at all levels.
- Infrastructure grants for schools to enable them to build kitchens, buy food processing equipment, and create school gardens.

Actions for Community Food Security

Providing food access to all people in Hamilton means promoting long-term, broad-based strategies such as system and policy changes.

These can include:

- Legislation for subsidies and tax incentives to support the agri-food sector.
- Policies for land use and planning that promote a healthy food supply.
- Policies that enhance the ability of the built environment to support healthy eating.
- Regulations that increase access to healthy food choices at all public settings.
- Policies that support adequate income levels for all Ontarians to afford basic necessities.
- A comprehensive Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy that addresses both the sustainability of a healthy food supply and the needs of all Ontarians but particularly those with low socio-economic status.



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

Nutritious Food Basket Weekly Costs City of Hamilton, 2011		
	Age (years)	Food Cost per week
Boys	2-3	\$21.85
	4-8	\$28.30
Girls	2-3	\$21.39
	4-8	\$27.38
Males	9-13	\$37.67
	14-18	\$53.14
	19-30	\$51.24
	31-50	\$46.34
	51-70	\$44.78
	Over 70	\$44.32
Females	9-13	\$32.23
	14-18	\$38.50
	19-30	\$39.56
	31-50	\$39.15
	51-70	\$34.75
	Over 70	\$34.15
Pregnant Women	18 and younger	\$42.95
	19-30	\$43.35
	31-50	\$42.31
Breastfeeding Women	18 and younger	\$44.77
	19-30	\$45.96
	31-50	\$44.92

Resources

- www.hamilton.ca/nutrition
- <http://foodnetontario.ca/wp>
- www.hamiltonfoodshare.org
- www.hamiltonpoverty.ca
- www.dothemath.thestop.org
- <http://25in5.ca/take-action/>

Your Nutritious Food Basket

Steps 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 the 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.

Example Nutritious Food Basket Cost in a 2-person Household

Gender	Age (years)	Cost (\$)
Woman	27	39.56
Girl	7	27.38
Subtotal		66.94
Total (multiply x 1.10 for 2)		73.63/week
Total x 4.33		318.84/month

Nutritious Food Basket Cost in Your Household

Gender	Age (years)	Cost (\$)
Subtotal		
Total (multiply x ____ for ____)		/week
Total x 4.33		/month