



## Staff Report

### Food Insecurity in Peterborough

<b>Date:</b>	November 12, 2014	
<b>To:</b>	Board of Health	
<b>From:</b>	Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, Medical Officer of Health	
<b>Original approved by</b>		<b>Original approved by</b>
Rosana Pellizzari, M.D.		Carolyn Doris, Public Health Nutritionist

### Recommendations

That the Board of Health for the Peterborough County-City Health Unit:

- receive the staff report, *Food Insecurity in Peterborough*, for information; and,
- share the contents of this report with members of the City of Peterborough Joint Services Steering Committee and members of Peterborough City and County Councils.

### Financial Implications and Impact

There are no financial implications for the board of health arising from this report.

### Decision History

- At the November 9, 2005 Board of Health meeting, the Board of Health approved the position that all low income and social assistance recipients should receive an increase that will cover the cost of nourishing food in addition to a Special Diet Allowance for those with specified medical conditions. Letters were sent to Premier McGuinty, the Provincial Ministers of Child and Youth Services, Community and Social Services, Finance, Health and Long-Term Care, Health Promotion and local municipal government officials.
- On July 30, 2008, members of the Board of Health and PCCHU staff met with M.P.P. Jeff Leal to discuss the need for 2008 funding for the Food Security Community Partnership Program

(FSCPP). Board members explained that poverty and health are strongly related and that this initiative supported community members who clearly want to make healthier food choices but can't because of low incomes. The FSCPP complemented local food security programs by filling in identified gaps in services and using local resources effectively.

- At the October 8, 2008 Board of Health meeting, the Board endorsed the Ontario Public Health Association resolution passed in November 2007 calling for a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy; endorsed the 25-in-5 Declaration; and requested the Minister of Community and Social Services and the Minister of Children and Youth Services respond to the recommendations made in the Special Diet Expert Review Committee Final Report regarding the increases and expansions to the current Special Diet Schedule.
- At the May 9, 2012 Board of Health meeting, Susan Hubay and Joëlle Favreau provided a comprehensive update on food security, which included details for the Nourish project which seeks to build community connections and reduce isolation from poverty through skills sharing opportunities. Deputy Mayor and Board Member Andy Sharpe offered to champion the initiative with the County of Peterborough.
- At the September 12, 2012 Board of Health meeting, the Board received for information the 2012 Nutritious Food Basket results, "Limited Incomes: A Recipe for Hunger" and proposed strategies to improve food security among individuals and families living on low incomes locally.

At that same meeting, following a Staff Report on "Cuts to Social Assistance Benefits: A Public Health Perspective", the Board agreed to send a letter to John Milloy, Minister of Community and Social Services, Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Children and Youth Services, Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, with copies to MPPs Jeff Leal and Laurie Scott, Ontario Boards of Health and the Association of Local Public Health Agencies (alPHA), to request enhanced provincial funding of Discretionary Benefits for people receiving social assistance, and continued support for housing retention, moving, and home maintenance expenses.

- At the December 12, 2012 Board of Health meeting, the Board sent letters to the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Community and Social Services, and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care requesting that:
  - the government increase social assistance rates to a level that reflects the true costs of nutritious food and housing and in the interim provide an immediate increase of \$100 per month for every adult in receipt of social assistance.
  - any revisions to the Special Diet Program be developed in collaboration with Dietitians of Canada - Ontario.

The Board also requested a presentation from staff about a proactive strategy to address the long-term funding situation for the Food for Kids Peterborough and County Student

Nutrition Programs (breakfast clubs and snack programs). This was presented in January, 2013.

In December 2012 the Board directed staff to prepare a letter to be sent to the federal Minister of Health and the Chief Public Health Officer requesting that the Public Health Agency of Canada enhance funding for the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program.

### **Background**

Boards of Health are mandated to monitor food affordability annually by the Ontario Public Health Standards.<sup>1</sup> Health Unit staff price out local food costs required to provide a basic nutritious diet. These costs are compared to a variety of income scenarios to determine affordability. According to the 2014 PCCHU Nutritious Food Basket results, the monthly cost of feeding a family of four is \$850 in Peterborough City and County. The report notes that local food prices have increased 7.6% over the past two years; however, the issue is not merely that the cost of food is high, but that incomes are too low.<sup>2</sup>

People living on low incomes find that after paying for rent and utilities there is not enough money to buy nourishing food. For example, a single person living on Ontario Works would find himself \$245 in the negative at the end of the month, if he purchased nourishing food as recommended in Canada's Food Guide. A number of factors impact the ability to choose nourishing food, however income and the cost of housing are by far the most significant. Under current conditions, the result is food insecurity, which is the inadequate or insecure access to healthy food in the context of financial constraints.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, the pressures on families and individuals living on low incomes in Peterborough continue to increase. Since 2012, significant cuts have been made to both the Housing Stability Fund (which provides short term financial assistance to help people remain in or obtain adequate housing) and Discretionary Benefit Funds (which provide funding for critical items and services such as bus pass subsidies, vision care, dentures, baby supplies and children's recreation subsidies). The implications for increased risk of food insecurity are clear: after paying for rent and utilities the most vulnerable in our community now have new expenses competing for their food dollars.<sup>4</sup>

Food insecurity is associated with inadequate nutrient intake. Literature shows that Canadian adults, adolescents and children in food-insecure households consume less fruit, vegetables, and milk products and have lower vitamin and mineral intakes, when compared with those in food-secure households.<sup>5</sup> Research also suggests that, for women in particular, the lower the household income the less able they are to afford milk products and vegetables.<sup>5</sup> This leads to inadequacy of a number of nutrients including protein, B vitamins, folate, iron, zinc and vitamin A.<sup>6,7</sup> These nutrients are an important part of a healthy diet as identified in Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide.

Food insecurity also leads to increased risk of infectious and chronic diseases. It is more difficult to manage these diseases and conditions for people who are food insecure.<sup>8</sup> Individuals in food insecure households had significantly higher odds of rating their health as poor or fair and were more likely to report having heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure.<sup>9</sup> Through a healthy diet, the risk of developing these diseases can be decreased.

**Table 1: 2014 Nutritious Food Basket Case Scenarios**

<b>Monthly Income/ Expenses</b>	<b>Single Man</b>	<b>Single Man</b>	<b>Single Elderly Woman</b>	<b>Single Parent Family of 3</b>	<b>Family of 4</b>	<b>Family of 4</b>
Monthly Income – after tax; includes federal & provincial benefits and tax credits	\$709 (Ontario Works)	\$1,179 (Ontario Disability Support Program)	\$1,513 (Old Age Security & Guaranteed Income Supplement)	\$1,961 (Ontario Works)	\$2,748 (Minimum Wage)	\$6,954 (Ontario median)
<b>Estimated Shelter Cost</b>	\$668	\$800	\$800	\$941	\$1,129	\$1,428
<b>Food – based on Canada’s Food Guide</b>	\$286	\$286	\$208	\$643	\$850	\$850
<b>What’s Left?</b>	<b>-\$245</b>	<b>\$93</b>	<b>\$505</b>	<b>\$377</b>	<b>\$769</b>	<b>\$4,676</b>
<b>% Income Required for Shelter</b>	94%	68%	53%	48%	41%	21%
<b>% income required for nutritious food</b>	40%	24%	14%	33%	31%	12%

Note: Shelter costs may or may not include utilities.

### ***Food Insecurity in Peterborough***

There is significant concern in Peterborough that many people in the community are not food secure. About 11.5% of people in Peterborough households experience some degree of household food insecurity, defined as worrying about running out of food; compromising food quality or not having a variety of food choices on hand. For 5%\* of people in Peterborough households the situation is severe, and people, including children, do not have enough to eat because of a lack of money. (\*estimates should be interpreted with caution due to large sampling variability).<sup>10</sup> Preliminary analysis suggests that one in seven children (under 18 years of age) in Peterborough now live in a food insecure home.<sup>11</sup> These statistics show a trend of increasing food security rates from past years.<sup>12</sup>

Across Canada there are now food banks in every province and territory with a network of almost 5,000 emergency food programs including food banks, soup kitchens and various meal and snack programs offered by schools, shelters, drop-in centers, prenatal programs and other such community organizations.<sup>13</sup> Locally, the primary response to food insecurity has been food banks and meal programs. There is now a food bank or food cupboard in every township in Peterborough County and nine food banks/cupboards throughout the City of Peterborough.<sup>14</sup> In March 2013, 7,724 people used a Kawartha Food Share member agency food bank.<sup>15</sup> Some individuals and families are at greater risk for food insecurity than others. Social assistance recipients, especially lone-parent families, are particularly vulnerable, with 60% reporting a lack of food security. However, 55% of all Ontarians who reported being food insecure had some employment income.<sup>16</sup> Despite perceptions about food bank users, locally 10.6% of people who access local food banks had employment income and 5.3% were home owners.<sup>17</sup>

There is a very real concern that community-based charitable food programs might be enabling the retraction of social programs. Tarasuk, Dachner and Loopstra (2014) state that “As long as the illusion that immediate food assistance is available for people unable to feed themselves persists, there is little impetus for governments to review the adequacy of their welfare programs or for the public to pressure them to do so”.<sup>18</sup> These programs do not address the root cause of food insecurity, which is lack of sufficient income.<sup>19</sup>

Improved incomes are the most important response to food insecurity. In the long term, it would seem reasonable that the Nutritious Food Basket results provided annually to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care be used as a starting point in determining the rates for adequate social assistance rates.<sup>20,21</sup>

In summary, insufficient income is the root cause of household food insecurity and improving the incomes of vulnerable populations is the most important response to food insecurity. Until income issues are addressed, people will continue to suffer the consequences of poor nutrition.

It will continue to be critical to support advocacy efforts at the municipal, provincial, and federal level for improved social assistance and minimum wage rates, increased employment opportunities and increased access to affordable housing. In the interim, local community food programs will need to improve access to nourishing foods with an emphasis on vegetables, fruit, and milk products.

### **Rationale**

The board of health has been an effective and credible advocate for food security in Peterborough. Health unit staff continues to play leadership roles in addressing food insecurity and advocating for change. Support from local Boards of Health, provincial public health agencies and broader advocacy networks are important allies in the efforts to address the root causes of food insecurity.

## **Strategic Direction**

This report applies to *Determinants of Health and Health Equity* by providing current evidence related to the impacts of poverty and food insecurity.

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### **Attachments:**

Attachment A – Limited Incomes: A Recipe For Hunger, October 2014, Peterborough County-City Health Unit

### **References:**

1. Ministry of Health Promotion, Nutritious Food Basket Guidance Document, May 2010
2. Peterborough County-City Health Unit, “Limited Incomes: A Recipe for Hunger”, October 2014
3. Tarsuk, V., Mitchell, A. Dachner, N (2014). Household food insecurity in Canada, 2012 Toronto: Research to identify policy options to reduce food insecurity (PROOF). Retrieved from <http://nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca>
4. Peterborough County-City Health Unit, “Backgrounder Information for the Municipal All-Candidates Meeting, October 16, 2014: Social Assistance, Housing and Discretionary Benefits, ”, October 2014
5. Vogt, J. & Tarasuk, V., Analysis of Ontario sample in Cycle 2.2 of the Canadian Community Health Survey 2004, Toronto, 2007. Available online: <http://www.phred-redsp.on.ca/CCHSReport.htm>
6. Dietitians of Canada, “Individual and Household Food Insecurity in Canada: Position of Dietitians of Canada”, March 2005
7. Kirkpatrick, S., Tarasuk, V. Food Insecurity is Associated with Nutrient Inadequacies among Canadian Adults and Adolescents. 2008 <http://jn.nutrition.org/abstract/138/3/604.full>
8. Vozoris, NT, Tarasuk, V., Household food insufficiency is associated with poor health. Journal of Nutrition, 133, 120-126, 2003.
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10. Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) 20011-2011, Statistics Canada, Share File, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
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14. Food For All, Peterborough County-City Health Unit. July 2014 Accessed at <http://www.foodinpeterborough.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2014-07-16-Food-For-All.pdf>
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16. Vogt, J. & Tarasuk, V., Analysis of Ontario sample in Cycle 2.2 of the Canadian Community Health Survey 2004, Toronto, 2007. Available online: <http://www.phred-redsp.on.ca/CCHSReport.htm>
17. [www.pspc.on.ca/pdf/Infonote food bank report released.pdf](http://www.pspc.on.ca/pdf/Infonote_food_bank_report_released.pdf)
18. Tarasuk, V., Dachner, N, Loopstra R. (2014) food banks, welfare and food insecurity in Canada, British food Journal, Vol 116 Iss 9 p 1405-1471.
19. Powers, E. (2005) Individual and household food insecurity in Canada: Position of Dietitians of Canada Dietitians of Canada
20. Dietitians of Canada, Ontario, Submission to the Social Assistance Review Commission, Second Discussion Paper, March 2012
21. Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance, "Evidence-informed Healthy Eating Messages", April 2010

# Limited Incomes: *A Recipe For Hunger*

November 2014

## Poverty is the Reason People are Going Hungry in Peterborough

Imagine you have worked for the same factory for 10 years. Two years ago, the company was bought out and production moved. Since then, you have taken a skills training program and found some temporary jobs, but nothing permanent. In between jobs, you are forced to go on social assistance.

After you pay rent and utilities, the money you receive leaves you with very few options. You will have other expenses such as telephone, clothing, transportation costs, cleaning supplies, and personal care items. It is likely that you will have to take from your food budget to make ends meet. Will you be able to afford to eat? Will you be able to choose healthy foods? Being in this difficult situation is often referred to as "food insecurity."

## Food Insecurity and Peterborough

Food insecurity is a local issue, with 11.5% of people in Peterborough households being food insecure.

This means that they:

- worried about not having enough to eat,
- compromised the quality of food eaten, or
- did not have a variety of food choices on hand.

For an estimated 5% of people in Peterborough households the situation is severe and people, including children did not have enough to eat because of a lack of money. Preliminary analysis shows that 1 in 7 children (under the age of 18 years) in Peterborough City and County live in a food insecure household.

## Low Incomes Don't Add Up

- People living on social assistance find that after paying for rent and utilities, there is not enough money to buy nourishing food.
- 36% of children living in poverty in Ontario have at least one parent who is working full time year round but not earning enough to lift their families out of poverty.
- 58.3% of food insecure households in Ontario rely on wages and salaries.

**The root cause of food insecurity is lack of sufficient income. Food insecurity is more common in households with lower incomes, in those receiving social assistance or those headed by a lone-female parents.**

**Working together to eliminate poverty in Peterborough is the most important thing we can do to increase food security in our community!**

## About the Nutritious Food Basket

In May 2014, the Peterborough County-City Health Unit priced the Nutritious Food Basket (NFB). The NFB is Ontario's standardized food costing tool used by Health Units to measure the cost of healthy eating, based on Canada's Food Guide. The food costs are recorded according to the lowest available price at the grocery store.

## Understanding the Nutritious Food Basket

Generally, highly processed foods and food with little or no nutritional value (such as soft drinks and potato chips) are not included. The food basket does not contain any foods for special diets, such as gluten-free products. Personal and household care items, like toothpaste, soap and cleaning supplies are not included.

### The Nutritious Food Basket design assumes:

- most people have the necessary time, food skills and equipment to be able to prepare most meals from scratch; and
- people have access to quality grocery stores.

## How Do We Know Some People Don't Have Enough Money For Food?

A summary of some real life situations for people living in Peterborough appears in Table 1. These scenarios illustrate that after paying for shelter and food, minimum wage earners and households on fixed incomes have little, if any money left over to cover other basic monthly expenses.

**Table 1: May 2014 Peterborough Nutritious Food Basket Scenarios**

Monthly Income/Expenses	Single Man (Ontario Works)	Single Man (Ontario Disability Support Program)	Single Elderly Woman (Old Age Security/ Guaranteed Income Supplement)	Single Parent Family of 2 (Ontario Works)	Family of 4 (Minimum Wage)	Family of 4 (Income Median)
Monthly Income including Benefits & Credits	\$709	\$1,179	\$1,513	\$1,961	\$2,748	\$6,954
Estimated Shelter Cost	\$668	\$800	\$800	\$941	\$1,129	\$1,428
Cost of a Nutritious Diet	\$286	\$286	\$208	\$643	\$850	\$850
<b>What's Left?</b>	<b>-\$245</b>	<b>\$93</b>	<b>\$505</b>	<b>\$377</b>	<b>\$769</b>	<b>\$4,676</b>
% Income Required for Shelter	94%	68%	53%	48%	41%	21%
% Income required for nutritious food	40%	24%	14%	33%	31%	12%

**REMEMBER:** People still need to pay for utilities, phone, transportation, cleaning supplies, personal care items, clothing, gifts, entertainment, internet, school essentials, medical and dental costs and other purchases.

References available by emailing [cdoris@pcchu.ca](mailto:cdoris@pcchu.ca).

## How Do People Cope?

- Research tells us that people know which foods are essential for good health. However, when money is tight, people are forced to adapt by cutting into their food budget.
- People are forced to skip meals or fill up on cheap foods that are not necessarily nutritious.
- They may eat less fruit, vegetables and milk products because they can't afford them.
- Parents living on low incomes feed their children first. They will go without eating to ensure that their children can eat. As a result, the parents' nutrition and health suffers.
- As a last resort, people are forced to use food banks. Food banks can only offer about three days worth of food per month.

## How much do you spend on food in a month?

The cost of feeding a family of four in Peterborough was \$850 in May 2014.

To calculate your own food costs, see page 4.



## Does Food Cost Too Much?

Local food costs have increased by 7.6% in the past two years. However, the cost of food is not the issue for most people. The issue is that incomes are too low. For people living on low incomes, there is not enough money left to buy healthy food after paying rent and utility bills.

- The Nutritious Food Basket monthly cost (\$850) represents 12% of an average family's monthly income.
- In contrast, the Nutritious Food Basket monthly cost (\$850) represents about 31% of the monthly income of a family supported by a minimum wage earner.

## What Can We Do About Poverty and Hunger?

1. Learn more about poverty and hunger.

Check out these websites:

- Food in Peterborough - [www.foodinpeterborough.ca](http://www.foodinpeterborough.ca)
- Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network - <http://ptbopovertyreduction.com>
- Poverty Free Ontario - [www.povertyfree.ca](http://www.povertyfree.ca)

2. Speak up! Ask for change. Write to your local M.P. or M.P.P. or Council member. Use this report to increase their understanding of the issue. Ask for an immediate increase of \$100 per month for every adult receiving social assistance as a first step towards putting food on the table for our most vulnerable neighbours.
3. Support local food programs while working to end poverty. Food programs include community gardens, collective kitchens, gleaning, community meal programs, student nutrition programs, and food box initiatives.

Help by fundraising or volunteering your time. For more information, call the Nutrition Promotion Program, Peterborough County-City Health Unit - 705-743-1000 or visit our website: [www.pcchu.ca](http://www.pcchu.ca).

4. Buy local foods whenever possible to support local farmers, and our local economy.
5. "Nourish" is an exciting project that brings Peterborough residents together to learn about growing, cooking, eating and enjoying food. Learn more about the Nourish Project at [www.nourishproject.ca](http://www.nourishproject.ca).

## Poverty and Health... Did You Know?

- People living on low incomes have more health problems and die younger than people with higher incomes.
- Children living in low income households are more likely to get sick and are less able to do well at school.

## Calculating Food Costs Based on the Nutritious Food Basket

Follow the steps below to find out the cost of a weekly Nutritious Food Basket:

### STEP 1:

Write down the age and sex of all the people you are feeding.

For example: Man, 37 years old; Woman, 37 years old; Boy, 14 years old; and Girl, 8 years old.

### STEP 2:

Using Table #2, write down the cost of feeding each person. Add up these costs. This is your subtotal.

### STEP 3:

It costs a little more to feed a small group of people and less to feed a large group. So your subtotal estimated in Step 2 will need to be adjusted. Use the following adjustments for household size and record this figure in the "TOTAL (per week)" row below.

- 1 person - multiply by 1.204**
- 2 people - multiply by 1.105**
- 3 people - multiply by 1.056**
- 4 people - multiply by 1.000**
- 5 people - multiply by 0.950**
- 6 people - multiply by 0.900**
- 7 people - multiply by 0.850**
- 8 people - multiply by 0.800**
- 9 people - multiply by 0.750**
- 10 people - multiply by 0.700**

### STEP 4:

To determine the cost per month, multiply your total cost by 4.33.

In this example, it would cost \$850.06/month to feed this family.

EXAMPLE	Sex	Age (years)	Cost Per Week (\$)
	Man	37	\$ 54.95
	Woman	37	\$ 46.50
	Boy	14	\$ 62.87
	Girl	8	\$ 32.00
	Subtotal		\$196.32
	Total (per week) \$196.32 x no adjustments		
	Total (per month) \$196.32 x 4.33 = \$850.07		

YOUR HOUSEHOLD	Sex	Age (years)	Cost Per Week (\$)
	Man		
	Woman		
	Boy		
	Girl		
	Subtotal		
	Total (per week)		
	Total (per month)		

Table 2: Food Costs

	Age/Sex	Cost Per Week
<b>Boy</b>	2-3	25.51
	4-8	32.97
	9-13	43.93
	14-18	62.87
<b>Girl</b>	2-3	25.03
	4-8	32.00
	9-13	37.54
	14-18	45.08
<b>Man</b>	19-30	60.92
	31-50	54.95
	51-70	52.95
	Over 70	52.41
<b>Woman</b>	19-30	47.07
	31-50	46.50
	51-70	40.85
	Over 70	40.06
<b>Pregnant Woman</b>	Younger than 18 yrs	50.49
	19-30	51.11
	31-50	49.85
<b>Breastfeeding Woman</b>	Younger than 18 yrs	52.48
	19-30	54.40
	31-50	53.14
<b>Family of 4*</b>		\$196.32

\*Man and woman 31-50; boy 14-18 years; girl 4-8 years

For food cost details and references, please call the Nutrition Promotion Program, Peterborough County-City Health Unit, at **705-743-1000** or visit our website at [www.pcchu.ca](http://www.pcchu.ca).

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