

Nutritious Food Basket

The Cost of Eating in the
Sudbury and Manitoulin Districts

2009

In accordance with the Ontario Public Health Standards, which require that boards of health monitor food affordability, the Sudbury & District Health Unit uses the Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) survey tool each year to measure the cost of basic healthy eating, and each year the results show that low-income households struggle to pay rent, bills and to buy healthy food.

To reflect the latest in dietary guidance and food trends, the list of 67 food items included in the NFB survey was recently updated. The revised list was used in the 2009 survey at six grocery stores across the Sudbury and Manitoulin districts. The revised list of food items can be found on the Health Canada website.¹ Due to changes to this list and other changes to the NFB survey tool, the average cost of the nutritious food basket for 2009 cannot be compared with previous years.

The 2009 analysis found that it costs about \$187 a week (\$813 per month) to feed a family of four (two parents, two children) in the Sudbury and Manitoulin districts.

Hunger has a dramatic impact...

The scenarios in Table 1 illustrate that for many low-income households the choice is not between a generic and name brand product but rather it is between food and hunger. Hunger has a dramatic 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.² To reduce their risk of health problems, low-income households must have adequate incomes to ensure that they can buy nutritious food.

The Sudbury & District Board of Health calls on the province to take a new look at proposed increases to social programs to ensure that Ontarians can afford to make healthy choices. One example is to increase Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Programs by providing a monthly \$100 Healthy Food Supplement. This will enable people to eat more nutritiously and use the health care system less.

What can you do to help?

Join the [Sudbury Food Connections](#) or the [Manitoulin Community Food Network](#) to help advance the local community food security mandate.

Support local community-based food programs such as community kitchens, school nutrition programs, community gardens and the Sudbury Good Food Box Program.

Educate yourself about the root causes of poverty and hunger and become involved in local efforts that support [Ontario's Poverty Reduction Strategy](#).

Complete the online [Do the Math](#) survey to demonstrate the need for the provincial government to introduce a \$100 Healthy Food Supplement as outlined in the province-wide [Put Food in the Budget](#) campaign.

TABLE 1: NUTRITIOUS FOOD BASKET SCENARIOS

	HOUSEHOLDS WITH CHILDREN				SINGLE PERSON HOUSEHOLDS		
	Scenario 1 Family of Four, Ontario Works	Scenario 2 Family of Four, Minimum Wage Earner	Scenario 3 Family of Four, Median Ontario Income	Scenario 4 Single Parent with 2 Children, Ontario Works	Scenario 5 One Person Household, Ontario Works	Scenario 6 One Person Household, ODSP	Scenario 7 One Person Household, OAS GIS GAINS
	INCOME						
Total Monthly Income	\$1,804	\$2,279	\$5,781	\$1,682	\$592	\$1,047	\$1,199
	EXPENSES						
Rent (Apartments, bachelor - 3BR; may not include utilities)	\$915	\$915	\$915	\$802	\$501	\$501	\$674
Food (Nutritious Food Basket)	\$813	\$813	\$813	\$617	\$271	\$271	\$201
Monthly Income Remaining for Other Expenses	\$76	\$551	\$4,053	\$263	\$(180)	\$275	\$324

Scenarios:

- **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 from one minimum wage earner, 40hr/wk, \$9.50/hr.
- **Scenario 3:** 2 adults (male and female ages 31-50), 2 children (girl age 8, boy age 14); income is Ontario Median Income – for couple households with children, using 2005 income after tax
- **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 (ODSP)
- **Scenario 7:** 1 adult (female age 70+); income based on Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement, and Guaranteed Annual Income System (OAS/GIS/GAINS)

Sources for Data Used to Calculate Income and Expenses:

- Maximum basic and shelter allowances. OW and ODSP. As of May 2009.
- Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement (OAS/GIS). <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/isp/oas/oastoc.shtml>
- For low-income families: maximum Canada Child Tax Benefit, National Child Benefit Supplement, and Ontario Child Benefit. <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/clcltr/menu-eng.html>
- GST credit calculated on a monthly basis. Figures derived from GST Guideline Table effective July 2008 to June 2009. <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/clcltr/menu-eng.html>
- Employment Insurance Premium Rates <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bnsts/tpcs/pyrll/clcltng/ei/cnt-chrt-pf-eng.html>
- Canada Pension Plan <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bnsts/tpcs/pyrll/clcltng/cpp-rpc/cnt-chrt-pf-eng.html>
- Working Income Tax Benefit Online Calculator <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/wtb/menu-eng.html>

- Median income of couple household with children (2005). Reference: Ontario 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>. After tax income includes government transfers and income tax, but not Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan deductions.
- Rental Market Reports, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Spring 2009. Average rent for apartments, http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64507/64507_2009_B01.pdf
- Nutritious Food Basket Protocol and Guidance Document, Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion, May 2009. Family size adjustment factors are included in the calculation. http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/pubhealth/oph_standards/ophs/ophprotocols.html
- Other “basic” expenses after rent and food include telephone, transportation, child care, household and personal care items, clothing, and school supplies. In addition, other expenses common in many households include personal transportation (a car), the cost of owning and maintaining a home, having pets, buying reading materials, eating out or having guests over for a meal. Reference: Spending Patterns in Canada - Ontario <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/62-202-x/2006000/t017-eng.htm> 2005. Statistics Canada. 2007. Ontario (table). 2006 Community Profiles. 2006 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 92-591-XWE. Ottawa.

References:

- <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/surveill/basket-panier/index-eng.php>
- Household food insufficiency is associated with poorer health. Vozoris, N.T., Tarasuk V.S. Journal of Nutrition. 133:120-126, 2003.

Disclaimer:

The names and goals of all groups listed are for information and are not necessarily considered endorsements by the Sudbury & District Health Unit.

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