

NEWS RELEASE

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The Price of Eating Well in 2010

Today, the Health Unit, the North Bay Food Bank and the gathering place provided their viewpoints on food insecurity in the North Bay area.

The Health Unit released the 2010 Price of Eating Well Report. This report shows for a family of four to follow Canada's Food Guide, it would cost about \$168.34 per week, or \$728.91 monthly.

When the cost of healthy eating is weighed against rent, utilities, transportation and other costs of living, it is clear that social assistance and minimum wage rates are not adequate.

Health may be compromised in many ways when nutritious food is not affordable. Those who don't have enough money to purchase healthy food may face higher rates of obesity, depression and chronic diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.

Quote

"We know that people receiving social assistance and working for minimum wage do not have enough money to purchase healthy food to maintain their health or have an acceptable quality of life."

- Erin Reyce, Public Health Dietitian, North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit

"Since January, 2009 the gathering place has experienced unprecedented growth in the numbers of our neighbours in need accessing service. The daily average number of meals served has increased from 87 in 2008 to 97 in 2009 and to 126 in 2010. This is an overall increase of almost 45% in two years with no evidence that the number has peaked."

- Jill Clark, Executive Director, the gathering place

"The North Bay Food Bank is experiencing record usage, with a family being fed every 1.5 minutes that the Food Bank is open. High heating costs and the increased price of gas are creating an influx of working poor, who find it difficult to survive on minimum wage. "

- Ellen White, North Bay Food Bank

Quick Facts

- About 60% of those being served at the gathering place live with mental illness or addiction. The benefits they receive are not sufficient to cover the cost of decent housing, food, medical or dental care.
- The North Bay Food Bank has already depleted more than 25% of the food collected during the Christmas season. In the seven days they have been open in January, they have fed over 1,000 people. About 300 were children under the age of 18.

- The Health Unit annually monitors the cost of healthy eating in the district. Health Unit staff visit twelve district grocery stores to cost foods for the *Nutritious Food Basket* program.
- The *Nutritious Food Basket* assumes people have the ability, kitchen equipment and time required to prepare the foods that are listed in the Basket.
- Not included in the *Nutritious Food Basket* are necessary household items often purchased at grocery stores, such as toilet paper, cleaning supplies and personal hygiene products.
- The gathering place opened its doors in September 2003. For the first five years of operation, the average number of meals served daily was consistently around 87.
- The *Price of Eating Well* report is available at www.healthunit.biz, under the Hot Topics box, click on the *Price of Eating Well Report 2010*.

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