



Ontario Public Health Association
l'Association pour la santé publique de l'Ontario
Established/Établi 1949

The mission of OPHA is to provide leadership on issues affecting the public's health and to strengthen the impact of people who are active in public and community health throughout Ontario.

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November 18, 2009

Hon. Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Room 281, Main Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty:

The results of the 2009 Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) reports are now available at Public Health Units across Ontario, as a mandated protocol in the Ontario Public Health Standards. The list of foods surveyed represents nutrition recommendations and food purchasing patterns of Canadians and includes foods from the four food groups of *Canada's Food Guide*. Non-food items, prepared foods and restaurant meals are not included in the calculation of the NFB.

Once again these reports have raised significant concerns among public health professionals about poverty and food insecurity. These pose serious risks for the public health of our communities and the province as a whole.

Please take some time to review the attached Nutritious Food Basket Case Scenarios from four Health Units in the province, representing different geographic regions of Ontario: Halton Region, Peterborough County/City, Thunder Bay District, and Waterloo Region. These scenarios show that low-income residents of Ontario do not have enough money to pay for shelter costs and nourishing foods.

Public Health Units have supported the steps this government has taken with regard to poverty reduction, including involvement in Student Nutrition Programs and the Ontario After School Initiative. We also understand that increases are planned in the future for the Ontario Child Tax Benefit and Minimum Wage.

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However, we believe that the NFB Case Scenarios indicate a need for renewed efforts by the government and its ministries to ensure that poverty reduction remains a high priority of the government. This will require 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 monthly by providing a \$100 Healthy Food Supplement. This will allow people to eat more nutritiously and use the health care system less. In addition, low income people will spend this money locally, contributing to local economic recovery.

The relationship between poverty and poor health is clear. Poor nutrition can lead to increased risk for chronic and infectious diseases, pregnancy outcomes with greater risk for low birth weight and negative impact on the growth and development of children. It costs more to treat and manage these conditions than to prevent them by ensuring people can afford an adequate diet. Consistent investment in maintaining public health is a prerequisite for maintaining a population that is prepared for productivity.

We look forward to your immediate attention to address the challenges of providing a nutritious diet for people living on a low income.

Sincerely,



Carol Timmings
President

Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) Case Scenarios from Four Ontario Health Units – May 2009

TABLE 1 – NFB Case Scenarios for Households in Halton Region, May 2009

	Households with Children				Single Person Households		
	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5	Scenario 6	Scenario 7
	Family of Four, Ontario Works	Family of Four, Minimum Wage Earner	Family of Four, Median Ontario Income	Single Parent with 2 Children Ontario Works	One Person Household Ontario Works	One Person Household ODSP	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)	\$ 1,188	\$ 1,188	\$ 1,188	\$ 1,027	\$ 722	\$ 722	\$ 903
Food (Nutritious Food Basket)	\$ 701	\$ 701	\$ 701	\$ 460	\$ 235	\$ 235	\$ 172
Monthly Income Remaining for Other Expenses	\$ (85.00)	\$ 390	\$ 3,892	\$ 195	\$ (415)	\$ 40.00	\$ 124
<i>Rent expressed as % of income</i>	66%	52%	21%	61%	130%	74%	75%
<i>Food expressed as % of income</i>	39%	31%	12%	27%	40%	22%	14%

TABLE 2 – NFB Case Scenarios for Households in Peterborough City and County, May 2009

	Households with Children				Single Person Households		
	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5	Scenario 6	Scenario 7
	Family of Four, Ontario Works	Family of Four, Minimum Wage Earner	Family of Four, Median Ontario Income	Single Parent with 2 Children Ontario Works	One Person Household Ontario Works	One Person Household ODSP	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; includes utilities)	\$ 1,318	\$ 1,318	\$ 1,687	\$ 1,025	\$ 578	\$ 578	\$ 817
Food (Nutritious Food Basket)	\$ 722	\$ 722	\$ 722	\$ 547	\$ 241	\$ 241	\$ 179
Monthly Income Remaining for Other Expenses	\$ (236)	\$ 239	\$ 3,372	\$ 110	\$ (227)	\$ 228	\$ 203
Rent expressed as % of income	73%	58%	29%	61%	98%	55%	68%
Food expressed as % of income	40%	32%	12%	33%	41%	23%	15%

TABLE 3 – NFB Case Scenarios for Households in Thunder Bay District, May 2009

	Households with Children				Single Person Households		
	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5	Scenario 6	Scenario 7
	Family of Four, Ontario Works	Family of Four, Minimum Wage Earner	Family of Four, Median Ontario Income	Single Parent with 2 Children Ontario Works	One Person Household Ontario Works	One Person Household ODSP	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)	\$ 836	\$ 836	\$ 836	\$ 719	\$ 467	\$ 467	\$ 589
Food (Nutritious Food Basket)	\$ 705	\$ 705	\$ 705	\$ 513	\$ 250	\$ 250	\$ 184
Monthly Income Remaining for Other Expenses	\$ 263	\$ 738	\$ 4,240	\$ 450	\$ (125)	\$ 330	\$ 426
Rent expressed as % of income	46%	37%	14%	43%	79%	45%	49%
Food expressed as % of income	39%	31%	12%	30%	42%	24%	15%

TABLE 4 – NFB Case Scenarios for Households in Waterloo Region, May 2009

	Households with Children				Single Person Households		
	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3	Scenario 4	Scenario 5	Scenario 6	Scenario 7
	Family of Four, Ontario Works	Family of Four, Minimum Wage Earner	Family of Four, Median Ontario Income	Single Parent with 2 Children Ontario Works	One Person Household Ontario Works	One Person Household ODSP	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)	\$ 978	\$ 978	\$ 978	\$ 845	\$ 561	\$ 561	\$ 712
Food (Nutritious Food Basket)	\$ 734	\$ 734	\$ 734	\$ 555	\$ 246	\$ 246	\$ 180
Monthly Income Remaining for Other Expenses	\$ 92	\$ 567	\$ 4,069	\$ 282	\$ (215)	\$ 240	\$ 307
Rent expressed as % of income	54%	43%	17%	50%	95%	54%	59%
Food expressed as % of income	41%	32%	13%	33%	42%	23%	15%

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 after-incomes
- 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/Guaranteed Annual Income System (OAS/GIS/GAINS)

References 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, & 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-June 2009. <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/clcltr/menu-eng.html>
- Employment Insurance Premium Rates <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bsnss/tpcs/pyrll/clcltng/ei/cnt-chrt-pf-eng.html>
- Canada Pension Plan <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bsnss/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 & Income tax, but not Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan deductions. .
- Rental Market Reports, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, October 2008. Average rent for apartments,

http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/esub/64399/64399_2008_A01.pdf See page 14, table 1.1.2.

- Nutritious Food Basket Protocol & 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.