Ontario

Nutritious Food Basket

Guidance Document

Ministry of Health Promotion

Standards, Programs & Community Development Branch
Ministry of Health Promotion
May 2010

This document is not intended to provide legal advice or to be a substitute for the professional judgment of public health staff. Public health staff should consult with their legal counsel as appropriate. Where there is a conflict between this guidance document and the Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS), the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA), or its regulations, the OPHS, HPPA or regulations, as the case may be, prevail.

Working Group Co-Chairs
Krista Burns

Working Group Members
Susan Hubay
Bridget King
Pat Vanderkooy
Judie Wilkie

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Preamble

This document provides additional support for boards of health to execute the Nutritious Food Basket Protocol, 2008 (or as current) under the Ontario Public Health Standards (2008). Given the nature of the Protocol it is highly recommended to use the Nutritious Food Basket Protocol, 2008 (or as current) and the Nutritious Food Basket Guidance Document in tandem. This Guidance Document is a stand-alone document without a legal basis that was developed according to the discretion of the Nutritious Food Basket Protocol Development Team.

The Ministry of Health Promotion has created a number of Guidance Documents to support the implementation of the four program standards for which it is responsible, e.g.:

- Child Health
- Child Health Program Oral Health
- Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Healthy Weights
- Nutritious Food Basket
- Prevention of Injury
- Prevention of Substance Misuse
- Reproductive Health
- School Health

1.0 Introduction

The Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS) are published by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care under the Section 7 of the *Health Protection and Promotion Act* (HPPA). These standards specify the mandatory requirements for boards of health to implement various public health programs and services. Order in Council (OIC) has assigned responsibility to the Ministry of Health Promotion (MHP) for several of these standards: (a) reproductive health, (b) child health, (c) prevention of injuries and substance misuse and (d) chronic disease prevention. The OPHS for health promotion identify the requirements for complex, multifaceted responsibilities of local boards of health in health promotion. The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has OIC responsibility for the oversight of the *Healthy Babies Healthy Children* section of the *Reproductive and Child Program Standards*.

The OPHS are based on four principles: need, impact, capacity, and partnership/collaboration. One Foundational Standard focuses on four specific areas: (a) population health assessment, (b) surveillance, (c) research and knowledge exchange and (d) program evaluation.

1.1 Purpose

> "The purpose of this protocol is to provide direction to boards of health in regard to fulfilling the requirement of monitoring food affordability.
>
> This protocol replaces the *Monitoring the Cost of a Nutritious Food Basket Protocol, 1998*.
>
> For more information on the background and design of the nutritious food basket and the interpretation of the nutritious food basket data, refer to the Nutritious Food Basket Guidance Document, 2008 (or as current)."
>
> *Nutritious Food Basket Protocol, 2008 (or as current)*

- Boards of health can use Nutritious Food Basket data for:
  - Program planning;
  - Informing policy decisions; and
  - Supporting and promoting access to nutritious, safe, personally acceptable foods.
- Nutritious Food Basket data has linkages to the following Ontario Public Health Standards and Protocol:
  - Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol, 2008 (or as current)
    - food costing data may contribute to a situational assessment and play a role in helping to identify priority populations and address determinants of health; and
  - Foundational, Chronic Disease Prevention, Reproductive Health and Child Health Standards
    - food costing data may aid in identifying community issues/needs, providing population health information to communities and stakeholders and meeting surveillance requirements.

1.2 What is a Nutritious Food Basket?

- A Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) is a survey tool that is a measure of the cost of basic healthy eating that represents current nutrition recommendations and average food purchasing patterns. Food costing is used to monitor both affordability and accessibility of foods by relating the cost of the food basket to individual/family incomes.

Table 1 – Age and sex groups for whom Nutritious Food Basket costs are generated.

	AGE (YEARS)		AGE (YEARS)		AGE (YEARS)
Boy	2 – 3	**Girl**	2 – 3	**Pregnancy**	18 and younger
	4 – 8		4 – 8		19 – 30
Males	9 – 13	**Females**	9 – 13		31 – 50
	14 – 18		14 – 18	**Lactation**	18 and younger
	19 – 30		19 – 30		19 – 30
	31 – 50		31 – 50		31 – 50
	51 – 70		51 – 70		
	Over 70		Over 70		

- The cost of a Nutritious Food Basket, using a list of 67 foods, along with pricing procedures specified in the NFB protocol, can be priced to estimate the average cost of feeding up to 22 age and sex groups, shown in Table 1, and a reference family of four (a man and woman, each aged 31–50 years; a boy, 14–18 years of age; and, a girl, 4–8 years old). The basket is designed to reflect an example of an eating pattern that meets *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*, and eating behaviours reflective of the *Canadian Community Health Survey 2.2* results.
- Items in the Nutritious Food Basket reflect the lowest price available in a specified purchase size, regardless of brand. The resulting food basket cost is based on the average cost of each food item from all grocery stores sampled and not the total cost of any one particular store.

1.3 History of Food Baskets in Canada

- Canada's oldest food costing resource has been in use by the Montreal Diet Dispensary (MDD) since 1948. The federal government became involved in food costing in 1974. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada developed and priced the *Nutritious Food Basket* and the *Thrifty Nutritious Food Basket*. These food baskets provided benchmark costs for feeding 23 age and sex groups in 18 cities across the country. Figures released monthly by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada were used for policy, planning and advocacy work. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's food basket methodology was also adapted by some communities not covered by the 18-city survey to produce local food basket prices.
- After the release of the 1990 *Nutrition Recommendations and the 1992 Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's food baskets needed revision to reflect new national standards for nutrition. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada discontinued their food basket work in 1995. In 1998, Health Canada developed a national food basket, revised to reflect current nutrition recommendations and 1996 food purchase patterns.
- Following the release of the 2007 *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* and the natural shift in eating patterns over time, Health Canada revised the 1998 National Nutritious Food Basket. The national eating patterns included within the revised National Nutritious Food Basket are expected to closely align with Ontario's eating patterns.

2.0 Data Access, Collection and Management

"The board of health shall:

a) Assign a Registered Dietitian, employed by the board of health, to be responsible for the overall coordination of food costing. Note: boards of health without a Registered Dietitian on staff must contract the services of a Registered Dietitian.

b) Conduct in-store costing through board of health staff or designates who have the food knowledge and math skills to act as surveyors.

c) Have two surveyors conduct the costing of each store independently, on separate forms, on the same day, to avoid recording errors.

d) Have a Registered Dietitian conduct training for food surveyors. For more information on in-store training, refer to the Nutritious Food Basket Guidance Document, 2008 (or as current)."

Nutritious Food Basket Protocol, 2008 (or as current)

2.1 Personnel

- Board of health staff or designates[1] with food knowledge and math skills are to be selected as food surveyors (Table 2).
- It is encouraged that the Registered Dietitian involved has personally completed the in-store costing exercise themselves at some point. Many of the meaningful and important experiences associated with implementing the protocol are best understood when experienced firsthand and can then be reflected in training.
- Two surveyors are required to conduct the costing at the same time on the same day in an effort to reduce errors in data collection.

Table 2 – Roles of Food Costing Personnel

PERSONNEL	ROLES
Board of Health Registered Dietitian	▪ Share experience with implementing in-store costing exercise ▪ Overall coordination ▪ Selection & training of food surveyors ▪ Store selection ▪ Quality Assurance – review data ▪ Submit findings to MHP
Food Surveyors Can be a: ▪ Board of health staff ▪ Contracted individual ▪ Student ▪ Volunteer	▪ Survey food costs ▪ Cross-check all prices with second food surveyor who priced the same store ▪ Enter data in spreadsheet

[1] Designates include the following: students, individuals contracted by the board of health, or volunteers with the board of health.

2.2 Training Surveyors

- Registered Dietitians (RD) who are new to coordinating the activities required in the Nutritious Food Basket Protocol should consider consulting with an experienced RD in the province if they require additional information outside of this guidance document.
- Food surveyors should understand the entire process of food costing. To ensure they have received a full explanation of their role, food surveyor training should include:
  - Reviewing the procedures;
  - Providing examples of common problems encountered;
  - Practising food costing at the grocery store (if possible); and
  - Completing sample calculations.
- To be sure the data is collected in the same way, all food surveyors must receive the same instructions and follow the same procedures. It is strongly recommended that food surveyors be trained in-store whenever possible to provide realistic hands-on experience. Training conducted in-house should try to mimic in-store training as closely as possible.
- When training surveyors, remind them to handle all items with care while costing food. A gentle reminder to be delicate with displays and produce may help to ensure positive relations with grocery stores.
- See **Appendix A** for the in-store costing form and **Appendix B** for training handouts.

2.3 Selection of Grocery Stores

"The board of health shall:

a) Conduct food costing in a minimum of **six** grocery stores within its health unit catchment area. Exception: jurisdictions that have fewer than six grocery stores shall cost all available grocery stores.

b) Review its list of selected stores on an annual basis to consider whether different stores or any new major chains/groups or independents need to be included.

c) Divide its health unit into the planning areas customarily used for service delivery or planning purposes to achieve geographic representation.

d) In health units with both urban and rural areas, determine what proportion of the population lives in urban and rural areas and use this as a guide to determine the proportion of urban or rural stores to be selected.

i. For the urban part of the health unit, follow the procedure outlined above; and

ii. For the rural part of the health unit, choose stores within or outside communities that draw many rural residents for grocery shopping.

e) Choose grocery stores to cost in each of the planning areas selected.

f) For more information on store selection procedures, refer to the Nutritious Food Basket Guidance Document, 2008 (or as current)."

Nutritious Food Basket Protocol, 2008 (or as current)

Sampling areas:

- In health units that include both rural and urban areas, the relative distribution will determine store selection numbers. If, for instance, 60% of the health unit's population lives in an urban centre and 40% live in outlying communities, then four neighbourhoods (i.e., 6 stores multiplied by 0.60 = 3.6, round up to 4) should be surveyed in the urban centre and the remaining two in the outlying communities.
- In a sense, this is an attempt to weight the health unit results by the geographic distribution of the population within their health unit.

Selection Criteria

- To be selected, the grocery store must offer a full line of grocery products. Any store that does not have the capacity to have the full range of items in the NFB would not qualify (e.g. many convenience stores, drug stores, and department stores would not meet this criterion).
- Systematic selection of stores must ensure that the final set of stores include representation from:
  - Each of the major chains operating in the health unit's jurisdiction;
  - Both premium and discount stores from any of the major chains above; and
  - Independent grocery stores, if an independent store exists in the region.
- Health units with large and/or diverse populations or stores may choose to sample more than six stores.
- Refer to **Appendix C** for a list of store names operated by Ontario's major chains/groups.
- To identify/locate independent grocery stores, health units may need to use a variety of sources such as the Yellow Pages, word of mouth, sightings, etc.
- It is not necessary to select both a premium and discount store **within** each major chain.
- Exclude stores such as:
  - Warehouse-type stores which may not regularly have food basket items in the specified sizes;
  - Stores that require membership for shopping privileges, because membership is not accessible to the entire population and it is not possible to attribute the membership cost to the food items; and
  - Convenience stores.

Rationale for Store Selection:

- The store selection strategy builds on the importance of chains and independents in terms of sales. Most of the chains operate a range of stores – some stores offer consistently lower-priced items, whereas others offer a mix of food prices.
- Stores should be representative of the types of stores in which individuals in the health unit region typically shop.
- The store selection strategy includes sampling at least one store from each major chain operating within a health unit jurisdiction. Not sampling from a range of stores could skew food prices.
- The relative importance (i.e., market share) of any store is not a factor in store selection strategy.
- Random sampling is not required for store selection due to the burden it would place on health units to compile and maintain an updated list of all grocery stores in their catchment area on a yearly basis. Conducting the random sample could also require the assistance of a statistician/epidemiologist, to which not all health units may have access. For these reasons, a random sample approach would not be efficient or revenue neutral.
- Rural and urban stratification is required because it is anticipated that important differences in food affordability may exist between these areas.

Store Selection and Year-to-Year Changes:

- For health units that are large or heterogeneous, a sample of six stores is less likely to represent the range of stores in the health unit region.
- It may be helpful to consult with an epidemiologist to find out what socio-economic or geographic information might be available and would be feasible to use in the store selection process.
- Health units may differ in how much change occurs in their community with respect to patterns of stores and market share.
- It is important to review selected stores on an annual basis to consider whether different stores and/or any new major chains/affiliates need to be included.

- Health units that are characterized by little change in the number and type of stores, their respective market share and the size and geographic distribution of their population may not need to change their store selection from year to year.
- Noticeable changes in population size, sociodemographic characteristics or geographic distribution can lead to changes in the number and location of grocery stores in a specific region. If a health region has a rapidly growing population that has led to more grocery stores being opened in the area, this needs to be considered when choosing stores. Another consideration is that if changes in the population have led to changes in the kind of available grocery store (i.e. more or fewer discount stores), grocery store selection will need to be revisited.
- Year-to-year comparisons of NFB data must be approached cautiously. The store selection process strongly influences the comparability of yearly data. In general, more rigorous selection processes provide more valid year-to-year comparisons.

Implementation:

- Once stores have been identified, the health unit should make contact with the grocery stores to request permission and thank them for their cooperation. Refer to **Appendix D** for a sample letter.
- Some health units find that the following procedure works well to ensure store participation:
  - Phone the store to request permission several weeks in advance of the date you plan to cost food. It may be useful to ask your Medical Officer of Health (MOH) to sign the letter that is sent to store managers, as this may add a level of credibility and importance to the letter in the eyes of the store manager. It is also helpful to provide the store manager with a copy of a report shared with the community in the past that uses information from the in-store costing. Store managers who have a better understanding of how the information is used are more likely to participate.
  - Send a letter of confirmation timed to arrive about a week prior to survey dates, or take a copy of the letter to the store manager on the day that food costing is completed to help remind the store manager about your communication.
  - Follow up with a letter of thanks after the surveys have been completed.
- If a store that was selected does not permit the health unit to carry out in-store costing, consider if the remaining stores accurately represent the region. If not, store selection will need to be revisited.

3.0 Data Analysis and Interpretation

"The board of health shall:

a) Cost the food items that comprise a nutritious food basket, as deemed by the Ministry of Health Promotion, annually during the month of May, or at a frequency determined by the Ministry of Health Promotion. For the list of food items and food costing forms, refer to the Nutritious Food Basket Guidance Document, 2008 (or as current).

b) Survey selected stores within a two-week period.

c) Complete the costing in any given store in a single visit.

d) Review all food costing forms to ensure purchase units are correct and enter the information into a cost averaging spreadsheet.

e) Submit electronic results from the food basket costing to the Senior Nutritionist at the Ministry of Health Promotion by July 1 of each year."

Nutritious Food Basket Protocol, 2008 (or as current)

3.1 Collecting the Data

- Undertake annual Nutritious Food Basket costing during the month of May.
  - The Consumer Price Index (CPI) for food in May closely reflects the annual average CPI for food, a measure considered appropriate for estimating the months in which food prices would be least affected by the high availability of food from the fall harvest or mid-winter food transportation costs.
- Survey all stores being sampled during a two-week period to avoid price fluctuations due to changes in market availability of products and between-store promotional campaigns.
- Conduct costing in one visit. Refer to **Appendix A** for in-store costing form.

3.2 Calculating the Cost of the NFB

- Ensure the in-store costing forms are complete for each store surveyed.
- Review prices to ensure they are in a form that can be entered into the cost averaging spreadsheet. The Registered Dietitian coordinating the NFB data collection needs to check the following:
  - **Where the specified purchase unit is not available and prices for alternative-size products have been recorded, the price needs to be calculated for the preferred purchase unit.** The spreadsheet that accompanies the Nutritious Food Basket Protocol specifies the purchase unit for each food item in the basket. For example, the purchase unit for yogurt is 750 g; if 750 g containers of yogurt are not available in one store, the surveyor can record an alternative size. The price for the alternative size must be converted to the preferred purchase unit, which in the case of yogurt is 750 g.
  - **Are prices for fresh produce in a per kilogram format?** If not, the price per item should be converted to a per kilogram price. For example, if a bunch of broccoli costs $1.99, and the surveyor weighs 3 bunches of broccoli, the average weight is 410 g. The per kilogram price is therefore $1.99/.410 kg= $4.85/kg.
  - Similarly, the average bunch of broccoli that weighs 1 1/8 (or 1.125) pounds costs $1.99/bunch and will have a per kilogram cost of $1.99/1.125 lb x 2.2026 lb/kg = $3.90/kg.

- Also note that it is expected that surveyors will have slightly different weights per bunch of broccoli because bunches will be slightly different sizes. When calculating the cost per kilogram, calculate an average using the values provided by the surveyors.
- **For produce priced in multiple formats, has a lowest price per kilogram been calculated?** These calculations need to be done for apples, potatoes, carrots, oranges and onions.
- **Are there missing values?** Do not enter anything (including "0") in the cost averaging spreadsheet for these items where there are missing values (e.g., when a food item is not available). The cost averaging spreadsheet will calculate the average cost of the food item from stores for which there is data. If "0" is entered, the average will include the price of $0 for the store for which there is no data, lowering the apparent average cost of the food item.
- **Food prices from each store must be entered into the cost averaging spreadsheet.** The average price for each food item is electronically linked to the "purchase price" column of the pricing spreadsheet. The cost of the food basket for the 22 age and sex groups and the reference family of four is then automatically generated (see **Appendix E** for a sample spreadsheet).

3.3 Using the Household Size Adjustment Factor

The spreadsheet generates the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket for each age and sex group. To calculate the cost of the basket for a household, the Household Size Adjustment Factor is applied. This accounts for economies or diseconomies of scale, as it costs less per person to feed a larger family and more per person to feed a smaller family.

Modest adjustments must be made to the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket to account for family size. Current practice is to multiply the weekly cost of the food basket by 1.20, if the cost is being calculated for one person; 1.10 for two people; 1.05 for 3 people; no change for 4 people; 0.95 for 5-6 people; and 0.90 for 7 or more people (see **Appendix F** for a sample worksheet with calculations).

3.4 Considerations for Interpretation and Reporting the NFB Data

- The following features of the food basket must also be recognized when interpreting Nutritious Food Basket costs:
  - An additional 5% is automatically added to the cost of the food basket (within the spreadsheet calculations) to cover the cost of miscellaneous foods used in meal preparation (spices, seasonings, condiments, baking supplies, soup, coffee and tea).
  - For the most part, the food basket excludes processed convenience foods, snack foods, and foods of little nutritional value.
  - Infant formula and baby foods are not included.
  - The basket does not include foods that are purchased for religious or cultural reasons (e.g., kosher, halal).
  - Special diets that address specific disease conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, celiac, etc. are not included.
  - Food dollars spent away from home are not factored into the cost of the basket.
  - It is assumed that individuals always buy according to the lowest price and not necessarily according to need, preference or availability.
  - It is assumed that the individual has the time, ability and food skills to prepare meals from scratch.
  - It is assumed that the individual has access to grocery stores, literacy and language skills to shop for the lowest price.
  - It is assumed that grocery shopping is a regular activity (every 1 to 2 weeks). The frequency of shopping impacts package sizes that are purchased.

- Because the food basket is based on average household purchasing patterns, the specific food purchasing patterns of any one person, or ethnic or age group, are not represented.
- If food items are not available in the specified purchase units, the modified calculation may raise or lower the cost of that food item.
- The package sizes priced, although representing an amount that is reasonable for a family of four to use in a week, may not be the most economical size for that food item.
- The cost of the Nutritious Food Basket is calculated by averaging the cost of individual food items across stores. Because market share of the stores priced is not factored into the process of calculating the cost, the resulting cost is an unweighted average. A weighted average would include the calculation of the importance of any one store or chain in the marketplace.
- Most consumers are accustomed to purchasing non-food items at grocery stores, such as laundry detergent, toilet paper or soap. If consumers compare their own food costs to the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket for their household, non-food items would have to be excluded from the consumers' usual grocery store expenditures.

3.5 Comparisons/Interpretation of the NFB

- Making food basket comparisons requires caution – otherwise, inappropriate interpretations may arise. Please keep the following in mind when making **public** NFB data comparisons:
  - **Stores** – Making between-store comparisons would violate the principle of confidentiality. These comparisons must not be published.
  - **Communities or planning areas within health unit jurisdiction** – These are only appropriate when you have confidence that your samples are representative of each community, and that comparing two communities would not violate confidentiality (e.g., a rural community with only one store).
  - **Health unit jurisdictions** – The mix of stores and the approach to store selection may be quite different between health units, **making between health unit comparisons inappropriate**.
  - **Regional comparisons** – North and south regional comparisons of cost and/or percent change are appropriate because: 1) a large group exists in the south; and 2) the likelihood exists that northern health units have similarities in geographic and environmental conditions. The north region is defined as Northwestern, Thunder Bay, Porcupine, Algoma, Timiskaming, Sudbury and North Bay-Parry Sound health units; the remaining 29 health units make up the south region.
  - **Within a health unit between years** – Assuming a health unit's NFB procedures were consistent over time, it is reasonable to compare a health unit's percent change in NFB costs from one year to the next, though 2009 will be an exception, as the items in the 2009 NFB are different than the foods selected in 2008.
  - **Provinces** – The National Nutritious Food Basket is the food costing tool used by most provinces. However, the national basket is often adapted by provinces to reflect regional differences in food consumption patterns. Store selection criteria also vary significantly, making comparisons between and among provinces inappropriate.
  - **Consumer Price Index (CPI)** – It is appropriate to compare your own health unit's percent change (year over year) to the May Consumer Price Index percent change. Refer to section 5.3 for further information on using the CPI to track trends over time.
  - **Provincial Average** – Comparing your own health unit's data to the provincial average generated by the MHP is appropriate.

- The Nutritious Food Basket is a powerful policy and advocacy tool. Inappropriate use of the Nutritious Food Basket costs result in the data being discredited. Examples of misuse of the data include:
  - Using the Nutritious Food Basket as a budgeting tool.
  - Public release of store names and/or individual store data could jeopardize participation and the validity of food costing in the community.
  - Publication of menus based on the list of foods in the Nutritious Food Basket. This suggests that the list of foods is being recommended as a healthy way of eating. The list of foods provides an example of foods that can be used only to determine benchmark costs of healthy eating.

4.0 Reporting and Dissemination

4.1 Reporting

The cost of a Nutritious Food Basket has been hailed as one of the most meaningful tools available to raise awareness about the cost of healthy eating to assess the adequacy of social assistance or minimum wage incomes. Thoughtful use of this information in the community will ensure its continued creditability.

4.2 Dissemination

Newsletters, press releases, reports and community meetings have been used to raise awareness about the cost of a Nutritious Food Basket. Many health units that have a history of pricing Nutritious Food Baskets have created standard formats for publishing information. Refer to **Appendix G** for examples of how Nutritious Food Basket data can be published.

5.0 Action

5.1 Using the NFB to support program planning

Below are sections of the Ontario Public Health Standards identified as areas in which NFB data could be used to support program planning.

1. Foundational Standard

- Goal, Societal Outcomes, Board of Health Outcomes
- Protocol – The Population Health Assessment and Surveillance Protocol, 2008 (or as current)
- Population Health Assessment
- Surveillance
- Research and Knowledge Exchange
- Program Evaluation

2. Chronic Disease Prevention

- Board of Health Outcomes
- Assessment and Surveillance
  - Requirement #2 is monitoring food affordability
- Health Promotion and Policy Development
  - Chronic diseases of public health importance include cardiovascular diseases, cancer, respiratory diseases, and type 2 diabetes. Risk factors for chronic diseases include but are not limited to poor diet, obesity, tobacco use, physical inactivity, alcohol misuse, and exposure to ultraviolet radiation. Food basket data can help inform potential barriers to purchasing healthy food.

3. Reproductive Health

- Goal
- Assessment and Surveillance
- Health Promotion and Policy Development
  - Food costing data can be used to help identify barriers to preconception health, specifically, a pregnant woman's ability to purchase foods that support a healthy pregnancy.

4. Child Health

- Goal
- Assessment and Surveillance
- Health Promotion and Policy Development
- Disease Prevention
  - Food costing data can be used to identify barriers to purchasing foods that support children's healthy growth and development and the prevention of chronic disease across the lifespan.

5.2 Income Scenarios

- A powerful way to present the potential existence of food insecurity in Ontario is by comparing the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket to the income of a family or individual. Generally, social assistance or minimum wage incomes form the standard against which comparisons are made.
- By preparing different income and family scenarios, a more realistic snapshot of barriers to healthy eating is achieved. Food is often considered to be the second priority in a budget, following rent and utilities, and as a result, families are often forced to compromise healthy eating to meet these other obligations.
- The Income/Expense Scenario Template (**Appendix H**) was developed in conjunction with the Ontario Public Health Association Food Security Working Group and staff from the Health Departments in Halton, Peterborough and Toronto. It is a user-friendly template that promotes consistency in reporting across the province. All figures are calculated except for:
  - **Rent:** access Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation rent estimates for your community.
  - **Heat/Hydro:** if utilities are not included in your average monthly rent expense, be sure to add them in. If heating/hydro expenses are not available, include a comment that the cost of heating/hydro costs have not been included in your calculations. This is especially important for Northern Ontario income/expenses scenarios.
  - **Food:** insert appropriate NFB data.
  - **Median income:** the income from employment for Scenario 3 is calculated as the median income for Ontario, but you may wish to use your own community's median income. Go to: http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Index.cfm?Lang=E. Enter your community on this website. Proceed to "Selected household characteristics." Find "Median after-tax income" in the year most recently available from the census data – "couple households with children" and divide that number by 12.
- Public Health Units may choose to print these scenarios in health unit newsletters for distribution to staff and partners, as well as to local politicians. Additional information could include local resources, groups and initiatives that help communities improve access to food.

5.3 Tracking Trends: comparison of the NFB data to the Consumer Price index

- Statistics Canada is responsible for the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which measures price change by comparing, through time, the cost of a fixed basket of commodities. This basket is based on the expenditures of the target population in a certain reference period. Separate CPIs are published for Canada, the ten provinces, Whitehorse, Yellowknife and Iqaluit; the CPI for Canada is based on a distribution of total expenditures consistent with the population. Some CPI information is also available for an additional 16 urban centres across the country. The published reports are free in electronic format in the publications section of the Statistics Canada website (www.statcan.gc.ca).
- Since the CPI is a measure of price change from one time period to another, it cannot be used to indicate price differences between provinces or urban centres. The current index year is 2002 (2002=100). The CPI is tracked monthly and movements from one month to another are expressed as percent changes. When comparing, it is recommended not to go back beyond the CPI index year.

- There are eight major components in the CPI, of which food is one component. The component weights are updated to reflect the most recent Survey of Household Spending (SHS). As of May 2007, the 2005 SHS is being utilized. Food comprises 17.04% of the weighting for the Canadian CPI, whereas the food weighting is 15.79% for Ontario. The food component includes "food purchased from grocery stores," including many of the foods also found in the Nutritious Food Basket (NFB), and "food purchased from restaurants/take-out." Food sub-categories of foods purchased from grocery stores include:
  - Meat (including poultry)
  - Fish, seafood and other marine products
  - Dairy products and eggs
  - Bakery and cereal products
  - Fruits, fruit preparations and nuts
  - Vegetables and vegetable preparations
  - Other food products and non-alcoholic beverages
- One way to analyze the NFB survey results is to compare with the corresponding CPI for the same time period, i.e. the May CPI, which is released by the middle of the following month. For example, in May 2007 the CPI for Canada increased by 2.2% from May 2006; the food component increased by 3.5% and, for relevance with the NFB, food purchased at grocery stores went up 4%. The largest increase in food components was in fresh vegetables, which increased by 9%. Comparisons can also be made with the Ontario CPI, in addition to or instead of the CPI for Canada.
- It may also be helpful to review other components of the CPI that might have an impact on food costs, such as energy/fuel and transportation. This would need to be done with caution, as no conclusions could be drawn.

For more information, access *Your Guide to the Consumer Price Index* at:
http://www.statcan.ca/english/sdds/document/2301_D6_T9_V1_E.pdf

5.4 Additional Activities to Consider for Enhanced NFB Analysis

5.4.1 Conduct a Community Food Assessment

What is a community food assessment?

"A community food assessment is a participatory and collaborative process that examines a broad range of food-related issues and resources in order to inform actions to improve community food security."[2] A community food assessment can be as broad or as focused as your community desires.

Why conduct a community food assessment?

A community food assessment can enhance Nutritious Food Basket information. Community food assessments can influence decision-making regarding your community's food system. A community food assessment can lead to improved program development and coordination, positive change in public policy regarding the food system, a greater awareness and participation in the community food system.[2]

[2] Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA). 2007. Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI). Community Food Assessment Guide.

What is involved in carrying out a community food assessment?

There are a number of effective community food assessment methodologies. Generally, key processes of a community food assessment include:

- An environmental scan
- Asset and gap analysis
- Community priority setting
- Recommendations for proposed action
- Plan of action and outcome measures
- Implementation

Where can I find out more about community food assessments?

What's Cooking in your Food System? A Guide to Community Food Assessment, 2002, written by Kami Pothukuchi, Hugh Joseph, Hannah Burton, and Andy Fisher, edited by Kai Siedenburg and Kami Pothukuchi. http://www.foodsecurity.org/pubs.html.

Community Food Action Initiative – Food on EVERY Table. Final Report by L. Szymanski and K. Sutherland, Sea to Sky Community Services Society for VCH, August 2006. http://www.vch.ca/population/docs/VCH_SeatoSky_Community_Food_Action_Initiative_Report.pdf

Food Security for All: North Shore System Assessment and Community Food Action Plan, report by SPARC BC for VCH (SMART Fund), August 2006. http://www.vch.ca/population/docs/VCH_North_Shore_Community_Food_Action_Initiative_Report.pdf

Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA). 2008. Community Food Action Initiative (CFAI). *Community Food Assessment Guide*. http://www.phsa.ca/NR/rdonlyres/76D687CF-6596-46FE-AA9A-A536D61FB038/28451/PHSAreportCFAIcommunityfoodassessmentguide.pdf

5.4.2 Surveying Other Food Items

Why survey other food items?

Your community may be interested in knowing the cost and availability of food items not included in the Nutritious Food Basket, such as the cost of infant formula, or the cost and availability of locally produced foods. This information is not required but may be useful for your community.

Items to Consider Surveying

Infant Formula

Public health units promote breastfeeding as the best method of infant feeding. For families who have made an informed choice not to breastfeed, or who are unable to breastfeed, health units support families looking for information on the correct use of infant formula. A survey of infant formula costing may assist you in providing this information. The easiest way to survey the cost of infant formula is to record the unit cost.

Consider

- What brands do you want to include?
  - There are many brands available. You may want to visit your grocery store or pharmacy before setting up your survey templates.

- Do you want to include organic infant formula?
- Do you want to include specialized infant formula (e.g., soy based and lactose free formulas)?
- Do you want to include therapeutic formulas?
- Do you want to include all the forms that are available (e.g., powder, liquid concentrate, ready-to-serve)?
- Will you include grocery stores, pharmacies, department stores and other stores where infant formula may be available?

Locally Produced Food

There is an increasing awareness of the importance of locally produced food. A community with a robust local food system will be more sustainable, and will have lower environmental costs and reduced demands on transportation infrastructure.[3] Surveying the availability and cost of locally produced food is an important step in gaining an understanding of your local food system.

Consider

- What is your definition of locally produced food?
  - At the Market Square in the City of Greater Sudbury, local food is defined as food that is grown within a radius of 150 miles (240 kilometres) of Sudbury. Ontario grown and products of Canada are categories also included in local food availability surveys conducted in the Sudbury area.
  - In the Region of Waterloo, a Food Flow Analysis Study local was defined by the political boundaries of the Region of Waterloo.[4]
- What foods can grow successfully in your area?
- Do you want to include organically produced foods?
- Consider including extra space on your in-store costing form to collect information on locally produced food. Record whether specific foods are available locally and the cost of each item.

For more information

"*What Does it Cost to Eat Healthy in Your Community? A Training Guide to Participatory Costing.*"
http://www.ahprc.dal.ca/publications/Food%20Costing%20Training%20Guide.pdf

Harry Cummings and Associates Inc. (HCA). 2005. *Region of Waterloo Food Flow Analysis Study*.
Region of Waterloo Public Health.
http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/4f4813c75e78d71385256e5a0057f5e1/54ED787F44ACA44C852571410056AEB0/$file/FFS.pdf?openelement

[3] Xuereb, M., Desjardins, E. 2005. Towards a Healthy Community Food System for Waterloo Region. Interim Report. Region of Waterloo Public Health. http://www.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/region.nsf/97dfc347666efede85256e590071a3d4/BC5A659B6394CB718525722D006E344E/$file/THCFS.pdf?OpenElement

[4] Harry Cummings and Associates Inc. (HCA). 2005. Region of Waterloo Food Flow Analysis Study. Region of Waterloo Public Health. http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/4f4813c75e78d71385256e5a0057f5e1/54ED787F44ACA44C852571410056AEB0/$file/FFS.pdf?openelement

5.4.3 Using a Participatory Approach to Research

- A participatory approach to research involves using processes to foster collaboration with those affected by the issue being studied; in this case, those who may experience food insecurity.[5]
- Participatory research can be conducted for the purposes of education, taking action or affecting social change.[5] Techniques and methods are used in all aspects of the research to facilitate participation and capacity building among those affected directly and indirectly by the issue. Participatory research also respects and builds upon pre-existing local knowledge and assets held by the participating community.
- In 2006, the Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection approved and funded a model of annual provincial participatory food costing. Participants from Family Resource Centres across the province are trained as food surveyors.

For more information:

"*What Does it Cost to Eat Healthy in Your Community? A Training Guide to Participatory Costing.*" (Also has an accompanying video.) http://www.ahprc.dal.ca/publications/Food%20Costing%20Training%20Guide.pdf

Nova Scotia Food Costing Report Appendices 2004 – Appendix A & B – worksheets used for training participants. http://www.ahprc.dal.ca/FoodCostingReportAppendices.pdf

The Nova Scotia Participatory Food Security Projects (2007). *Working Together to Build Food Security in Nova Scotia: Participatory Food Costing 2004/05*. http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/publications/2004-05FoodCosting.pdf

Travers K. (1997) Reducing inequities through participatory research and community empowerment. *Health Educ Behav* 24(3):344-56.

[5] Macaulay, A. C., Commanda, L. E., Freeman, W. L., Gibson, N., McCabe, M.L., Robbins, C.M., & Twohig, P. L. (1999). *Participatory Research Maximizes Community and Lay Involvement.* British Medical Journal, 319 (18 September), pp. 774-778.

6.0 Conclusion

The Ontario Ministry of Health Promotion prepared this Guidance Document to provide direction to boards of health as they implement health promotion programs and services that fall under the 2008 Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS). This Guidance Document provides background information specific to implementing the Nutritious Food Basket.

Achieving overall health goals and societal outcomes will depend on the efforts of boards of health working together with many other community partners, such as non-governmental organizations, local and municipal governments, government-funded agencies and the private sector. By working in partnership towards a common set of requirements, Ontario can better accomplish its health goals by reaching for higher standards and by adequately measuring the processes involved.

The health of individuals and communities in Ontario is significantly influenced by complex interactions between social and economic factors, the physical environment and individual behaviours and conditions. Addressing the determinants of health and reducing health inequities will also ensure that boards of health are successful in their efforts.

Appendix A – In-Store Costing Form

In-store Costing Instructions

Upon entering the store, identify yourself to personnel at the customer service desk or to the store manager **whether or not permission was already obtained to conduct the food pricing**. If permission was already obtained, let personnel at the customer service desk know that you are entering the store to conduct the food costing. They will contact the store manager if necessary. This is an essential courtesy step!

If permission was not previously obtained, you will have to explain what you are hoping to do to either the store manager or personnel at the customer service desk. Use a letter prepared by the health unit to help you explain the process of food costing. Be prepared to leave a copy of the letter with the store manager.

Under no circumstances should anyone price food without having permission from store management. If you are refused permission to conduct the pricing, thank the store manager for their time and leave the store. Go to the next store on your list.

Use the **in-store food costing form** to record the prices of food items. Specific instructions for different food categories are indicated on the form. In addition, follow these general instructions:

- Record the **lowest price for food items as specified** on the in-store costing form.
- Use the regular price if a special price requires redemption of coupons, mail-in rebates, or the purchase of a minimum grocery order.
- If an item or suggested substitute is not available, indicate this with "N/A" (not available) or a "—" so that it is clear that the item was simply not forgotten.
- Use the comments and calculations column of the in-store food costing form to make notes about what was priced, if necessary, or as extra space to record prices. This space will also be used later to make any necessary calculations.
- **Please print clearly and make sure that you are recording the price for the size of product specified.**

In-store Food Costing Form

City/Town:	Store Code:
Surveyor's Name:	Date:

Note: Unless indicated otherwise, for all items listed below, choose the **lowest price** for the food product **in the preferred purchase unit** (marked in **bold and larger type**). If an item is not available in the preferred purchase unit:

1. Choose the lowest price for the first **alternative size** listed (listed below the preferred purchase unit and not in bold).
2. If that size is not available, price the item in the next alternative size listed. **Only record the price for alternative sizes when the preferred purchase unit is not available.**
3. If an item is available in a size not specified, surveyors can choose to price an alternative size closest to the preferred purchase unit.
4. If the food product is not available in any of the given sizes, choose the **alternative food product** listed (in brackets) and record the lowest price in the **preferred** size, or alternative sizes if not available.
5. If an item or appropriate substitute is not available, indicate this with "N/A" (not available) or a "—" so that it is clear that the item was simply not forgotten.

Refrigerated Food Section

FOOD ITEM	PURCHASE UNIT	PRICE	COMMENTS AND CALCULATIONS	✔ DATA ENTERED TO SPREADSHEET
Milk, partly skimmed, 2% M.F.	**4L**			
Cheese, processed food, cheddar, slices	**500 g**			Enter price/500 g
	250 g		price / 250 x 500 = price/500 g	
	1 kg		price /1000 x 500 = price/500 g	
Cheese, mozzarella, partially skim, block, not slices	**200 g**			Enter price/200 g
	300 g		price / 300 x 200 = price/200 g	
	520 g		price / 520 x 200 = price/200 g	
Cheese, cheddar, block, not slices, medium (If *medium* cheddar cheese is unavailable, price the cheapest alternative cheddar cheese)	**200 g**			Enter price/200 g
	300 g		price / 300 x 200 = price/200 g	
	520 g		price / 520 x 200 = price/200 g	

FOOD ITEM	PURCHASE UNIT	PRICE	COMMENTS AND CALCULATIONS	✔ DATA ENTERED TO SPREADSHEET
Yogurt, Fruit flavoured, 1-2% M.F.	**750 g**			Enter price/750 g
	650 g		price / 650 x 750 = price/750 g	
	175 g		price / 175 x 750 = price/750 g	
Eggs, chicken, Grade A large	**1 dozen**			
Margarine, tub (non hydrogenated)	**907 g**			Enter price/907 ml
	454 g		price / 454 x 907 = price/907 g	

Meat Department

Note: For the next section, unless specified otherwise, write down the **price per kilogram**. The package sizes will vary and do not have to be any particular size. Surveyors are, however, encouraged to limit pricing to meat packages that are less than 3 kg. Meat is assumed to be fresh, not frozen.

FOOD ITEM	PURCHASE UNIT	PRICE	COMMENTS AND CALCULATIONS	✔ DATA ENTERED TO SPREADSHEET
Chicken legs, no back (thigh + leg)	**1 kg**	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
(If chicken legs, *no back* are unavailable, price chicken legs, *with back*)	1 kg	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	Enter if no data for chicken legs, no back
(If chicken legs, *with back* are unavailable, price *whole chicken*)	1 kg	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	Enter if no data for chicken legs, with back
Inside round roast	**1 kg**	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
(If *inside* round roast is unavailable, price *outside* round)	1 kg	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	Enter if no data for inside round roast
(If *outside* round roast is unavailable, price *full round* roast)	1 kg	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	Enter if no data for outside round roast
Inside round steak	**1 kg**	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
(If *inside* round steak is unavailable, price *outside* round steak)	1 kg	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	Enter if no data for inside round steak
(If *outside* round steak is unavailable, price *full round* steak)	1 kg	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	Enter if no data for outside round steak

FOOD ITEM	PURCHASE UNIT	PRICE	COMMENTS AND CALCULATIONS	✔ DATA ENTERED TO SPREADSHEET
Ground beef, lean	**1 kg**	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
(If *lean* ground beef is unavailable, price *medium* ground beef)	1 kg	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	Enter if no data for lean ground beef
(If *medium* ground beef is unavailable, price *regular* ground beef)	1 kg	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	Enter if no data for medium ground beef
Pork loin centre-cut chops, bone in	**1 kg**	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
(If *centre-cut* chops are unavailable, price pork loin *rib-end* chops)	1 kg	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	Enter if no data for centre-cut chops
(If pork loin *rib-end* chops are unavailable, price pork *shoulder butt* chops, bone-in)	1 kg	**____/kg** **____/lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	Enter if no data for rib-end chops
Pre-packaged sliced cooked ham, not lower fat	**175 g**			Enter price/175 g
	500 g		price / 500 x 175 = price/175 g	
	375 g		price / 375 x 175 = price/175 g	

Produce Department

Note: For carrots, apples, oranges, potatoes and onions, note the price of each version displayed, i.e., price per kilo or per pound if loose, price per 3 lb bag, 4 lb bag and 5 lb bag. For other items, choose the **lowest price** for the food product in the **preferred purchase unit** (marked in **bold and larger print**).

If any of the following vegetables are priced by the unit, for instance $1.99 for a bunch of broccoli, note the price and **weigh** up to three average sized bunches of broccoli.

FOOD ITEM	PURCHASE UNIT	PRICE	COMMENTS AND CALCULATIONS	✔ DATA ENTERED TO SPREADSHEET
Cantaloupe, whole, raw	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
Sweet potato, whole, raw	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
Carrot, whole, raw	loose	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
	2 lb bag		price / 2 x 2.2026 = price/kg	
	3 lb bag		price / 3 x 2.2026 = price/kg	
	5 lb bag		price / 5 x 2.2026 = price/kg	
	1 kg		Choose lowest price/kg from above for data entry	Enter lowest price/kg
Romaine lettuce, head	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
Broccoli, raw	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
Green pepper, sweet, raw	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	

FOOD ITEM	PURCHASE UNIT	PRICE	COMMENTS AND CALCULATIONS	✔ DATA ENTERED TO SPREADSHEET
Apples, any variety	loose	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
	3 lb bag		price / 3 x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
	4 lb bag		price / 4 x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
	5 lb bag		price / 5 x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
	1 kg		Choose lowest price/kg from above for data entry	Enter lowest price/kg
Bananas	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
Red or green grapes, seedless (If *seedless* grapes are unavailable, price *red or green seeded* grapes)	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
	1 kg	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	Enter if no data for seedless grapes
Oranges (not mandarin, clementine, tangerine etc.)	loose	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
	3 lb bag		price / 3 x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
	4 lb bag		price / 4 x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
	1 kg		Choose lowest price/kg from above for data entry	Enter lowest price/kg
Pears, any variety	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb/ = price/kg	

FOOD ITEM	PURCHASE UNIT	PRICE	COMMENTS AND CALCULATIONS	✔ DATA ENTERED TO SPREADSHEET
Potatoes, whole, raw	loose	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
	4.54 kg			Enter price/4.54 kg
	5 lb bag		Price/5 x 2.2026 x 4.54 = price /4.54 kg	
Rutabagas, yellow turnip, whole, raw	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
Cabbage, whole, raw	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
Cucumber, any variety	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
Celery	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
Lettuce, iceberg (head)	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
Mushroom, any variety	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	Enter price/kg
	227 g		price/227 x 1000 = price/1 kg	
Onions, cooking	Loose	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	price/lb x 2.2026 lb = price/kg	
	2 lb bag		price/ 2 x 2.2026 = price/kg	
	3 lb bag		price/ 3 x 2.2026 = price/kg	
	5 lb bag		price/ 5 x 2.2026 = price/kg	
	1 kg		Choose lowest price/kg from above for data entry	Enter lowest price/kg
Tomatoes, raw	**1 kg**	____/**kg** ____/**lb**	Choose lowest price/kg from above for data entry	Enter lowest price/kg

Bakery or Bread Aisle

Note: Unless indicated otherwise, for all items listed below, choose the l**owest price** for the food product **in the preferred purchase unit** (marked in **bold and larger print**). **For bread**, price the brand that is cheapest, **excluding** in-store bakery bread.

FOOD ITEM	PURCHASE UNIT	PRICE	COMMENTS AND CALCULATIONS	✔ DATA ENTERED TO SPREADSHEET
Bread, pita, whole wheat	**284 g**			
	400 g		Price/400 x 284 = price/284 g	
	450 g		Price/450 x 284 = price/284 g	
Bread, whole wheat, sliced, (100% whole wheat)	**675 g**			Enter price/675 g
	570 g		price / 570 x 675 = price/675 g	
	450 g		price / 450 x 675 = price/675 g	
(If *100%* whole wheat bread is unavailable, price *60%* whole wheat bread, sliced)	**675 g**			Enter price if 100% whole wheat bread is unavailable
	570 g		price / 570 x 675 = price/675 g	
	450 g		price / 450 x 675 = price/675 g	
Bread, white, sliced	**675 g**			
Rolls, hamburger	**350g (8 pack)**		Read the Nutrition Facts Table to find out how many grams 1 bun weighs. Multiply the weight of the bun by the number of buns in the package. This gives you the total number of grams in the entire package. Cost of package x 350 weight of entire package = price/350 g	Enter price/350 g

Frozen Food Department

Note: Unless indicated otherwise, for all items listed below, choose the **lowest price** for the food product **in the preferred purchase unit** (marked in **bold and larger print**).

FOOD ITEM	PURCHASE UNIT	PRICE	COMMENTS AND CALCULATIONS	✔ DATA ENTERED TO SPREADSHEET
Frozen fish fillets, (the cheapest of haddock, sole, pollock, or halibut)	**400 g**			Enter price/400 g
	680 g		price / 680 x 400 = price/400 g	
Cut beans, frozen, green or yellow	**1 kg**			
Frozen mixed vegetables, standard mix (carrots and peas)	**1 kg**			Enter price/kg
(If *standard* mix is unavailable, choose a mix with *carrots, peas, plus other vegetables*)	1 kg			Enter if no data for standard mix
(If standard mix *plus* other vegetables is unavailable, choose a mix with broccoli, cauliflower, etc.)	1 kg			Enter if no data for standard mix plus other vegetables
Peas, green, frozen	**1 kg**			
Frozen orange juice concentrate	**355 mL**			Enter price/355 mL
	341 ml		price / 341 x 355 = price/355 mL	
Strawberries, frozen, unsweetened	**600 g**			

Canned, Packaged and Dry Foods

Note: Unless indicated otherwise, for all items listed below, choose the **lowest price** for the food product **in the preferred purchase unit** (marked in **bold and larger print**).

FOOD ITEM	PURCHASE UNIT	PRICE	COMMENTS AND CALCULATIONS	✔ DATA ENTERED TO SPREADSHEET
Beans, baked, canned in tomato sauce	**398 ml**			
Canned flaked light tuna, water packed (If *water packed* tuna is unavailable in either size specified, price canned flaked light tuna *packed in vegetable broth*)	**170 g**			Enter price/170 g
	184 g		price / 184 x 170 = price/170 g	
	170 g			Enter if no data for water packed tuna
	184 g		price / 184 x 170 = price/170 g	
Salmon, pink, canned	**213 g**			
Peaches, canned halves or slices, water, juice, or light syrup packed	**398 ml**			Enter price/398 mL
	796 ml		price / 796 x 398 = price/398 ml	
Corn, canned, whole kernel	**341 mL**			
Tomatoes, canned whole, (not stewed)	**796 mL**			Enter price /796 ml
	540 ml		price / 540 x 796 = price/796 ml	
Apple juice, unsweetened, pure or from concentrate	**1.36 L**			Enter price /1.36 L
	1 L tetra pack		price/L x 1.36 = price/1.36 L	
	1.2 L		price/1.2 L X 1.36 = price/1.36 L	
Tomato juice cocktail, regular or vegetable cocktail, regular	**1.89 L**			
Cereal, bran flakes with raisins	**775 g**			
Cereal, toasted oat, Os	**525 g**			
Regular quick cooking oatmeal, *not* instant	**1 kg**			Enter price/kg
	1.35 kg		price / 1.35 x 1 = price/1 k g	
Flour, whole wheat	**2.5 kg**			
Flour, white, enriched, all purpose	**2.5 kg**			
Raisins, any variety	**750 g**			
	375 g		price / 375 x 750 = price/750 g	

FOOD ITEM	PURCHASE UNIT	PRICE	COMMENTS AND CALCULATIONS	✔ DATA ENTERED TO SPREADSHEET
Lentils, dry	**454 g**			Enter price/454 g
	450 g		price / 450 x 454 = price/454 g	
	907g		price / 907 x 454=price/454g	
Cookie, plain (arrowroot or social tea)	**350 g**			Enter price/350 g
	400 g		price / 400 x 350 = price/350 g	
	500 g		price / 500 x 350 = price/350 g	
	570 g		price / 570 x 350 = price/350 g	
Cracker, saltine, unsalted	**450 g**			Enter price/450 g
	454 g		price / 454 x 450 g = price/450 g	
Peanut butter, smooth type, sugar and salt added	**500 g**			
Vegetable oil, canola or canola blend (not olive oil)	**1.89 L**			Enter price /1.89 L
	946 mL		price / 0.946 x 1.89 = price/1.89 L	
	2 L		price / 2 x 1.89 = price/1.89 L	
	3 L		price / 3 x 1.89 = price/1.89 L	
Salad dressing, mayonnaise-type, for instance, Miracle Whip®. Do not price mayonnaise!	**475 mL**			Enter price/475 mL
	1 L		price / 1000 x 475 = price/475 mL	
(If mayonnaise-type salad dressing is unavailable, price 50% less fat mayonnaise-type salad dressing)	**475 mL**			Enter if no data for mayonnaise-type salad dressing
	1 L		price / 1000 x 475 = price/475 mL	
Salad dressing, Italian, regular	**950 mL**			Enter price/950 mL
	475 mL		price / 475 x 950 = price/950 mL	
Pasta, spaghetti, enriched	**900 g**			Enter price/900 g
	800 g		price / 800 x 900 = price/900 g	
Rice, white, long grain, parboiled or converted	**900 g**			Enter price/900 g
	750 g		price / 750 x 900 = price/900 g	
Peanuts, dry roasted	**700 g**			
	600 g		price / 600 x 700 = price/700 g	

Appendix B – Costing Instructions for Survey Day

Basic Instructions for Food Surveyors

Upon entering the store, identify yourself to personnel at the customer service desk or to the store manager to let them know that you are entering the store to conduct the Nutritious Food Basket costing. This is an essential courtesy step.

Read Labels Carefully

Check that you are pricing the item specified on the Food Basket Form and that the price sticker belongs to that product.

In-Store Costing Form

Use the in-store food costing form to record prices of food items. Specific instructions for different food categories are indicated on the form.

Things to Keep in Mind

- Record the **lowest price** for food items as specified on the in-store costing form.
- If a special price requires the use of coupons, mail-in rebates, or the purchase of a minimum grocery order, use the regular price of the item. However, for coupons that will automatically be given to the cashier (for example, those that can be peeled off the shelf of the product), use the reduced price because it is accessible to everyone.
- If an item is not available, indicate this with "N/A" (not available) in the price column. Make a note in the comments/calculations column that the item was not available.
- Use the comments and calculations column of the in-store food costing form to make notes about what was priced, if necessary, or as an extra space to record prices. This space can also be used later to make necessary calculations.
- Cross-check all numbers with the other food surveyors to ensure all food items have been recorded accurately.
- **Please print clearly**

Things You Need To Know When You Are In the Store

A trial in-store pricing of all or most products will ensure that personnel are familiar with food labels and where to find the preferred purchase unit and product specifications. Some of these product specifications are also listed below for review with personnel.

Familiarity with the in-store food costing form **(Appendix A)** prior to conducting the survey will ensure that in-store survey time is minimized. A supervised trial will also alert personnel to the care required to correctly record prices for food items as specified.

Vegetables and Fruit

- Some items will need to be weighed if prices are given on a per-item rather than a per-kilogram basis. Weighing up to three pieces of produce, for instance, three bunches of broccoli, to calculate an average weight per bunch of broccoli will give a more representative average weight than trying to choose one "average" bunch for weighing. Average weight and a per-kilogram price can be calculated after completion of the in-store survey.

- Some produce will also need to be priced in a variety of formats. For instance, the price of loose versus bags of apples, oranges, potatoes, onions, carrots, and tomatoes need to be recorded to later determine the lowest price per kilogram.

Meats, Poultry, Fish

- Do not price club or family packs even though they may be cheaper than the regular sized packages, because not everyone has the money upfront, or the storage space.

Assessing fat content of milk, yogurt and cheese

- Some of the items to be priced have specified levels of milk fat (M.F.) or butter fat (B.F.). Survey personnel need to be familiar with these terms and where they can be found on product labels.

Dealing with items not available in the preferred purchase unit or alternative sizes

- If the preferred purchase unit or other specified sizes are unavailable, surveyors can choose to price an alternative size of the food product. Choose the alternative size that is closest to the preferred purchase unit and convert to the preferred purchase unit price.
- If a specified item in the preferred purchase unit or appropriate alternative size is not available, cost the alternative food item.
- If the alternative food item is not available, indicate with "N/A" (not available) so it is clear the item was simply not forgotten.

Dealing with Items out of stock

- If an item is out of stock or not on the store shelf do not record the price. An item must be physically on the store shelf to be included. Choose an alternate package size. If no other package size is available, indicate N/A.

Dealing with specialty food items

- Low fat, low sodium, organic, seasoned (e.g. seasoned meat or fish) or nutrient enriched (e.g., "with omega 3") items can be priced if they are the lowest cost option available in the specified purchase size.

Converting prices and weights

- To determine the price for the specified size:
  - Divide the recorded price by the recorded size
  - Multiply the cost per gram by the size you want

Sale prices

- Survey personnel need to record the sale price of items if this is the lowest price for a product in a specified size.
- Sale prices should only be used if they represent the price the consumer would pay without buying a minimum order. The price does not require a mail-in rebate or using a coupon that the customer would need to bring to the store.
- Sale prices that require the use of point-of-purchase coupons, for instance, those that may be peeled off the shelf, can be used because these coupons are accessible to all customers purchasing the product.
- When items are sold in multiples, for instance, 6 cans of corn for $4.59, use the unit price of $0.77 ($4.59/6) only if the multiple price applies to single can purchases.

Pre-packaged 'bulk' food

- Some items can be found pre-packaged in the bulk food section of the grocery store (bulk items packaged and labeled in the grocery store). You will need to check the price of these items to see if they are more or less expensive than pre-packaged items. Do not cost items that are not prepackaged.

Appendix C – Ontario's Major Chains and Affiliates[6]

Below are the major grocery chains and their some of their affiliates. Note that store names may change over time.

Loblaw Companies Ltd.
Loblaws
Zehrs
Real Canadian Superstore
Cash & Carry
Real Canadian Wholesale Club
Fortinos
No Frills
Your Independent Grocer
Valu-Mart
Freshmart

Sobeys
Sobeys
Foodland
IGA
Price Chopper
Sobeys Express

Metro (A&P)*
Metro
Dominion
Loeb
A&P
Food Basics
Ultra Food & Drug
The Barn Markets
Drug Basic Pharmacy

The Kitchen Table

Canada Safeway

Wal-Mart

[6] Canadian Council of Grocery Distributors, Personal Communication, Ontario vice president.

* All Dominion, Ultra and The Barn stores will be converted to the name Metro before the end of 2008. Loeb stores will be converted to the name Metro during the first half of 2009, and A&P stores will be converted by the end of 2009.

Appendix D – Sample Letter to Grocery Store Manager

Print on Board of Health Letterhead

Date

Dear Manager:

Your local health unit is conducting a Nutritious Food Basket survey. We would like to invite your participation in this survey to enable us to determine the cost of a list of foods that reflect healthy eating recommendations. The results of this survey will be used to raise awareness about the cost of healthy eating in your community.

Food prices are being collected from xx grocery stores across the community.[7] Prices from all stores will be pooled to obtain an average price for any one food item.

The food pricing will be conducted by health unit staff/peer educators. With your permission, food basket pricing personnel will spend approximately 90 to 120 minutes in your store.

Your participation in this project is appreciated. Please contact person z at tel: _____ if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

[7] Note that in communities with fewer than three stores, food prices will be pooled with those from other communities. This should be made clear to store managers in small communities. The template for this letter should be adjusted accordingly.

Appendix E – Spreadsheet

Spreadsheet provided annually to health units by the Ministry of Health Promotion via email

Appendix F – Sample Worksheet – Household Size Adjustment Factors

The Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket Estimating the Average Weekly Cost of Healthy Eating

To estimate the weekly cost of a healthy diet per household, follow these steps:

Step 1 Write down the **gender & age** for each person in the household in Table 1 below.

Step 2 Fill in the **weekly food cost** for each person, using the corresponding figures in "Cost per Week ($)" in Table 2 below.

Step 3 Add the weekly food costs together to calculate the **sub total** in Table 1.

Step 4 Multiply the sub total by the **adjustment factor** for household size to calculate the **total** in Table 1:

Since it costs more (per person) to feed a small group and less to feed a large group, the total weekly cost is adjusted using these factors:

Household Size – Adjustment Factors

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

Table 1 Estimated Weekly Food Costs for a Household

GENDER	AGE	WEEKLY FOOD COST ($)
Sub Total		$
Adjustment Factor		
TOTAL		**$ (per week)**
Total x 4.33		**$ (per month)**

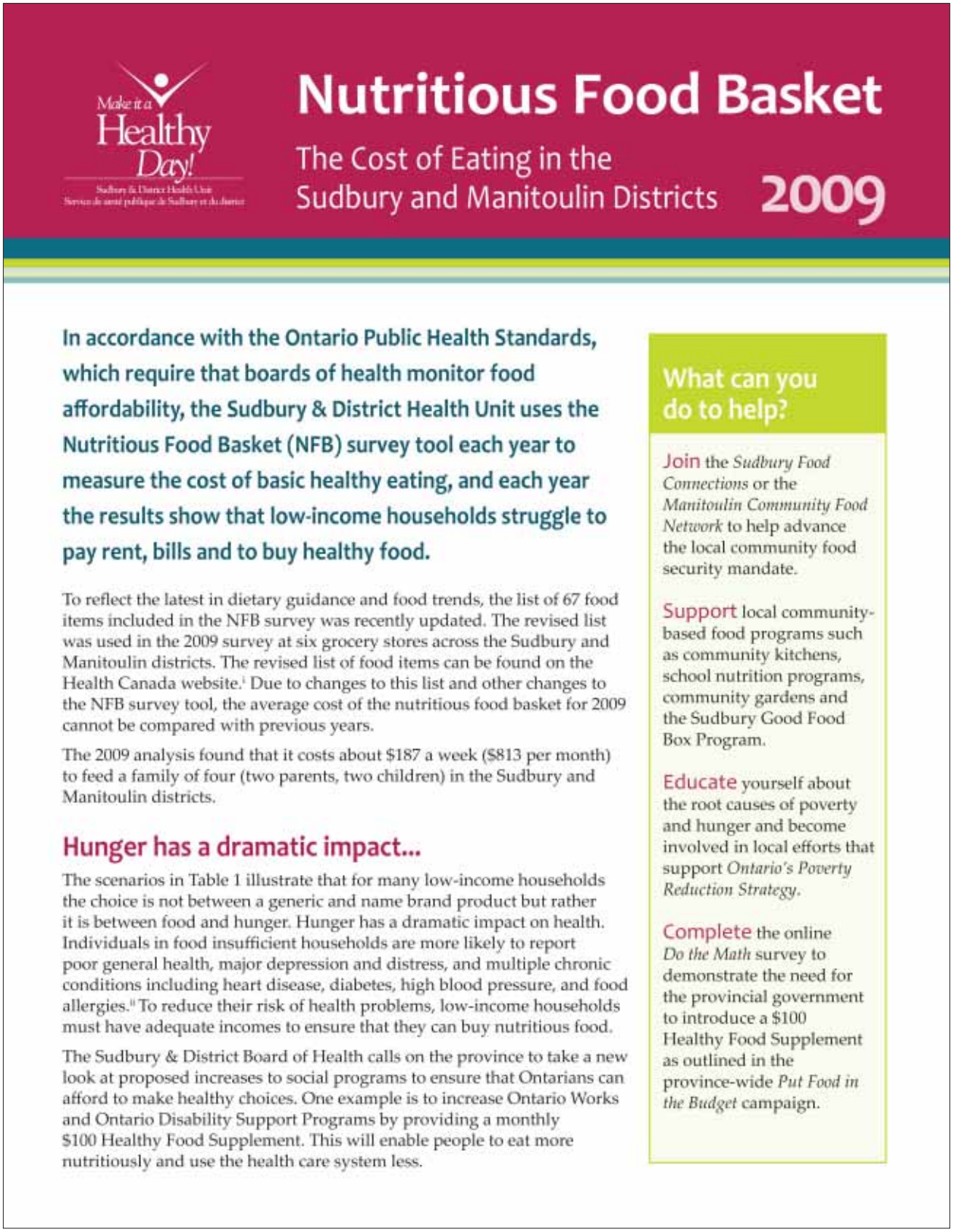
Example: Estimated Weekly Food Costs for a Household of 2 People

GENDER	AGE	WEEKLY FOOD COST ($)
Woman	27	31.24
Girl	7	26.86
Sub Total		$ 58.10
Adjustment Factor		**x 1.10**
TOTAL		**$ 63.91 (per week)**
Total x 4.33		**$ 276.73 (per month)**

Table 2 Nutritious Food Basket Weekly Costs (location) (year)

GENDER	AGE (YEARS)	COST PER WEEK ($)
Children: Boy	2-3	xx.xx
Girl	2-3	xx.xx
Boy	4-8	xx.xx
Girl	4-8	etc.
Males	9 -13	
	14-18	
	19-30	
	31-50	
	51-70	
	over 70	
Females	9 -13	
	14-18	
	19-30	
	31-50	
	51-70	
	over 70	
Pregnant woman	18 and younger	
	19-30	
	31-50	
Breastfeeding woman	18 and younger	
	19-30	
	31-50	
Reference family of four	Male 31-50	
	Female 31-50	
	Male 14-18	
	Female 4-8	

Appendix G – Sample Public Health Unit Food Costing Communications



Make it a Healthy Day!
Sudbury & District Health Unit
Services de santé publique de Sudbury et du district

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.[i] 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.[ii] 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/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 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/ophsprotocols.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:

i http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/surveill/basket-panier/index-eng.php.

ii 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.

« Ce document est disponible en francais »

Appendix H – The Income/Expenses Scenario Template

September 2008 - Nutritious Food Basket Scenarios

	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 (Full-time/Full-year)	Family of Four Median ONTARIO Income (after tax)	Single Parent Household with 2 Children, Ontario Works	One Person Household, Ontario Works	One Person Household, ODSP	One Person Household, OAS/GIS
Monthly Income							
Income from Employment		$ 1,517.00	$ 6,175.00				
Basic Allowance [a]	$ 437.00			$ 372.00	$ 211.00	$ 554.00	
Shelter Allowance [a]	$ 647.00			$ 595.00	$ 349.00	$ 445.00	
Old Age Security/Guaranteed Income Supplement (OAS/GIS) [b]							$ 1,144.00
Child/Family Benefits [c]	$ 536.00	$ 536.00		$ 536.00			
Ontario Child Benefit [d]	$ 100.00	$ 100.00		$ 100.00			
Federal GST Benefit [e]	$ 62.00	$ 62.00		$ 62.00	$ 20.00	$ 27.00	$ 30.00
Employment Insurance paid [f]		$ (26.00)	$ (104.00)				
Canada Pension Plan paid [g]		$ (61.00)	$ (283.00)				
Working Income Tax Benefit [h]		$ 42.00					
Total Income	**$ 1,782.00**	**$ 2,170.00**	**$ 5,788.00**	**$ 1,665.00**	**$ 580.00**	**$ 1,026.00**	**$ 1,174.00**
Selected Monthly Expenses							
Average Monthly Rent (may or may not include heat/hydro) [i]	(3 Bdr.)	(3 Bdr.)	(3 Bdr.)	(2 Bdr.)	(Bachelor)	(Bachelor)	(1 Bdr.)
Food [j]							
Total Expenses	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Monthly Funds Remaining (for other basic needs e.g. telephone, transportation, child care, household and personal care items, clothing,	**$ 1,782.00**	**$ 2,170.00**	**$ 5,788.00**	**$ 1,665.00**	**$ 580.00**	**$ 1,026.00**	**$ 1,174.00**
Percentage of income required for	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Percentage of income required to purchase healthy food	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note: All dollars rounded to nearest whole number.

Scenario References:

Scenario 1 - 2 adults (male and female ages 25-49), 2 children (girl age 7, boy age 13); on Ontario Works (OW)

Scenario 2 - 2 adults (male and female ages 25-49), 2 children (girl age 7, boy age 13); income is based on one minimum wage earner, 40hr/wk, $8.75/hr.

Scenario 3 - 2 adults (male and female ages 25-49), 2 children (girl age 7, boy age 13); income is based on the Ontario Median Income After tax:Couple Households with Children, 2005. Reference: 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 August 1, 2008).

NOTE: The After Tax income includes government transfers & income tax, but not Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan deductions.

Scenario 4 - 1 adult (female age 25-49), 2 children (girl age 7, boy age 13); on Ontario Works

Scenario 5 - 1 adult (male age 25-49); on Ontario Works

Scenario 6 - 1 adult (male age 25-49); on Ontario Disability Support Program

Scenario 7 - 1 adult (female age 75+); income based on Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement (OAS/GIS)

a - Basic and maximum shelter allowance. OW rates effective August 2008. Ontario Disability Support Payment (ODSP) rates effective July 2008.

b - Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement (OAS/GIS) rates July 2008.

c - Includes maximum Canada Tax benefit, National Child Benefit Supplement, Guideline Table effective July 2008 - June 2009. http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/cloti/menu-eng.html

d - Maximum monthly Ontario Child Benefit from July 2008-June 2009.

e - Based on net annual income. GST credit issued on a quarterly basis, but calculated on a monthly basis. Figures derived from GST Guideline Table effective July 2008-June 2009. http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/cloti/menu-eng.html

f - Reference: Employment Insurance Premium Rates http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bsnss/tpcs/pyrl/clcltng/ei/cnt-chrt-pf-eng.html

g - Canada Pension Plan Reference: http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/tx/bsnss/tpcs/pyrl/clcltng/cpp-rpc/cnt-chrt-pf-eng.html

h - Reference: Working Income Tax Benefit Online Calculator. Accessed August 2008. http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/wtb/menu-eng.html

i - Rental Market Reports, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, October 2007. Some communities may need to add utility costs.

j - Reference: Monitoring the Cost of a Nutritious Food Basket Protocol, Ontario Ministry of Health June 1998

Appendix I – Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the Nutritious Food Basket?

The Nutritious Food Basket is a survey tool for monitoring the cost of a nutritious diet for individuals and families over time. It includes 67 food items and is designed to reflect an example of an eating pattern that meets *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*, and eating behaviours reflective of the *Canadian Community Health Survey 2.2* results.

2. Why do we cost the Nutritious Food Basket?

The Nutritious Food Basket is a surveillance tool to help assess food affordability. The data can be used to monitor both affordability and accessibility of foods by relating the cost of the food basket to individual/family incomes.

3. How do I respond to questions from the media about how the foods are priced?

They want to know that the Nutritious Food Basket is not expensive. The lowest price for food items in specified sizes is collected to calculate the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket. At times, this also includes sale priced items. The Nutritious Food Basket as a whole does not include many convenience foods like canned soup, spaghetti sauce, frozen meals, or foods with little nutritional value. This has a large influence on keeping the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket down.

4. Does the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket represent a least-cost food basket?

No, the Nutritious Food Basket does not reflect the lowest possible cost of a Nutritious Food Basket. A least-cost basket that meets nutrition recommendations would likely be considered unpalatable and lacking the variety of foods conducive to long-term use. In addition, some strategies to lower food costs may not be options for lower income consumers who have limited incomes, and possibly transportation and food storage restrictions.

Costs include sale priced items and reductions for in-store coupons. However, items that require the redemption of coupons, the use of mail-in rebates, or minimum purchase orders for sale prices are not included in pricing, since these offers are not available to all consumers at the time that food is purchased.

The Nutritious Food Basket excludes expensive foods, like some higher priced convenience foods, take out and restaurant foods, and foods with little nutritional value. Because of the exclusion of these more expensive types of foods, the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket is generally lower than that which would be purchased by average Canadians.

5. Why are sale prices recorded, but not the cost of an item with a mail-in rebate, coupon or minimum purchase order? Wouldn't this further reduce the cost of the basket?

The cost of the Nutritious Food Basket should reflect the price that consumers would pay for a product on the day that pricing is conducted. Sale prices and point-of-purchase coupons, such as those that may be peeled off the shelf, are available to all shoppers in the store on a given day. Not all consumers would necessarily be aware of or have coupons to use to get a coupon-based price. Similarly, not all consumers would follow through to obtain a mail-in rebate. Lastly, requiring a minimum purchase order to obtain a sale price limits the accessibility of the sale price to those who can afford the minimum purchase order.

6. When we went to do the pricing, we found that some of the foods in other sizes were on sale but not those in the preferred purchase unit? Should we have priced the sale sizes?
Not unless the food item was not available in the preferred purchase unit. The pricing strategy outlines that food items are to be priced according to the set purchase unit outlined on the food costing form. Alternative sizes are priced only when the preferred purchase unit is not available. This ensures consistency in the pricing strategy across stores.

7. I don't understand why we can't make between-store comparisons. Don't consumers want this information?
The main reason for collecting food prices is to be able to provide the benchmark cost of healthy eating. Publishing the cost of food items at specific stores would make many store managers reluctant to participate.

8. Shouldn't you be able to compare the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket between communities because the same pricing strategy is used in each store and the Nutritious Food Basket costs are based on average food prices across all of those stores?
Food cost comparisons between communities/planning areas within the health unit jurisdiction are typically not recommended unless there is confidence that the samples are representative of each community and that comparing two communities would not violate confidentiality (e.g., a rural community with only one store).

Making comparisons between health units is not recommended because the prices used to generate the Nutritious Food Basket costs are a straight average – they do not reflect the relative market share (either in terms of volume or dollar sales) of the stores priced. The mix of stores in one community, in terms of market share, may be quite different from those in another. In addition, the approach to store selection may be quite different between health units, making between health unit comparisons inappropriate.

9. Why is the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket often less for women than men?
Women are generally smaller than men so they need less food to meet their energy and nutrient needs. Even though they may need less food, it is important that they eat nutrient dense foods. The cost of feeding pregnant and breastfeeding women will be highest among all women because of their needs to support a pregnancy or produce milk. Children and teens grow rapidly. Their energy and nutrient needs are high relative to their body sizes. The cost of the Nutritious Food Basket for children and teens may seem high but a higher quantity of food is needed to support their optimal growth and development.

10. How do the quantities of food in the Nutritious Food Basket compare to those recommended in Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide?
The contents of Nutritious Food Basket fulfill the food group-specific recommendations in *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* (e.g. at least half the grain products in the basket are whole-grain grain products and include two cups of milk each day). For the majority of the age-sex groups, the number of servings in the basket is either identical to or within one serving of what is recommended in the Food Guide.

11. What about using the Nutritious Food Basket as a basis for menu planning? Are menus available?
Menus based on the Nutritious Food Basket are **not** available, nor is the creation of menus encouraged. Although the creation of menus could validate that the food basket forms a palatable diet, menus would also lend support to the Nutritious Food Basket being used as a prescriptive list, which is not the intended purpose. The foods included in the Nutritious Food Basket serve as a basis for monitoring the average cost of a food basket that supports nutrition recommendations. It provides a benchmark cost of eating well.

12. Is the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket relevant to people from different cultures?
Since the Nutritious Food Basket includes basic food items from all food groups in *Eating Well With Canada's Food Guide*, it is relevant to people from most cultures; however, the basket does not reflect the specific eating patterns of any particular individual or culture. Differences in food preparation techniques, as well as spices and condiments used, account for a large degree of the differences in dishes eaten among many cultures.

The Nutritious Food Basket reflects a meat-based diet. A food basket constructed to reflect a more legume-based diet could be less expensive, depending on the foods chosen for the other food groups. Similarly, food basket costs may not be appropriate for use with cultures whose basic staples are starchy root vegetables and fresh fish and/or seafood that serve as the main sources of protein.

13. Is the Nutritious Food Basket applicable for people on diets for medical conditions?
Usually not, but that depends on the restrictions of the diet and or the medical condition. The foods in the basket, and their relative proportions, provide foods in amounts for 22 age and sex groups that are consistent with current nutrition recommendations for healthy Canadians. The Nutritious Food Basket may or may not be consistent with the requirements of a special diet.

14. Can we compare data collected using the old 1998 basket to data collected from the new 2008 basket?
Yes, you can link the old basket with the new basket by running a "parallel period" of two to three years, during which time, data of food items in both baskets are collected and averages are calculated. Then, you can study the numeric relationship between the two sets of averages and convert the new averages into an "estimate of old average." **This is NOT a requirement under the Nutritious Food Basket Protocol.**

In the absence of a "parallel period" approach, old food basket data cannot be compared to new food basket data.

15. Knowing that stores often have promotions that last one week, should all stores within the same chain be sampled during the same promotional week?
The protocol requires you to complete costing within a two-week period. In order to allow health units some flexibility with the timing of costing, it is not necessary to complete costing in stores in the same chain during the same week.

16. What is the rationale for using two surveyors per store?
The protocol states that two surveyors conduct the costing. This is an effort to reduce errors.

17. The 1.36 L size of apple juice is often only available in brands that come from countries other than Canada. Would 1.2 L cans of Canadian juice be preferable?
The Nutritious Food Basket does not give preference to local/Canadian food. Your health unit may choose to cost local food in addition to the Nutritious Food Basket requirements. This however, is not a Ministry requirement. There are some things to consider if you plan to cost local food on page 20 of the Guidance Document.

Please follow the link below to Health Canada's website for more questions and answers related to the Nutritious Food Basket: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/surveill/basket-panier/qa-qr-eng.php

Appendix J – Working Definitions

Food accessibility: Physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.[8]

Affordability: Sufficient, safe and nutritious food for all people at all times at a cost they can afford.

Chain: "An operator of four or more retail stores."[9]

Consumer Price Index (CPI): "A measure of the rate of price change for goods and services bought by Canadian consumers ... It is obtained by comparing, through time, the cost of a fixed basket of commodities purchased by Canadian consumers in a particular year ... the index reflects only pure price movements."[10]

Convenience store: "Compact, drive-to store offering a limited line of high convenience items. Many sell gasoline and some sort of fast food. Under 2,400 sq. ft. in size and keeps long hours."[9]

Dietary Reference Intakes: "A comprehensive set of nutrients reference values for healthy populations that can be used for assessing and planning diets. DRIs replace previously published Recommended Nutrient Intakes (RNIs). They are established by Canadian and American scientists through a review process overseen by the U.S. National Academies, which is an independent, non-governmental body."[11]

Discount store: Stores within major chains that do not offer the same level of staff service and variety of food products. It's generally expected that the prices are lower, but there isn't necessarily a discount on every item. (For example, No Frills, Food Basics).

Grocery store: "Any retail store selling a line of dry grocery, canned goods, or non-food items, plus some perishable items."[9]

Market share: The proportion of sales attributed to any one store, group or chain.

Nutritious Food Basket (NFB): A food costing tool that is a measure of the cost of healthy eating based on current nutrition recommendations; a list of foods which can be priced to estimate the average cost of feeding different age and sex groups.

Reference family of four: A man and woman, each aged 31-50 years; a boy, 14-18 years of age; and, a girl, 4-8 years old. Typically the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket is reported as a weekly figure that represents the reference family of four.

[8] Source: WHO, Glossary of Globalization, Trade, and Health Terms: Food Security. Accessed online April 2010 at: www.who.int/trade/glossary/story028/en/.

[9] Source: Who's Who 2007. Canadian Grocer Magazine's Annual Directory of Chains and Groups in Canada, p. 12.

[10] Source: Statistics Canada, Your Guide to the Consumer Price Index, Catalogue No. 62-557-XPB, 1996, PP1-3.

[11] Source: Health Canada 2004, Dietary Reference Intakes. Accessed online October 2007 at: www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/reference/index_e.html.