



Media Release

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GBPH releases 2024 report on food affordability

Grey Bruce Public Health's latest report on food affordability and food insecurity, released this week, calls attention to the struggles many Grey-Bruce households face to afford basic living expenses – such as adequate food and monthly rent – as incomes and social assistance rates fail to keep pace with rising costs.

The new report, [*"The Cost of Eating Well & The Urgent Issue of Food Insecurity,"*](#) is based on local food cost data collected by Public Health in 2024.

The report determined the cost of groceries for a family of four in Grey-Bruce in 2024 was \$289 a week or \$1,250 a month, representing a 1% increase from 2023. A single adult, meanwhile, must spend about \$434 a month on food to meet Canada's Food Guide recommendations, which is also a 1% increase from 2023.

Based on those costs, a family of four on Ontario Works would have to spend nearly half (43%) of their monthly income on food to meet Canada's Food Guide recommendations. After covering only rent and groceries, they would be left with only \$314 a month to cover all other expenses, including utilities, transportation, and medications.

Single individuals on Ontario Works are unable to meet core needs of housing and food as more than 100% of their income is required for housing alone (107%), with nothing left to cover the \$434 needed for food each month.

"The data collected for our annual Cost of Eating Well report clearly shows – as was the case in 2023 – that our social safety net is failing to meet basic, essential needs of housing and food," says Public Health Manager Jason Wepler.

"While the local grocery data indicates a slowing of food inflation compared to previous years, we know many households are continuing to feel the strain of a rising cost of living, including costs related to rent."

A healthier future for all.

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For the 2024 *Cost of Eating Well* report, Grey Bruce Public Health used the Ontario Nutritious Food Basket survey to determine food affordability.

Public Health dietitians collected data on the lowest costs of 61 food items in 12 grocery stores across Grey-Bruce. The items on the survey are based on Canada's Food Guide (vegetables, fruit, whole grain foods, and protein foods) and reflect eating and purchasing patterns of many Canadians. The survey assumes that people have the knowledge, equipment, and skills to prepare food mostly from scratch. Prepared convenience foods or non-food items, such as toiletries, were not included.

The results of the survey are shared in the report through a variety of income scenarios to demonstrate the difficult choices households with different income sources may face.

The report also highlights the serious and lasting impacts of food insecurity and includes steps all levels of government and community partners can take to address the issue.

"Food insecurity is a problem of inadequate income, not solved by food," Wepler says. "Improving the financial circumstances of food insecure households requires action from all levels of government and community leadership. More than half of those experiencing food insecurity are employed. We need to see wages and benefits that reflect the true cost of living along with government interventions that ensure that everyone can meet their basic needs."

Almost one in five of Grey-Bruce households struggle to purchase the food they need and are food insecure. Evidence shows the issue may be worsening. In 2023, 24.5% of Ontario households lived with food insecurity, which is significantly higher than the 16.1% of Ontario households that experienced food insecurity in 2021.

Household food insecurity in Grey-Bruce is not caused by rising food prices, but without a corresponding increase in household income, this cost will force families to make impossible choices between shelter, food, medications, transportation, and other needs.

Food insecurity is an important social determinant of health that leads to heightened risks for infectious diseases, injuries, poorer mental health, and chronic diseases. These health impacts result in early mortality and inflated healthcare costs.

For More Information:

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