

Health Unit Media Release

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****A media kit is available containing: press release, directory of emergency food programs, newspaper article, and Nutritious Food Basket 2006 summary report. Please contact Dianne Oickle.****

Cost of food has increased almost 19% over the past 9 years in the Tri-county

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit has been working to educate the public about the cost of healthy eating and to identify services that are available to help people access healthy foods.

For the ninth consecutive year, the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit has calculated the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket. **The weekly food cost for a family of four in 2006 indicates a significant increase from 2005.** According to the most recent Nutritious Food Basket survey, **the cost of feeding the average family of four is \$547.66 per month, compared to \$460.67 per month in 1998.** This is a substantial hike of \$13.77 per month to feed a family of four since just last year. The Nutritious Food Basket is a project completed yearly by the Health Unit under the direction of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Each year, the average cost of foods from ten grocery stores throughout Leeds, Grenville and Lanark is calculated. The Nutritious Food Basket contains 66 food items that support nutritional health and reflect the shopping behaviours of Canadians.

“Poverty directly increases the risk of chronic disease, including heart disease, cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, and obesity” says Dianne Oickle, a Registered Dietitian at the Health Unit. “As the cost of food is going up, so are other costs of living such as hydro and gas. But people’s income is staying the same or going down.” Oickle says that this is putting families across all income levels at risk of not having enough food to eat.

The Health Unit has been working with community partners through networking meetings to address food security concerns in the tri-county. **The Health Unit also has a number of resources for community members and service providers that can help people access healthy foods.**

For more information, please call the HealthACTION Line at 1-800-660-5853 (or 613-345-5685) and ask to speak with a Registered Dietitian.