

Health Unit Media Release

For Immediate Release: Nov 29, 2007



More children in Leeds, Grenville & Lanark County will go hungry

Every child deserves the best start for the future. In Ontario, 38% of people relying on food banks are children. In Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Counties, almost one in eight children live in poverty (over 4,200). Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Counties also have 5 communities with higher rates of poverty compared to the province. The 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 tenth consecutive year, the Health Unit has calculated the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket, which is a project completed 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 the tri-county is calculated. According to the 2007 Nutritious Food Basket survey, **the cost of feeding the average family of four is \$565.71 per month**; this is a substantial hike - a total of \$105.04 since the survey was first completed ten years ago. This may not sound like a lot, but **it is an increase of \$1260.48 per year in food spending compared to ten years ago!**

“We need to address the issue of poverty so hunger will no longer exist in our community” says Carole Chang, a Registered Dietitian at the Health Unit. “The cost of food keeps rising while people’s income is staying the same or even decreasing.” Chang says that more and more people, especially children, are at risk of not having enough food to eat.

Fighting hunger is a complex issue that requires continuous effort and commitment from the government and everyone in our community. You can start today by giving generously this holiday season. Food bank donations are accepted in many locations throughout the tri-county. It is important to donate healthy and nutritious food for those who are most at risk for malnutrition.

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 as well as information on the types of food that are acceptable for donation.**

For more information, please call the Health Action Line at 1-800-660-5853 (or 613-345-5685) and ask to speak with a Registered Dietitian or visit our website at www.healthunit.org/nutrition.

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A media kit is available containing: press release, directory of emergency food programs, newspaper article, and Nutritious Food Basket 2007 summary report. Please contact Carole Chang.