

Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit Media Release

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Hunger in Leeds, Grenville & Lanark, 2015

The findings released by the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit's 2015 Nutritious Food Basket Survey showed the cost of feeding a family of four (two parents with two children) is \$845 per month. This is a 20% increase from 2010.

For many families in LGL, this increase may mean having to choose between paying bills and buying food. Since there are consequences to not paying other bills, food is often what is sacrificed. When individuals and families are unable to access enough healthy food to eat in a way that makes them feel good about themselves, it is called "food insecurity" or "hunger".

The root cause of hunger is a lack of money or income to meet basic needs. It affects how much and what kind of food a person eats and may stop someone from getting the all the vitamins, minerals and food energy they need to be healthy today and in the future.

Research shows us that income has an important effect on health. How much money we have to spend influences our health because we need that money for quality food and safe shelter. When we don't have enough money for these basic needs, we are at a higher risk for many health conditions, like diabetes, cancer, mental illnesses, and respiratory or heart diseases. Our income affects our living conditions, overall quality of life and general well-being.

If everyone in Leeds Grenville and Lanark counties has a chance for fair wages, safe working conditions, and affordable housing, daycare and public transportation, everyone will be better able to afford and access safe and nutritious food, and get the nutrients they need to be healthy. Improving these living conditions for everyone is an action known as **working upstream** – changing the causes of poor health *before* they affect our lives and the health of our communities.

What can you do to help?

- Visit: <http://www.healthunit.org/healthequity/>
 - To learn more about the cost of healthy eating: see the infographic: http://www.healthunit.org/nutrition/foodsecurity/Nutritious_Food_Basket.pdf
 - Learn more about the root causes of hunger and talk to your neighbours, coworkers, elected officials and community groups: Watch the "Let's Start Conversation About Health" Video
- Learn about and become involved in community programs that support healthy eating for all, like the Good Food Box, Student Nutrition Programs and community gardens.
- When you are asked to donate to food banks and hot meal programs donate the healthiest food possible: http://www.healthunit.org/nutrition/resources/Healthy_Food_Donation_List.pdf