The Cost of Eating in BC

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Dietitians of Canada (DC) is the professional association representing more than 5400 dietitians in Canada including almost 800 in BC. Dietitians of Canada speaks out on food and nutrition matters important to the health and well-being of Canadians. BC members of DC have collaborated to bring data and information forward to inform decision makers about the struggles experienced by families on low incomes.

The Community Nutritionists Council (CNC) of BC is made up of registered dietitians who work for Regional Health Authorities. The CNC mission is: “To enable all British Columbians to achieve and maintain optimal nutritional well-being through access to safe, appropriate and quality food, nutrition information and nutrition services.”

This report was prepared by registered dietitians: Margaret Broughton, Kristi Estergaard, Grace Foo, Louise Lefebrve, Helen Lutz, Janice Macdonald, Lisa McKellar, Andrea Ottem, Shefali Raja, Flo Sheppard, Christy Thomson and Ingrid Verduyn.

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Dietitians of Canada, BC Region
Box 34175, Station D
Vancouver, BC V6J 4N1
Phone: 604 736 3732
Fax: 604 736 3736
Email: jmacdonald@dietitians.ca
Web site: www.dietitians.ca

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BC Association of Social Workers
BC Coalition of People with Disabilities
BC Food Systems Network
BC Healthy Living Alliance
Canadian Association of Food Banks, BC Branch
Canadian Cancer Society, BC & Yukon
Canadian Diabetes Association—Pacific Area
Directorate of Agencies for School Health/Breakfast for Learning Partnership
Farm Folk City Folk
Federation of Child & Family Services of BC
First Call, BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition
Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon
Health Officers’ Council of BC
Public Health Association of BC
Public Health Nursing Leaders Council of BC
Raise the Rates Campaign
The Social Planning and Research Council of BC

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Executive Summary

"It is the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food." The Cost of Eating in BC demonstrates that some groups within our population are denied this right due to limited financial resources. Individuals and families receiving income assistance and those working in low paying jobs are at high risk for food insecurity.

The provincial government reported a $3.1 billion surplus in 2005, yet BC has the highest low income family rate and the highest child poverty rate in Canada, according to the most recent data from Statistics Canada.

Those on income assistance and most minimum wage earners in families with no other sources of income live below the poverty line. They cannot afford safe shelter and enough nutritious food for their families. A family of four on income assistance receives about $1600/month. They would need to spend almost 60% of their income on shelter and about 40% on food, leaving nothing for clothing and other necessities such as transportation, child care, household supplies and medical and dental care. This is compared to a family of four with one earner and an average income spending about 30% and 15% of their disposable income on shelter and food respectively. Many receiving welfare benefits have no choice but to access charitable food programs which were never intended to replace an inadequate income. In 2005 more than 75,000 British Columbians used food banks; a third of these were children and the majority (52%) were on income assistance.

Low income Canadians spend less on food, eat fewer servings of vegetables, fruit and milk than wealthier Canadians. They are at higher risk for many health problems and die younger.

Numerous initiatives across BC focus on healthy living and preventing and treating chronic disease by supporting more British Columbians to get active and eat a healthy diet, including more vegetables and fruit. The impact of poverty on the ability of some British Columbians to eat a healthy diet and its impact in turn on health and disease require the immediate attention of all levels of government. Unless poverty, the root cause of household food insecurity, is addressed the provincial government will be severely challenged to meet its 2010 health targets.

To this end, it is recommended that:

1. Governments, at all levels, establish poverty reduction as an important policy goal. The BC Ministries must work together to ensure that current and planned policies do not create more poverty in BC and hence negatively impact on the food security, health and well-being of British Columbians.
2. Income assistance rates be increased to bring families on assistance out of poverty. The Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance must establish a clear, fair and transparent process for determining income assistance that is based on the actual cost of shelter and support. The food allowance must be based on the actual cost of a nutritious food basket.
3. The minimum wage be increased to a level such that British Columbians working for minimum wage do not live in poverty.
4. Funding and support for adequate social housing be immediately put in place to help relieve the burden of living on a low income.
5. Governments, at all levels, adequately fund sustainable initiatives that support food security for low income families.

Health Canada’s tool used to conduct the food costing is based on a basket of foods frequently purchased by Canadians in 1996 and recommendations for healthy eating. The costing tool requires significant updating, given that Canadians eating habits have changed significantly in the last decade and in 2007 a revised Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating is being released to reflect new nutrition recommendations. Nova Scotia has conducted food costing for several years applying a rigorous approach that allows them to report their data by region and size of population. They apply a participatory approach to costing which engages those impacted by food insecurity.

To this end, it is also recommended that:

6. Health Canada update the food costing tool based on what Canadians are eating and the revised Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating.
7. The Provincial Health Services Authority support the annual costing of food as one indicator of individual and household food security, by supporting both the application of a more rigorous methodology to ensure resulting data can be generalized by health region, and a participatory approach to engage the community.
The Cost of Eating in BC—

Little Money Left for Food

Did you know?
❖ BC has the highest child poverty rate in Canada
❖ Welfare rates have dropped to their lowest level since the 1980s
❖ 52% of BC food bank users are on welfare
❖ Minimum wage is inadequate to provide a single person working full time a yearly income above the poverty line in most of BC
❖ People with low incomes have more health problems and die younger
❖ BC had a 3.1 billion dollar surplus in 2005
❖ Raising welfare rates by 50% would cost about 25% of BC’s surplus.

How do you know some families don’t have enough money for food?
Dietitians working in public health price out a basket of food at a number of grocery stores throughout BC using Health Canada’s food costing tool. The food basket includes 66 basic foods that require food preparation skills. The basket does not contain any non-food items such as personal care items or household supplies.

For the family on welfare, 99% of their disposable income is required to rent shelter and purchase the food basket. Families sacrifice quantity and quality of food to meet other costs of daily living. See table this page.

What does it cost to feed a family?
It costs about $653 a month to feed a family of four (two parents, two children).

Does food cost too much in BC?
The cost of food is not the issue. For those families with low incomes, especially those on welfare, there is not enough money to buy healthy food.
❖ A family of four with one average income would need to spend about 15% of their income to buy the food basket
❖ The same family of four on a low income would need to spend 29% of their income to buy the same food basket
❖ The same family on welfare would need to spend 41% of their income on the food basket.

How do poor families cope?
❖ Many families on welfare must rely on a food bank to help feed their family
❖ Low income families eat less fruit, vegetables, and milk products because they can’t afford them
❖ Most families on welfare must live in unsafe neighbourhoods with poor housing and unhealthy conditions for children.

What is the cost of food?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Costs</th>
<th>Family of 4 on welfare</th>
<th>Single Parent 2 children on welfare</th>
<th>Family of 4 low earned income</th>
<th>Family of 4 average income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disposable income</td>
<td>$1601</td>
<td>$1491</td>
<td>$2243</td>
<td>$4290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of shelter</td>
<td>$934</td>
<td>$934</td>
<td>$934</td>
<td>$1212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% income needed for shelter</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of food</td>
<td>$653</td>
<td>$477</td>
<td>$653</td>
<td>$653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% income needed for food</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% income ($) left for all other costs</td>
<td>1% ($14)</td>
<td>5% ($80)</td>
<td>29% ($656)</td>
<td>57% ($2425)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What are dietitians in BC doing about poverty and hunger?
❖ Since 2000, The Cost of Eating in BC report has been published annually to show that many families do not have enough money to buy healthy food
❖ Recommendations in this report are brought to the attention of the government annually with a request for immediate action.

Pull out Little Money Left… and Call To Action, copy and distribute widely
— Annual Report 2006 —
Having enough safe and healthy food is important for the health and future success of our children, our families and our seniors. Here are some ways you can help make this happen:

**Learn more about poverty issues**
- Read books such as “Policies of Exclusion, Poverty and Health, Stories from the Front”, available from www.wise-bc.org
- Visit the web sites of the Endorsing Agencies of *The Cost of Eating in BC 2006*.

**Small actions do make a difference**
- Visit RAISE THE RATES www.raisetherates.org and add your voice to the campaign
- Share this page and "Little Money Left for Food" with colleagues, friends or neighbours and brainstorm local action
- Join a community food coalition and learn more about food initiatives where you live
- Support co-operative and low cost housing projects
- Get political—speak out in the community and through the media about why we should all care about eliminating poverty
- Write a letter to your local Member of the Legislative Assembly and/or the provincial Minister responsible for the policies and programs that make poverty worse. Ask for:
  - fair welfare rates
  - higher minimum wage
  - affordable housing.

Those who are poor and cannot afford to buy healthy food are the best advocates for change. See Appendix C of *The Cost of Eating in BC 2005* report for some tips on writing a letter to government officials.

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"It is the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food."

— Source: FAO-United Nations, August 2002, Declaration of the World Food Summit

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**Tough Choices:**

**What would you do?**

There are 9 days until your cheque comes and you have $15 to buy food for you and your 2 boys. You know it is important to eat lots of fruit and vegetables. Fifteen dollars will buy you a bag of apples, a bag of oranges and some grapes, or a box of macaroni, 2 pounds of regular ground beef, a package of wiener and buns, 2 cans of tomato soup and 2 loaves of bread. What do you choose?

Your sister dies and you want to go to the funeral. The bus ticket is $22 that you don’t have—do you buy the bus ticket knowing you, and possibly your children, will go hungry this month?

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Published by:

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The Cost of Eating in BC report has been published annually since 2000 by Dietitians of Canada, BC Region and the Community Nutritionists Council of BC. The full report and those from past years are available online in the Resource Centre at www.dietitians.ca

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Pull out *Little Money Left… and Call To Action*, copy and distribute widely

— Annual Report 2006 —
Researchers and community members need strong evidence to monitor and advocate for food security. Government policy makers need relevant data for decision-making. For the purpose of gathering evidence that can be used to build household food security, Dietitians of Canada, BC Region and the Community Nutritionists’ Council of BC have been reporting on the average cost of a basic basket of foods in BC annually since 2000. “It is the right of everyone to have access to safe and nutritious food.”

The Cost of Eating in BC demonstrates that some groups within our population are denied this right due to limited financial resources. Individuals and families receiving income assistance and those working in low paying jobs are at a high risk for food insecurity.

BC reports record surplus and highest childhood poverty rate

The provincial government had a $3.1 billion surplus in 2005, yet poverty rates for single mothers and children were unacceptably high. In 2004, 55% of children living in female lone-parent families lived in poverty, and BC reported the highest child poverty rate (based on after tax income) in Canada at 18% compared to a national average of 13%. BC also had the highest low income rate among families at 10% compared to 8% nationally. Raising welfare rates by 50% would cost about $500 million dollars (based on current caseload), less than 25% of BC’s surplus according to the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Numerous sources, including Premier Campbell’s own BC Progress Board, cite BC’s dismal performance when it comes to poverty rates. Inadequate income assistance benefits and the insufficiency of minimum wage contribute to this situation. "…many single people can’t afford a phone so they can be reached by employers; can’t get appropriate [attire]; can’t afford transportation…; can’t eat properly, heat their dwellings…if they can afford dwellings. How can we expect them to look for work and be acceptable to employers on $510 per month?"

Welfare rates dismal

In 2005, welfare incomes for most recipients in BC were at their lowest level since the mid 1980’s. When inflation is taken into account, the income of a lone parent with one child and a single employable person has declined by 18% and 24% respectively since 1994, the peak year of welfare income in BC. Single, employable adults on welfare receive what amounts to about $6/day, or the cost of a special coffee and muffin.

Food banks were never intended to be a solution to poverty and yet more than 75,000 British Columbians in 2005 used food banks; a third of these were children and the majority (52%) were on income assistance. Those living on income assistance are three times more likely to report food insecurity.

Minimum wage inadequate

Minimum wage has remained at $8/hour for the last five years, and is inadequate to provide a single earner working full time a yearly income above the poverty line. Contrary to popular belief, many minimum wage earners are women as opposed to teenagers earning pocket money. The "working poor", as defined by Statistics Canada, live in families in which the main income earner has significant hours of paid work (at least 910 hours, the equivalent of full time for 6
months of the year), yet is unable to rise above the low-income threshold for their family. These families account for almost 30% of poor families and 40% of poor children.18

Income crucial to health

Income is an important indicator of health. Research shows that a higher income and social status is associated with better health and may in fact be the most important determinant of health.19 Low income Canadians are more likely to die young and have more illness than Canadians with higher incomes.20 They are less physically active, spend less on food, and consume fewer servings of fruit, vegetables and milk products.21, 22 Almost 60% of adults in the lowest income households have fewer than the recommended five daily servings of vegetables and fruit compared to 41% in the highest income households.23 Children living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are twice as likely to be obese as their peers living in wealthier neighbourhoods.24 Single mothers living on a low income put their own nutritional health at risk in order to ensure there is enough food for their children.25

Education and skill building not enough

A popular misconception is that poor families don’t have the knowledge and skills to make and prepare healthy food. In fact, single mothers living on a low income are “…adequately or well skilled to make the most of limited food resources.”26 Poor people run out of food because the grocery bill is flexible unlike other fixed payments such as rent and utilities.27 Any additional costs, such as increases in rent, energy bills, or unexpected set backs, like health problems, can tip the poor family into homelessness and hunger.28 The fragile economic situation is the problem, not the lack of knowledge and skill or the cost of the food.

Government can make a difference

Food, Health and Well-Being in British Columbia, the Provincial Health Officer’s Annual Report 2005, uses data and information from the 2005 The Cost of Eating in BC report. He supports government action to address food insecurity and recommends that they “ensure that income assistance rates are based on the actual cost of living” and that “all levels of government should commit to a healthy eating and food security strategy”.29 The provincial government has committed to ambitious health targets to be achieved by 2010 and supports an ActNow BC initiative that aims to increase vegetable and fruit consumption and physical activity levels and decrease overweight and obesity among British Columbians.30 Low income British Columbians are at a clear disadvantage. Although the provincial government has committed funds to supporting food security initiatives across BC, poverty, the root cause of individual and household food insecurity* must be addressed or it will be impossible for low income British Columbians to reach these targets.

“For me and my child I’m allowed $520 [for rent]. I can’t find anything for that. The ministry assumes the mother will pay the rest of the rent with the BC Family Bonus, but that leaves zero money for food.”

—Vancouver Sun August 8, 2006

“Single moms seek space for family shelter”

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In June 2006, community nutritionists across BC took responsibility for pricing out a basic basket of foods based on Health Canada’s *National Nutritious Food Basket 1998.* This is the only standardized food costing tool available in Canada (see Appendix A). Using convenience sampling, a total of 106 grocery stores from communities in all health regions were included. Grocery stores, including small and large chains and independents, were contacted in advance for permission to enter their stores to conduct the costing. The foods included in the food basket were selected from among those frequently purchased by Canadians in 1996 and based on nutrient value. The food basket is neither an ideal diet nor the least expensive diet. The food costs do not include take-out or restaurant eating. The economies of scale factor for a family size smaller or larger than four was applied to determine total food costs (see Appendix A). Using the results of the food costing to determine the affordability of food is considered an appropriate use of this costing tool.

“The reason we are doing [food costing] is to reduce premature mortality and morbidity from preventable chronic diseases. That’s the big global goal.”

Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre

The proportion of disposable income (take home earnings plus child and family benefits) spent on food for the low income family, including the family on assistance, was compared to the Canadian family of the same size with an average income. The cost of rent, utilities, phone and other costs of daily living (transportation, clothing, child care, personal hygiene items, laundry and cleaning supplies, school supplies and fees, medical, dental and optical costs) were determined using 2005 costing data from the Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC). See Tables 4 and 5—Appendix C for details. Alternative data from Statistics Canada for rent and utility costs was included for comparison purposes. See Table 6—Appendix C for details. The Provincial Health Services Authority was engaged this year to review the data collection process for accuracy and generalization of the data by health region. Although the data collection tools were simplified in order to help minimize errors, more rigorous data collection processes must be established to allow reporting of the food costing data by region and local area. Nova Scotia conducts annual food costing and has worked with researchers and statisticians to develop a rigorous approach allowing generalization of the data by region and size of community e.g. rural versus urban. In addition, they apply a participatory approach by engaging and training those directly or indirectly impacted by food insecurity to conduct the costing. This participatory approach to costing is one that community nutritionists across BC have requested be applied in BC.
The monthly cost to feed a variety of age and gender groups in BC is included in Table 1. The average monthly cost to feed the reference family of four (two parents, two children) is $653, approximately the same as the cost in 2005.

A family of four on income assistance receives a maximum shelter payment of $590/month and a support payment of $401 for a total of $991/month. The cost of shelter (includes utilities and telephone) at the 25th percentile is about $930/month (for a 3 bedroom) whether applying the 2005 SPARC BC (see Table 4) or the Statistics Canada (see Table 6) shelter calculations. This translates to many families on assistance dipping into their support allowance to pay for rent and utilities, leaving little for food, clothing, transportation, child care, household supplies and medical and dental care (see Tables 2 and 3). The total income for a family on assistance (including Child/Family Benefits, sales tax credits, school start-up and Christmas supplements) is only about $1,600 a month or less than $20,000 a year for a family of four, well below the poverty line.35

The single parent family on income assistance also faces a bleak situation. This family spends 63% of their disposable income on shelter, and could not possibly afford a healthy diet and other necessities including clothing, transportation (to look for work and hunt for bargains), child care (to support a job search), school supplies, and personal care items (e.g. toothpaste, hand soap, shampoo).

Single people living alone on temporary income assistance are in the most desperate situation with those on disability assistance fairing somewhat better. Depending on which shelter cost was applied (refer to Table 3), they would either not have sufficient funds to even rent a bachelor apartment (at the 25th percentile for rent) or little left to purchase food after shelter costs and certainly nothing left after rent and food for other essentials. Single people on temporary assistance would most likely need to participate in local food programs and other hand-outs in their community to survive.

While the family with one average income spends about 15% of their disposable income on food, those on BC temporary income assistance would need to spend 30% to 41% of their income on food (see Table 1).
Furthermore, to cover the high cost of rent and utilities, those on income assistance would need to spend 58% to 118% of their income on rent alone based on approximate rents in Greater Vancouver at the 25th percentile of the rental market in 2004 (see Tables 2 and 3). The family with one average income spends about 28% of that on shelter. Given that a family cannot spend all or almost all of their limited funds on shelter, they are faced with living in poor-quality housing in unsafe neighbourhoods, exposing children to unhealthy conditions. Based on this data it is clear why many families on assistance must line up at the food bank and are more likely to report food insecurity.

All family scenarios on income assistance would be denied the basic human right of access to safe and nutritious food. Income assistance rates are well below the poverty line and place British Columbians in desperate situations.

Numerous initiatives across BC focus on preventing and treating chronic disease and obesity by supporting more British Columbians to become physically active and eat a healthy diet, including more vegetables and fruit. Low income families require special attention as, due to the challenges of living in poverty, they are more likely to eat an unbalanced diet, be physically inactive and their children are more likely to be overweight or obese. When programs are planned, accessibility to those with limited incomes must be a key consideration.

The food basket used to conduct the costing across BC reflects both foods frequently purchased by Canadians in 1996, and recommendations for healthy eating. The costing tool requires significant updating, given that Canadians eating habits have changed significantly in the last decade and in 2007 a revised Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating is being released to reflect new nutrition recommendations. Nova Scotia has conducted food costing for several years applying a rigorous approach that allows them to report their data by region and size of population. As well they have studied and now apply a participatory approach to costing which engages those impacted by food insecurity.

### TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly Costs</th>
<th>Family of 4, on welfare</th>
<th>Single parent, 2 children on welfare</th>
<th>Single older female on welfare</th>
<th>Young pregnant woman on welfare</th>
<th>Single male on disability assistance</th>
<th>Family of 4, low earned income</th>
<th>Family of 4, average income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disposable income</td>
<td>$1601</td>
<td>$1491</td>
<td>$538</td>
<td>$583</td>
<td>$889</td>
<td>$2243</td>
<td>$4290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate cost of shelter†</td>
<td>$934</td>
<td>$934</td>
<td>$634</td>
<td>$634</td>
<td>$634</td>
<td>$634</td>
<td>$634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of income required for shelter</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>118%</td>
<td>109%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate cost of food</td>
<td>$653</td>
<td>$477</td>
<td>$162</td>
<td>$204</td>
<td>$228</td>
<td>$653</td>
<td>$653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of income required for food</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s left for all other costs of daily living after shelter and food?</td>
<td>$14</td>
<td>$80</td>
<td>-$258</td>
<td>-$255</td>
<td>$27</td>
<td>$656</td>
<td>$2425</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*See Table 3 Appendix B for details
† Shelter includes rent, utilities and phone and is based on the costs provided in Table 4. Alternate data from Statistics Canada for rent and utility costs is included for comparison purposes in Table 3.
Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Governments, at all levels, establish poverty reduction as an important policy goal. The BC Ministries must work together to ensure that current and planned policies do not create more poverty in BC and hence negatively impact on the food security, health and well-being of British Columbians.

2. Income assistance rates be increased to bring families on assistance out of poverty. The Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance must establish a clear, fair and transparent process for determining income assistance that is based on the actual cost of shelter and support. The food allowance must be based on the actual cost of a nutritious food basket.

3. The minimum wage be increased to a level such that British Columbians working for minimum wage are not required to live in poverty.

4. Funding and support for adequate social housing be immediately put in place to help relieve the burden of living on a low income.

5. Governments, at all levels, adequately fund sustainable initiatives that support food security for low income families.

6. Health Canada update the food costing tool based on what Canadians are eating and the revised Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating.

7. The Provincial Health Services Authority support the annual costing of food as one indicator of individual and household food security, by supporting both the application of a more rigorous methodology to ensure resulting data can be generalized by health region, and a participatory approach to engage the community.

“The most difficult situation I’ve had to face is the realization that I cannot afford to feed my family the foods that I know they need. I’ve gone through stores with $20 knowing that this is for two weeks. I would never have thought that I would be in such a predicament.”

The objective of a food basket is to identify foods that reflect average food purchase patterns, meet nutrient requirements, and are palatable and economical. Nutrient needs are met by adjusting food group quantities. Palatability and consumer acceptability are addressed by using foods that are commonly purchased. Costs are kept low by including sale priced items and by excluding expensive 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 food basket is generally lower than that which would be purchased by average Canadians. The foods included in the food basket are as follows:

❖ 2% milk, fruit-flavoured yogurt, medium cheddar cheese, processed cheddar cheese slices, partly skim mozzarella cheese, vanilla ice cream;
❖ round steak, stewing beef, regular ground beef, pork loin chops, chicken legs (no back), sliced cooked ham, frozen fish fillets (cod, haddock, sole, Boston blue fish or Alaskan pollock depending on availability), canned pink salmon, canned flaked light water packed tuna, large eggs, canned baked beans in tomato sauce, dried navy beans, white pea beans, peanut butter;
❖ white bread, whole wheat bread, hot dog/hamburger buns, all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, dry macaroni or spaghetti, long grain white rice, macaroni and cheese dinner, regular cooking oatmeal, salted soda crackers, social tea cookies, Corn Flakes® and Shreddies® cereals;
❖ oranges, canned unsweetened apple juice, frozen orange juice concentrate, tomatoes, canned whole tomatoes, tomato sauce, potatoes, frozen French fried potatoes, pears, green grapes, canned fruit cocktail, bananas, Macintosh apples, Sultana raisins, iceberg (head) lettuce, romaine lettuce, frozen mixed vegetables, canned corn, canned peas, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, celery, field cucumber, onions, green pepper, rutabagas;
❖ a margarine in which the grams of mono and polyunsaturated fats add up to 6 g or more in a 10 g serving (as shown on the nutrition label), butter, canola oil, mayonnaise-type salad dressing, white sugar, strawberry jam.

Economies of Scale Factor for Families Larger and Smaller than the Reference Family

Use the following adjustment for family size:
1 person: increase food costs by 15% (multiply by 1.15)
2 people: increase food costs by 10% (multiply by 1.10)
3 people: increase food costs by 5% (multiply by 1.05)
4 people: make no change
5 people: decrease food costs by 5% (multiply by 0.95)
6 people: decrease food costs by 10% (multiply by 0.90)
### TABLE 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>1 Reference family of 4 on income assistance</th>
<th>2 Single parent family with 2 children on income assistance</th>
<th>3 Single Older Female on income assistance</th>
<th>4 Young pregnant woman on income assistance</th>
<th>5 Single Male on Disability Assistance</th>
<th>6 Reference family of 4 with low earned income</th>
<th>7 Reference family of 4 with average income</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net Income (after payroll deductions)</td>
<td>$991</td>
<td>$881</td>
<td>$510</td>
<td>$555</td>
<td>$856</td>
<td>$1692</td>
<td>$4179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child/Family Benefits*</td>
<td>$586</td>
<td>$586</td>
<td>$25 (sales tax credits)</td>
<td>$25 (sales tax credits)</td>
<td>$30 (sales tax credits)</td>
<td>$552</td>
<td>$111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposable Income</td>
<td>$1601</td>
<td>$1491</td>
<td>$538</td>
<td>$583</td>
<td>$889</td>
<td>$2243</td>
<td>$4290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx. cost of rent, utilities and phone**</td>
<td>$934 (3BR)</td>
<td>$934 (3BR)</td>
<td>$634 ($414) Bachelor</td>
<td>$634 ($414) Bachelor</td>
<td>$634 ($414) Bachelor</td>
<td>$934 (3BR)</td>
<td>$1212 (3BR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Health Care- MSP††</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>$22</td>
<td>$108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of income required for rent and utilities</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>118% (77%)</td>
<td>109% (71%)</td>
<td>71% (47%)</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of Food (2006)***</td>
<td>$653</td>
<td>$477</td>
<td>$162</td>
<td>$204</td>
<td>$228</td>
<td>$653</td>
<td>$653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of income required to purchase a healthy diet</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What's left after food/shelter/ MSP costs for all other costs of living†††</td>
<td>$14</td>
<td>$80</td>
<td>$-258 (-$38)</td>
<td>$-255 (-$35)</td>
<td>$27 ($247)</td>
<td>$634</td>
<td>$2317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx. cost of other costs of daily living****</td>
<td>$563</td>
<td>$387</td>
<td>$205</td>
<td>$205</td>
<td>$205</td>
<td>$563</td>
<td>$563</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: All dollars and numbers rounded to the nearest whole number.

Reference Family of 4—Mother and Father, ages 25–49 years; two children—boy-13, girl-7
Family 1—Reference family of 4 on provincial income assistance. Shelter max.-$590; Support rate-$401.27
Family 2—One parent family on provincial income assistance—Mother age 25–49, two children—boy 13, girl 7. Shelter max.-$555; Support rate-$326.38
Family 3—A single, older female (age 60 years) living alone on provincial income assistance. Shelter max.$325; Support rate-$185.39
Family 4—Pregnant young woman (Age 19-Trimester 2/3) living alone on income assistance with natal allowance. Shelter max.-$325; Support rate-$185; Natal allowance-$45/mo.40
Family 5—A single male on disability assistance—Shelter max. $325; Support rate-$531.41
Family 6—Net monthly income based on $11/hour, 40 hour work week, CPP (4.95%) and EI (1.87%) contributions for 2006, federal (15.5%) and provincial (6.05%) tax deductions for July 2006.42
Family 7—A Canadian two-parent family with two children, one earner, average income. Before tax 2004 income $65,900.43 CPP (4.95%) and EI (1.87%) contributions for 2006, federal (22%) and provincial (9.15) tax deductions for July 2006.44 After payroll deductions income $50,153.

* Child/Family Tax benefits effective to July 2006. Includes GST credit, BC Sales Tax Credit, Earned Income Benefit (where applicable), Child Tax Credit Benefit http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/benefits/calculator/menu-e.htm
† Christmas and School Start-Up Supplements pro-rated. Other supplements are available to welfare clients upon application. See reference 38.
** See Table 4—Appendix C. The cost in brackets is an alternate cost of shelter (see Table 6) based on Statistics Canada Census data.
†† Cost of MSP http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/infolen/premium.html#monthly
††† See Table 1. For families with fewer than 4 members the economies of scale factor is applied. See Appendix A.
††† The cost of shelter and food are subtracted from the disposable income to determine what is left for all other costs of daily living. The cost in brackets represents the remainder based on the cost of shelter as noted in Table 6.
**** Other costs of daily living include approximate costs for clothing, transportation, household supplies, and personal care but do not include the cost of child care (which is required for families on income assistance due to the requirement to be looking for work), health/dental/optical care, non-prescription drugs, and entertainment. See Table 5—Appendix C.
**TABLE 4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPARC BC’s Estimated Adequacy of BC Employment and Assistance Shelter Allowances (rent set at 25th percentile) *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single Adult (Bachelor)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Rent (25th percentile)†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL COSTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter Allowance**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of costs met by the Shelter Allowance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortfall ($)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† The estimated average cost of rent for a three bedroom apartment is $1153. It is assumed that those on a low income would need to rent at the lower end of the scale and those with an average income would not.

**TABLE 5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SPARC BC’s Estimated Minimum Monthly Income Required for Support*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Single Adult</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Personal Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Transit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Costs of Daily Living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL COSTS of SUPPORT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Allowance†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shortfall ($)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

† The estimated average cost of rent for a three bedroom apartment is $1153. It is assumed that those on a low income would need to rent at the lower end of the scale and those with an average income would not.

**TABLE 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2001 Statistics Canada Census Data on Cost of Rent and Utilities—Updated to June 2006*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No bedroom (Bachelor)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility cost†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Statistics Canada Custom Tabulation, 2001 Census, 20% Sample, Quartile 1 (25th percentile), for British Columbian Urban Centre, 500,000 or more population updated to 2006 using CPI estimates for Vancouver.

† Does not include telephone costs. In about 25% of cases, utility costs are included in rent.

** Telephone costs are the same as those noted in Table 4, rounded to the nearest dollar.
BC Association of Social Workers is the professional association for social workers in British Columbia. They advance Social Work practice and values to create a just and compassionate society. www.bcasw.org

BC Coalition of People with Disabilities (BCCPD) is a non-profit organization that represents people with all types of disabilities throughout BC. The BCCPD is an umbrella group and our membership includes individuals and groups. Our mandate is to raise public and political awareness around issues of concern to disability communities and to create change. We work to improve access to all aspects of our communities for people with disabilities. www.bccpd.bc.ca

BC Food Systems Network is a provincial food policy organization, established in 1999, which links people all over the province involved in community action related to food. Members of the network include farmers, community outreach workers, community nutritionists, food processors, food system analysts, educators, policy-makers, First Nations people and those living with poverty. The mission of the Network is to work together to eliminate hunger and create food security for all residents of British Columbia.

BC Healthy Living Alliance is a provincial coalition of organizations working together to improve the health of British Columbians by promoting physical activity, healthy eating and living smoke-free. While the Alliance recognizes there is a wide range of chronic diseases, our primary focus, to begin with, is on the common risk factors (physical inactivity, poor dietary habits, tobacco use, obesity) and underlying determinants that contribute significantly to cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes. www.bchealthyliving.ca

Canadian Association of Food Banks, BC Branch provides support and leadership to member food banks in BC in their efforts to provide short term food relief while working on long term solutions to hunger and poverty. www.foodbank.bc.ca

Canadian Cancer Society is a national, community-based organization of volunteers whose mission is to eradicate cancer and enhance the quality of life for people living with cancer. We provide leading financial support for cancer research and deliver community-based support programs and prevention information for all types of cancer. www.cancer.ca

Canadian Diabetes Association—Pacific Area Established over 50 years ago, the Canadian Diabetes Association is a charitable organization that has grown to include a presence in more than 150 communities across the country. The Canadian Diabetes Association promotes the health of Canadians through diabetes research, education, service and advocacy. www.diabetes.ca

Directorate of Agencies for School Health (DASH)/BREAKFAST FOR LEARNING partnership was formed in 2001 to provide ongoing support and further develop meal programs in BC. Their vision is that every child in Canada attests school well nourished and ready to learn. www.dasbbc.org

www.breakfastforlearning.ca

Farm Folk City Folk is a non-profit society with a mandate to ‘Nurture Food Democracy.’ Food Democracy occurs when people are able to participate in decisions about the food they eat—how it is produced, processed, packaged, transported, marketed and consumed. It is closely linked to food security. www.ffcf.bc.ca
Federation of Child & Family Services of BC (FCFS) is a professional community service association that has been promoting and enhancing excellence in services to children, youth and families in BC since 1982. Membership includes 105 Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations. It also includes the voices of many other BC provincial organizations along with a national research group, an international accrediting body and academic institutions. www.fcfs.bc.ca

First Call, BC Child and Youth Advocacy Coalition represents over 70 provincial and regional partner organizations, 25 local child, youth and family networks, and many individuals working together to create greater understanding of and advocacy for legislation, policy, and practice to ensure that all children and youth have the opportunities and resources required to achieve their full potential and to participate in the challenge of creating a better society. Every year, First Call produces a report card on child poverty in the province of BC. www.firstcallbc.org

Health Officers’ Council of BC is a society consisting of all the Medical Health Officers in BC as well as physicians such as academics and public health practitioners at the BC Centre for Disease Control.

Heart and Stroke Foundation of BC & Yukon, a volunteer-based health charity, leads in eliminating heart disease and stroke and reducing their impact in British Columbia through the advancement of research and its application, the promotion of healthy living, and advocacy. www.heartandstroke.ca

Public Health Association of BC (PHABC) is a voluntary, non-profit, non-governmental organization whose mission is to preserve and promote the public’s health in BC. PHABC is an affiliate of the Canadian Public Health Association. www.phabc.org

The Public Health Nursing Leaders Council includes nursing leaders from organizations and agencies providing public health nursing services in the province of British Columbia. The Council advocates for public health policies and programs that demonstrate quality and meet practice standards, with a view to improving the health of the population in British Columbia.

Raise the Rates Campaign is supported by numerous organizations across BC including Dietitians of Canada, BC Region and First Call BC Child and Youth Coalition. Raise the Rates wants the provincial government to increase welfare rates by at least 50%, end arbitrary barriers that keep people in need from accessing welfare, allow all income assistance recipients to keep the first $500 they earn, and raise the minimum wage to at least $10 an hour. wwwraisetherates.org

The Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) was formed in 1966 and works with communities in building a just and healthy society for all. In December 2005 SPARC BC released the report “Left Behind: A Comparison of Living Costs and Employment and Assistance Rates in BC”. www.sparc.bc.ca
REFERENCES


11. Ibid


13. Ibid


REFERENCES


26 Ibid


28 Ibid


30 Speech from the Throne (February 08, 2005). www.legis.gov.bc.ca/37th6th/4-8-37-6.htm


34 Ibid


37 Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance. Income Assistance—Effective January 1, 2005
www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/mhr/ia.htm

38 Ibid

39 Ibid

40 Ibid plus Health Supplements and Programs—Updated May 1, 2005. www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/mhr/hsp.htm

41 Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance. Disability Assistance—Effective January 1, 2005
www.mhr.gov.bc.ca/mhr/da.htm

42 Payroll Deductions Tables July-2006, BC at www.cra-arc.gc.ca/E/pub/tg/t4032bc-7/t4032bc-7-06b.pdf

43 Statistics Canada. Average Total Income By Economic Family Types 2004. www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/famil05a.htm