What is FoodARC?

- The Food Action Research Centre is housed at Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, NS.
- We are committed to research and action to build food security in NS and beyond.
- Patty Williams is the Director and FoodARC has many partners across NS and nationally.

FoodARC
research inspiring change

- Research
- Building capacity
- Sharing knowledge
- Advocacy and policy change
Participatory Food Costing 2015: Why do it?

- Since 2002, household food insecurity has increased in Nova Scotia.
- Continuous monitoring of a healthy food basket illustrates food insecurity as a systemic problem, and not an individual one.
- Involving those with experience of food insecurity in the research is transformative.
Participatory Food Costing 2015: Why do it?

- NS has the highest rate of food insecurity among all Canadian provinces
  - 1/6 households in 2014
- The findings inform policy
  - New: This year we looked at 2 policy levers
- Over time we can see the increasing cost of a healthy diet

Cost of a nutritious diet for a family of four:

2015: $935.11
2002: $572.90

63%
How did we conduct participatory food costing?

- 21 grocery stores throughout NS in June 2015 by 29 people
- Prices of the 67 food items in the National Nutritious Food Basket were documented using the “Participatory Food Costing Survey Tool”
The cost of a healthy diet across Nova Scotia
Affordability Scenarios

“Stories” of typical Nova Scotia households and their ability to afford a basic nutritious diet

- Lone mother (31-50 years) with two children (two boys, 4 & 12 years)
- Lone man (19-30 years) without a disability
- Lone man (54-59 years) with a disability (spinal cord injury)
- Lone senior man (65-70 years) with a disability (spinal cord injury)

Reference household of four
“We were on the system and lived on the system and, you know, I was ashamed of that years ago and now I’m not. I tell people and I tell moms that I work with that, you know, there is a light at the end of the tunnel.”

— Family Resource Centre Partner
Dual earner household

- **Reference household of four receiving Income Assistance**
  - Cost of healthy food basket = $935.11
  - Income ($2592.04) - Expenses ($3578.48)
  - What’s left? -$986.44

- Since 2002, the monthly cost of a basic nutritious diet for the reference household of four has increased by 63%
  - 2002: $572.90 → 2015: $935.11
“When it gets down to your last ten bucks and you can either go buy a meal or you can put it on your bills so it’s not disconnected...I’ve been there...it’s just been so hard. I know what that’s like and it’s very, very difficult.”

- Family Resource Centre Participant
Single earner households

- **Lone mother with two children receiving minimum wage**
  - Cost of healthy food basket = $679.47
  - Monthly income ($2601.46) – expenses ($3111.58)
  - What’s left? -$510.12

- **Lone man without a disability receiving Income Assistance**
  - Cost of a healthy food basket in 2015: $370.13
  - Monthly income ($653.52) – expenses ($1447.06)
  - What’s left? -$793.54
“And being rural, it’s not like you can go ‘this week the Superstore has two for one on, so I can just whip down and stock up and buy five of them...,’ you know what I mean? You’re budgeting your trips to town, okay I get paid this day and this day so you’re budgeting. ...”

- Family Resource Centre Participant
Protective factor of guaranteed income

- Lone male...with a disability receiving Income Assistance
  - Cost of a healthy food basket: $321.92
  - Monthly income ($961.85) – expenses ($1472.18)
    - What’s left? -$510.33

- ...On Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement
  - Monthly income ($1445.39) – expenses ($1472.18)
    - What’s left? -$26.79
“Well, the first word that pops into my head is fear. Fear of not having enough to feed your children. That’s the first thing – because I experienced it. [...] I mean I know there is a definition and I could rhyme off the definition for you, but for me personally, food insecurity is fear and a lack of dignity.”

- Family Resource Centre Partner
What is the impact of key policy levers?

Federal government's new Canada Child Benefit

Hypothetical increase in minimum wage to $15/hour
Federal government’s new Canada Child Benefit

*Figure 9:* End of month balance after purchasing a basic nutritious diet in Nova Scotia in June 2015 for a reference household of four and lone mother with two children receiving Income Assistance with previous Child Tax Benefit and Universal Child Care Benefit compared with the New Canada Child Benefit.
Hypothetical increase in minimum wage to $15/hour

*Figure 10:* End of month balance after purchasing a basic nutritious diet in Nova Scotia in June 2015 for a reference household of four, lone mother with two children, and lone man without a disability if minimum wage was increased to $15/hour compared with 2015 minimum wage ($10.60/hour)

- **Reference household of four (1 FT, 1 PT):**
  - Current minimum wage: -$418.07
  - Hypothetical minimum wage: $167.24

- **Lone mother with two children (FT):**
  - Current minimum wage: -$510.12
  - Hypothetical minimum wage: $141.40

- **Lone man without a disability (FT):**
  - Current minimum wage: $0
  - Hypothetical minimum wage: $674.90

Legend:
- Green: Current minimum wage ($10.60 per hour)
- Blue: Hypothetical minimum wage ($15.00 per hour)
Findings: A bird’s eye view

### Table 2 Summary of end of month balance after purchasing a basic nutritious diet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference household of four</th>
<th>Current Situation</th>
<th>Policy Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Income Assistance</td>
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<table>
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<th>Lone senior man with disability</th>
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<td>Minimum Wage</td>
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Conclusions

- **Income-related**: Income Assistance rates are inadequate and the minimum wage rate is inadequate for working households with children.

- **Looking beyond income**: We need strong, complementary social policy.

- **Unique needs** that create added costs exacerbate the inadequacy of current income supports and minimum wage.
Reflection

Turn to the person next to you:

- What stood out?
- Were you surprised by the impacts?
Recommendations: Income (1/2)

- Increase IA rates within 5 years to an amount that would allow all households to meet their basic needs; adjust annually.
- Ensure Nova Scotians who need to can afford to have a private vehicle.
- Reduce the rate at which employment income is deducted from IA amounts for those who are working while receiving IA.
- Put automatic enrollment in place for the Guaranteed Income Supplement.
Recommendations: Income (2/2)

- Research the possibility and impacts of a living wage in Nova Scotia workplaces; pilot a program.
- Increase incentives for businesses to employ Nova Scotians in full-time positions and offer benefits.
- Pilot and evaluate the impact of a guaranteed basic income in NS on household food insecurity.
- Ensure enough income and related policy supports for Nova Scotians with disabilities, who work and who do not work, to have a basic nutritious diet.
Recommendations: Community Infrastructure

- Increase the number of adequate, affordable, and safe housing units to reflect the number of households living below the low-income cut-off.

- Invest in affordable and accessible community-appropriate public transit.
Recommendations: Complementary Social Policy

- Ensure strong social policy as the foundation for food policy.
- Look at the provincial childcare subsidy to see if it helps people seek and keep employment.
- Increase the amount of the federal CCB, or increase other benefits to offset the high cost of childcare.
- Examine the effectiveness of a publicly funded, provincially regulated childcare system.
Spoken word by Deirdre Lee
In small groups, discuss:

- What stood out?

- If you had one wish to move these recommendations forward, what would it be? (Add these to the wish garden!)
Next Steps: Ongoing food costing vital to good policy

Being able to collect and analyze similar data every few years helps us understand how the risk of food insecurity changes over time.
Thank you!

- To download the full report: [www.foodarc.ca](http://www.foodarc.ca)
- For more information, contact: [foodsecurity@msvu.ca](mailto:foodsecurity@msvu.ca)
- We are especially grateful for funding support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council!
What is food insecurity?

Community food security

Household food security

Food security

Food sovereignty

Food justice
Potential Financial Impact of Purchasing a Basic Nutritious Diet on Monthly Funds Remaining for a Family of Four Relying on Income Assistance in Nova Scotia between 2002 and 2010

Potential monthly financial gap in funds remaining for additional expenses after purchasing a basic nutritious diet for the reference family of four earning minimum wage between 2002 and 2012.