Can Nova Scotians Afford to Eat Healthy?
The launch of the 2015 Report on Participatory Food Costing

Dartmouth North Community Food Centre
March 2, 2017
A Collaborative Dialogue:
A new approach to our report release

Creating possibilities for shifts in policy to support healthy, just, and sustainable food for all
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.
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

- Zone 1: $938.74
- Zone 2: $911.98
- Zone 3: $964.98
- Zone 4: $918.78
Affordability Scenarios

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

“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 on Income Assistance
  - Cost of healthy food basket = $935.11
  - Income ($2,592.04) - Expenses ($3,578.48)
  - 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
Reference household of four

Median income

MONTHLY INCOME

- Wages minus payroll deductions: $5,967.53
- GST/HST Credit: $0.00
- $188.26 Child Tax Benefit
- Affordable Rent Tax Credit: $0.00
- Universal Child Care Benefit: $91.45
- Working Income Tax Benefit: $0.00

TOTAL: $5,547.24

MONTHLY EXPENSES

- Shelter (3 bedroom): $1,010.00
- Power (1000 kWh): $203.55
- Mobile Telephone: $44.27
- Transportation (private): $587.35
- Clothing and Footwear: $270.29
- Personal Care Expenses: $90.59
- Household Cleaning Supplies: $30.66

TOTAL: $3,706.22

WHAT’S LEFT?

- Food Basket: $935.11
- $1,841.02

Average income

MONTHLY INCOME

- Wages minus payroll deductions: $4,000.93
- GST/HST Credit: $13.59
- $231.57 Child Tax Benefit
- Universal Child Care Benefit: $91.45
- Working Income Tax Benefit: $0.00

TOTAL: $4,523.64

MONTHLY EXPENSES

- Shelter (3 bedroom): $1,010.00
- Power (1000 kWh): $203.53
- Mobile Telephone: $44.27
- Transportation (public): $582.11
- Clothing and Footwear: $276.39
- Personal Care Expenses: $90.59
- Household Cleaning Supplies: $30.58

TOTAL: $3,706.22

WHAT’S LEFT?

- Food Basket: $935.11
- $817.42
Reference household of four

**Income Assistance**

- **MONTHLY INCOME**
  - $520.00 Parental Allowance
  - $620.00 Shelter Allowance
  - $300.00 Transportation Allowance
  - $104.33 Childcare Allowance
  - $25.00 Special needs (personal hygiene & grooming)

- **Total** $2592.04

- **MONTHLY EXPENSES**
  - $120.00 Shelter (3 bedrooms)
  - $201.53 Transit
  - $582.33 Transportation (private)
  - $216.50 Childcare

- **Total** $3578.48

- **WHAT'S LEFT?**
  - $935.11 Food Basket
  - -$986.44

**Minimum wage**

- **MONTHLY INCOME**
  - $2300.01 Wages minus payroll deductions
  - $580.15 Canada Child Tax Benefit
  - $109.45 Universal Child Care Benefit

- **Total** $3179.03

- **MONTHLY EXPENSES**
  - $1201.00 Shelter (3 bedrooms)
  - $201.53 Power
  - $44.37 Mobile Telephone

- **Total** $3597.10

- **WHAT'S LEFT?**
  - $935.11 Food Basket
  - -$418.07
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’t 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 budget. ...”

- Family Resource Centre Participant
Lone mother with two children

**Income Assistance**

**MONTHLY INCOME**
- $275.00 Personal Allowance
- $520.00 Shelter Allowance
- $150.00 Transportation Allowance
- $400.00 Childcare Allowance
- $12.50 Special needs (grooming)

**TOTAL**
- $2430.48

**MONTHLY EXPENSES**
- $800.00 Housing (3 bedrooms)
- $156.50 Power
- $24.50 Mobile Telephone
- $445.28 Transportation (private)

**TOTAL**
- $3111.58

**WHAT’S LEFT?**
- -$681.10

**Minimum wage**

**MONTHLY INCOME**
- $1532.61 Wages minus payroll deductions
- $723.10 Child Tax Benefit
- $167.56 Universal Child Care Benefit
- $73.85 Working income Tax Benefit

**TOTAL**
- $2601.46

**MONTHLY EXPENSES**
- $800.00 Housing (3 bedroom)
- $155.56 Power
- $24.50 Mobile Telephone
- $445.28 Transportation (private)

**TOTAL**
- $3111.58

**WHAT’S LEFT?**
- -$510.12
Lone man without a disability

Income Assistance

**MONTHLY INCOME**
- $255.00 Personal Allowance
- $300.00 Shelter Allowance
- $21.27 Transportation Allowance
- $12.50 Special needs (personal hygiene & grooming)

**TOTAL** $653.52

**MONTHLY EXPENSES**
- $794.00 Shelter (1 bedroom)
- $115.59 Power
- $24.58 Mobile Telephone
- $22.09 Transportation (public)
- $61.16 Clothing and Footwear

**TOTAL** $1447.06

**WHAT’S LEFT?**
- $793.54

$370.13 FOOD BASKET

Minimum wage

**MONTHLY INCOME**
- $1532.63 Wages minus payroll deductions
- $21.25 NS Affordable Living Tax Credit
- $0.00 Working Income Tax Benefit
- $4.58 GST/HST Credit

**TOTAL** $1588.46

**MONTHLY EXPENSES**
- $794.00 Shelter (1 bedroom)
- $115.59 Power
- $24.58 Mobile Telephone
- $25.89 Transportation (public)
- $61.16 Clothing and Footwear

**TOTAL** $1447.06

**WHAT’S LEFT?**
- $141.40

$370.13 FOOD BASKET
Protective factor of guaranteed income...

- Lone male...with a disability on 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
Protective factor of a guaranteed income...

Lone man with a disability, IA

**MONTHLY INCOME**
- $255.00 Personal Allowance
- $255.00 Shelter Allowance
- $21.27 Transportation Allowance
- $21.27 Personal Hygiene & Grooming

**TOTAL** $961.85

**MONTHLY EXPENSES**
- $74.00 Shelter (1 bedroom)
- $115.59 Power
- $24.50 Mobile Telephone
- $25.99 Transportation (public)
- $321.92 FOOD BASKET

**WHAT'S LEFT?** $321.92 FOOD BASKET - $510.33

Lone senior man with a disability, OAS & GIS

**MONTHLY INCOME**
- $963.74 Old Age Security
- $22.67 GST/HST Credit
- $764.40 Guaranteed Income Supplement
- $71.33 Non-eligible Wheelchair
  - Recycling Program

**TOTAL** $1445.39

**MONTHLY EXPENSES**
- $74.00 Shelter (1 bedroom)
- $115.59 Power
- $24.50 Mobile Telephone
- $23.89 Transportation (public)
- $321.92 FOOD BASKET

**WHAT'S LEFT?** $321.92 FOOD BASKET - $26.79
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)
Findings: A bird’s eye view

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

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

Dialogue

Turn to the person next to you:

- What stood out?
- Were you surprised by the impacts?
- What are the possibilities?

Please write one idea on a sticky note and we will collect it.
Conclusions & Recommendations

- **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.
Spoken word by Deirdre Lee
Dialogue

Turn to the person on the other side of you:

- What stood out?
- If you had one wish to grow these recommendations what would it be?

Please write one idea on a sticky note and we will collect it.
Next Steps
Thank you!

- To download the full report: www.foodarc.ca
- For more information, contact: foodsecurity@msvu.ca
- We are especially grateful for funding support from the Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness