

Participatory Food Costing: Making the Connection

The Second Nova Scotia Food Security Gathering: Making the Connection II



On behalf of the NSFSN Participatory Food Costing Working Group
December 5th 2008, Debert Hospitality Centre

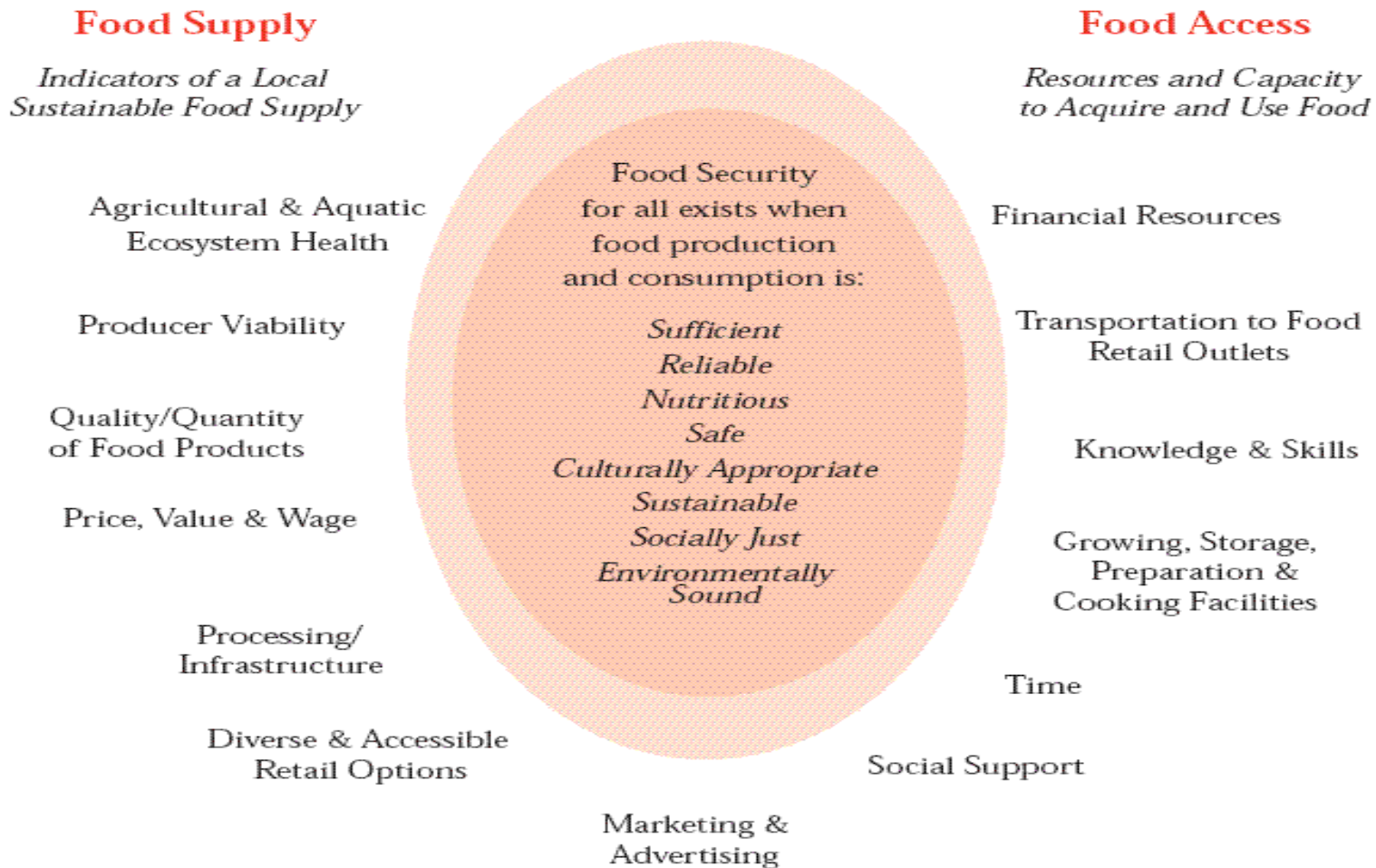
What is Food Security?

- ❑ ...all community residents obtain a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self-reliance, and equal access for everyone”

(Dietitians of Canada, 2007)

- ❑ a prerequisite for and fundamental determinant of health
 - ❑ A priority of Healthy Eating Nova Scotia
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Figure 1. Determinants of Food Security³

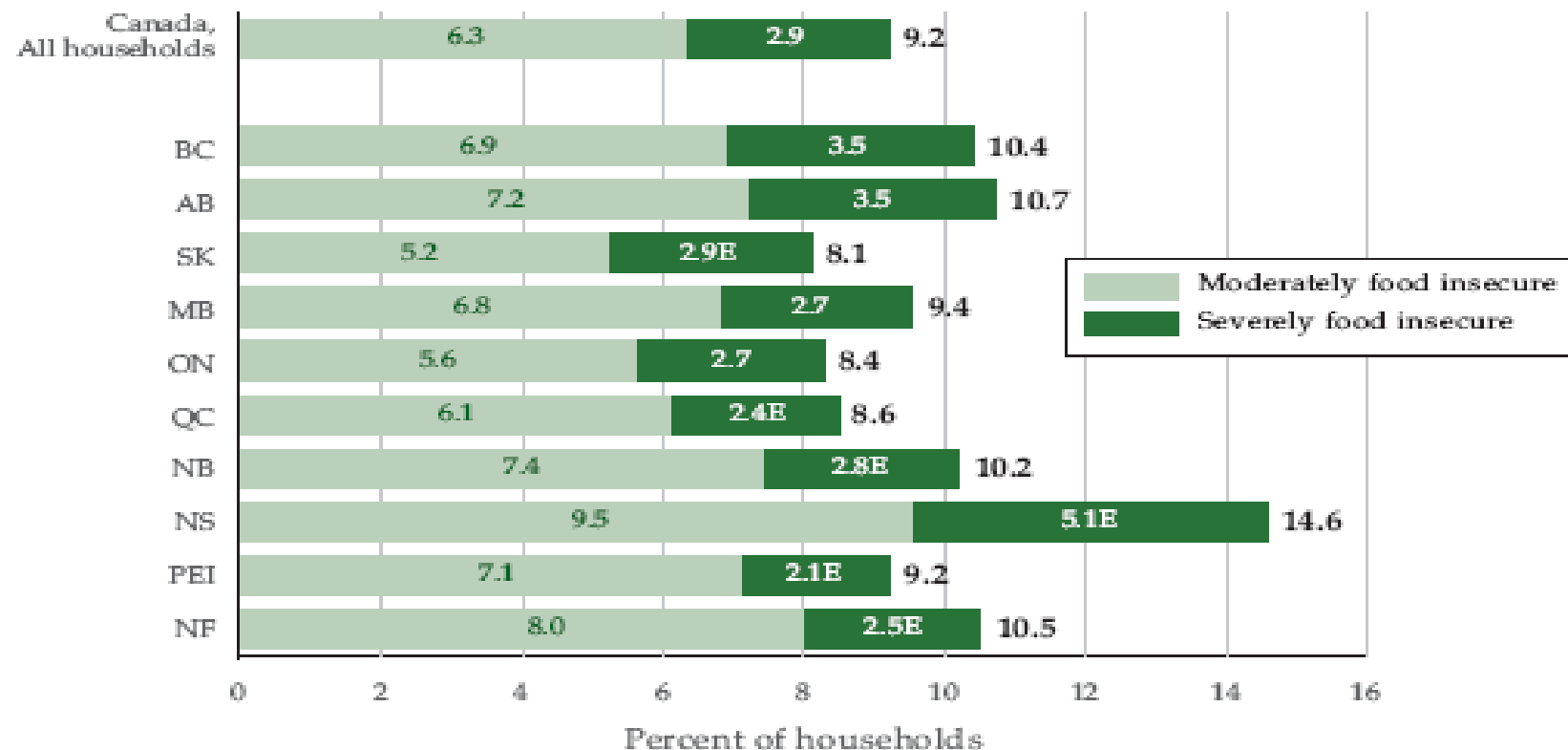


Thought About Food? Part 1—Understanding Food Security

(NS Participatory Food Security Projects Policy Working Group, 2006)

Prevalence of income-related food insecurity in Canada in 2004

Figure 3.2 Income-related household food insecurity by province, 2004



Participatory Food Costing in NS

- Conducted first in 2002 and again in 2004/05 (spring and fall)
 - Model for ongoing food costing developed in 2004/05
 - Stratified random sampling of grocery stores
 - Training/Support for food costers/support people (CAPC/CPNP FRC/P's, community groups, Public Health etc)
 - National Nutritious Food Basket (NNFB) with “local food” component
 - *Tools - What does it cost to eat healthy in your community? A Training Guide to Participatory Food Costing and Excel Workbook for Data Analysis.*
 - *Annual Partnership Workshop and capacity building activities*
 - Sustainable funding for annual participatory food costing model from Dept of Health Promotion and Protection starting in 2006
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Aims of Food Costing Model

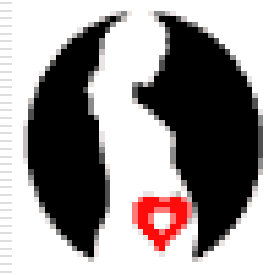
- To gather credible, current, and relevant data on the cost of a basic nutritious diet in NS through participatory approaches.
 - To engage, mobilize, and build capacity to address the issue of food insecurity and inform healthy public policy at both individual and system levels.
 - To use quantitative data to augment qualitative data to confirm the reality of food insecurity.
 - To foster knowledge development for individuals and organizations on the cost of food and the factors that affect the cost of food.
 - To compare the cost and affordability of nutritious food throughout regions of the province and across the country over time.
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Guiding Principles



- Food security for all Nova Scotians.
- Capacity building, social inclusion, collaboration, and community mobilization through participatory approaches to food costing.

*CAPC and CPNP funded
Family Resource
Centers/Projects and other
community-based
organizations as Core
Partners*



Participatory Process

- Participatory research involves community partners in decision making, data collection and analysis and the use of the research results
 - It involves the participation of those most involved, affected, or potentially affected by food insecurity as well as government and other partners who can work to influence policy
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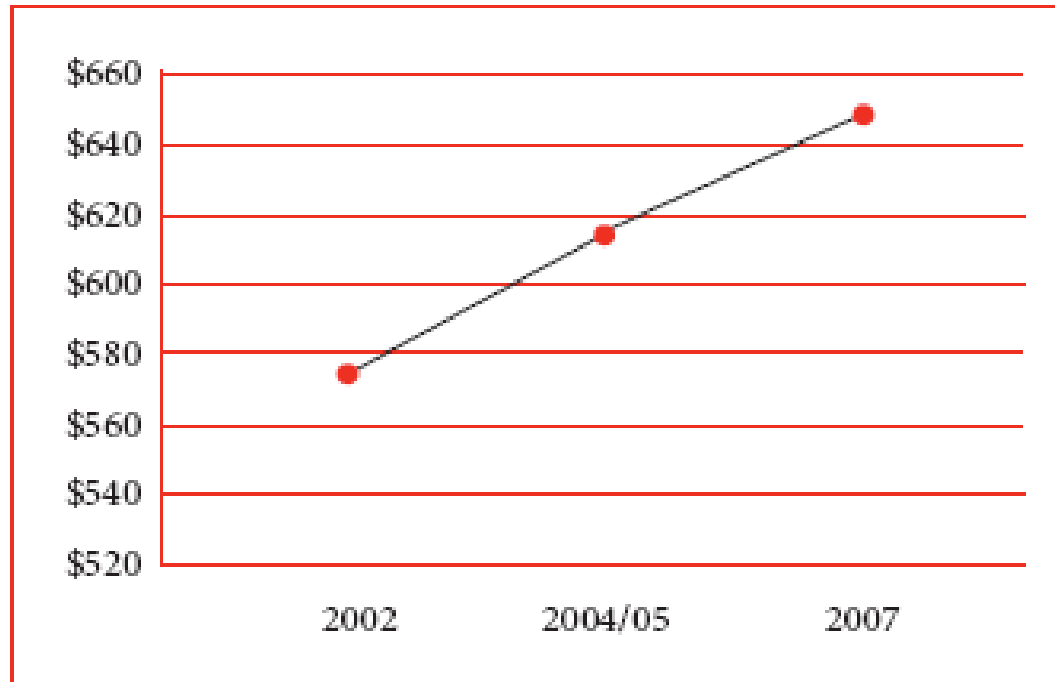


Partners and Collaborators

- ❑ Collaborating CAPC/CPNP-funded NS Family Resource Centres/Projects and other community-based organizations
- ❑ Nova Scotia Nutrition Council
- ❑ NS Public Health Services
- ❑ Departments of Health Promotion and Protection; Health; Community Services; and Agriculture
- ❑ Universities: Acadia, Dalhousie (AHPRC), MSVU, St. FX & UOIT
- ❑ Health Canada; Public Health Agency of Canada
- ❑ Atlantic Canadian Regional Organic Network
- ❑ Ecology Action Centre's Food Action Committee
- ❑ Food Security networks and coalitions across Canada
- ❑ National & Provincial Advisory Committees

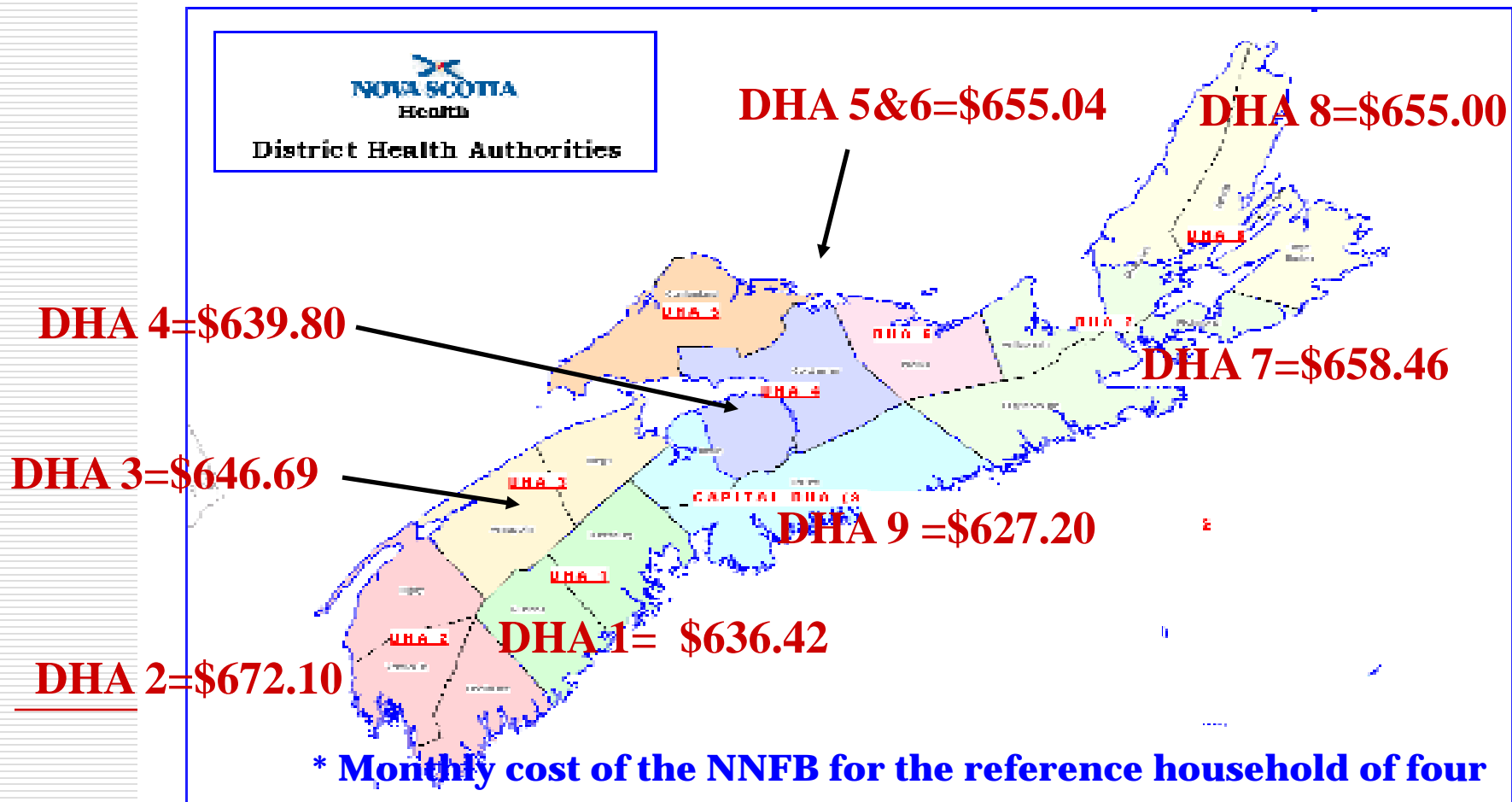
Funding from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Health Canada and the NS Dept of Health Promotion and Protection is gratefully acknowledged.

How much does a basic nutritious diet cost each month for a household of four in NS?



*The reference household of four is comprised of a mother and father between the ages of 25-49, a girl aged 7 and a boy aged 13.

What does a basic nutritious diet cost in communities throughout NS?



Can low income Nova Scotians afford a basic nutritious diet?

- ❑ Minimum wage (Williams *et al.* Can Journal of Public Health 2006. 97(6): 430-34) & income assistance
 - ❖ Reference household of four
 - ❖ Female Led Lone Parent with 2 children
 - ❖ Lone Adult Male with no Children
 - ❖ Pregnancy and Breastfeeding (income assistance only)
 - ❑ Public pensions for seniors (Green *et al.* Can Journal of Aging 2008; 27(1):69-79)
 - ❑ Supports for university students
 - ❑ Supports for persons with a disability
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What was the availability of locally-produced* foods in grocery stores in Nova Scotia?

- Examined in 2004/05, 2007, 2008
- In over 50% of the stores sampled the least expensive item was produced locally for:
 - apples, potatoes (both Oct 2004 and June 2005)
 - cabbage, carrots (Oct 2004 only)
 - onions (June 2005 only)
- No local pears, celery, green pepper, iceberg lettuce, or romaine lettuce were available in any of the surveyed stores.
- Overall lack of clear and accurate signage and labeling

* Defined as produced in Atlantic Canada

Key Activities and Accomplishments

- ❑ Press Conferences and release of reports in 2004, 2006 and 2008
 - ❑ Publications in Peer Reviewed Journals
 - ❑ Presentations at Conferences , e.g. Food Secure Canada, International Community Development Assoc., CIHR Institute Gender of Health
 - ❑ Food Costing data was key evidence used in Utility Review Board Hearing on NS and Dal Legal Aid Challenge to NS Power rate increases for those living in poverty
 - ❑ Submission to Minimum Wage Review Committee
 - ❑ Increases to Income Assistance Personal Allowance and Shelter rates
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Tools for Building Capacity for Systems Change to Support Food Security

Participatory action research... Food costing; Story sharing; National scan of strategies for influencing policy; National, Regional and Community Level Dialogues; Survey of Atlantic food security initiatives; Advocacy workshops and media releases of research findings, etc..

2000

Ongoing

Working together across sectors and jurisdictions to develop policy tools

- Workbook “Food Security & Influencing Policy”
- DVD “Food Security: It’s Everyone’s Business”
- Understanding the Relationship Between Public Policy and Food Security in Nova Scotia: A Background Paper and Policy Lens



www.foodthoughtful.ca

Eating right proving pricey

ALTH

ndrea MacDonald — The Daily News

le bad news is getting worse for some Nova Scotians, who are losing between paying bills and running the family food budget. That's the conclusion of a food-costing study that shows many families can't afford a basic nutritious diet. Researchers found an eight per cent increase in the cost of a healthy diet from the last time they measured prices in 2002.

Lead researcher and Mount Saint Vincent University nutritionist Pat Williams says some families are struggling for things like shelter and utilities at the expense of nutritious food. Every month they try to catch up, they fall behind.

This is happening despite an abundant food supply and some of the lowest prices in the world.

"It doesn't mean that they're necessarily going hungry," she said yesterday. They're just eating less healthily."

The researchers call it food insecurity. Williams said the implications are frightening, given that almost half of single mothers are raising their children in poverty.

At the end of the day, she added, all pay the price in rising health-care costs and higher crime.

Boosts in minimum wage and income assistance have been good, Williams, but are not keeping pace with inflation. At \$7.15 per hour, Nova Scotia has one of Canada's lowest minimum wages.

"I've been worrying for 16 years," said Debbie Williams, a single mother of two from Yarmouth who also worked as a food coster on the project.

"The stress is constant and frustrating. It builds up and builds up and there is nothing to replace it. It's going. We manage to get by, but just that — getting by." Williams says her children use their birthday and Christmas mon-



JUST GETTING BY: Single mom Debbie Williams worked as a food coster.

ey for special outings such as movies. She only buys fruits and veggies occasionally because they go bad. The single mom has no car, no lunch money, nor funds for certain clothing. Her kids are on medication.

Debbie Reimer works with low-income families. It's not hard to hear the anger in her voice when she talks about the misconceptions surrounding low-income families, such as the idea that they can't budget or blow all their money on bingo.

\$617 for basic, nutritious diet

Researchers calculated the monthly cost of a basic, nutritious diet for a family of four at \$617.42.

That amount represents a bare-bones diet developed by Health Canada and is for a mother and father between 25 and 49 years old, with a seven-year-old girl and a 14-year-old boy. In 2002, the cost was \$572.90. It also assumes the groceries came from a mega/superstore.

Cost of purchasing the same nutritious basket of goods from a smaller grocery store was \$632.40 per month.

Single mothers, immigrants, the elderly, aboriginals, and post-secondary students are among the most likely to experience food insecurity, according to the food costers. In fact, single mothers from Nova Scotia are 3.3 times more likely than those from other Atlantic provinces to experience it.

The costers priced their food at 42 grocery stores in various Nova Scotia communities. Research took place in October 2004 and June 2005, since spring and fall represent the times of year with the least seasonal variability in food cost.

Funding came from the provincial Office of Health Promotion and Protection.

— Source: *Working Together for Ongoing Food Costing and Policy Solutions to Build Food Security: Participatory Food Costing 2004/2005*

"People do know what a basic nutritious diet looks like — they just can't afford it."

Researchers are pushing for policy changes to ensure all Nova Scotians are "food secure."
amacdonald@hfxnews.ca

ANDRE FORGET

Voices... community partners

"And not just that but you are giving a voice to the people who are living it. And it's not that they haven't been saying it for a long time, it's just nobody has really been listening. And that's the whole main thing to me with this project is giving people the power and voice. It's not just professors or students, it's people who are actually living in this type of circumstance."

(Participatory Food Costing Participant, Johnson C,
MScAHN Thesis, 2004)

Participatory Food Costing Project: Working Group members

- ❑ **Christine Johnson**, Dept of Human Nutrition, St FX University
 - ❑ **Debbie Reimer**, AVH Kids Action Program
 - ❑ **Becca Green**, Ecology Action Centre Food Action Committee
 - ❑ **Karen LeBlanc**, Maggie's Place Family Resource Centre
 - ❑ **Ilya Blum**, Dept of Mathematics, MSVU
 - ❑ **Michelle Murton**, Department of Health Promotion and Protection
 - ❑ **James McGrath**, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch
 - ❑ **Polly Ring**, Public Health Services, South West Health
 - ❑ **Tina Killam**, Parent's Place Family Resource Centre
 - ❑ **Karen Fraser**, Family Place Family Resource Centre
 - ❑ **Rita MacAulay**, Public Health Services, CDHA
 - ❑ **Michelle Florence**, Participatory Food Costing Coordinator
 - ❑ **Patty Williams**, Principal Investigator, Dept of Applied Human Nutrition, MSVU
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For More Information

Reports:

NSNC Website www.n SNC.ca

AHPRC Website www.ahprc.dal.ca

www.hpclearinghouse.ca

Workbook and DVD:

Thought About Food?

www.foodthoughtful.ca

Email – foodsecurity@msvu.ca



AHPRC
Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre



Thank you!