

FOOD SECURITY & INCOME

Food security exists when there is universal access to food that is healthful, nutritious, safe and culturally acceptable. In a food secure community, the growing, processing and distribution of food is regionally-based, socially just and environmentally sustainable.

Unfortunately, the number of people who are unable to access safe and healthy food in a dignified manner is growing in our community.

Food security and health are interconnected. Poor nutrition contributes to:

- * Poor health
- * Obesity
- * Distress
- * Chronic disease
- * Major depression
- * Food allergies¹

Linking Cost of Food to Income

The Canadian Food Bank Association's 2003 Hunger Count report finds that "in every region, food banks report that inadequate minimum wage and social assistance rates, followed closely by high rents, are among the primary reasons for the growing demand for emergency food assistance."²

Income assistance rates and food costs for a family of four in BC's Capital Region³

	2000	2003
Monthly shelter allowance	\$650	\$590
Monthly support allowance	\$401	\$401
Monthly cost of a nutritious food basket	\$573.89	\$595.86

Measuring the cost of food is not intended to address the issue of whether or not the food is reasonably priced. Cheap food is not an indicator of a sustainable food system.

Fifty years ago farmers on Vancouver Island produced an estimated 85% of the food consumed on the island, compared to today when Island producers provide about 10% of food consumed.³

Indicators of Food Insecurity

- There has been a 22.7% increase in food bank use since 1997.
- In 2003, the Mustard Seed Food Bank and its 18 affiliated agencies in BC's Capital Region served 27,379 meals and distributed 9,563 food hampers.³
- Organizations providing food resources are currently unable to meet the needs of those who require assistance.⁴
- The School Meals Program operates in the Greater Victoria and Sooke School Districts. Overall, in the 2002-2003 School year, 1600 children were fed through the program each day.⁵

Sources:

- ¹ Dietitians of Canada (2003). *The Cost of Eating in BC*, Executive Summary
- ² Canadian Association of Food Banks (2003). *Hunger Count*, p. 17
- ³ CR-FAIR (2004). *A Baseline Assessment of Food Security in BC's Capital Region*
- ⁴ 2003 Capital Region Food Resource Directory
- ⁵ CR-FAIR (2004). *A Baseline Assessment of Food Security in BC's Capital Region*



Community Council

1144 Fort Street, Victoria BC V8V 3K8
 Tel: (250) 383-6166 Fax: (250) 385-6712
 Email: info@communitycouncil.ca
 Website: www.qolchallenge.ca

Bringing people together
 to create solutions in the areas of homes,
 paid work and community connections
 in BC's Capital Region.