



Public Affairs News Release

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Low income British Columbians can't afford to buy healthy food

Nanaimo, British Columbia - With rising food and housing costs, low income families are more desperate than ever. A low income family would need to spend up to 44% of their disposable income on a nutritious diet compared to the average Canadian spending 17%. Twenty percent of the population has been defined as low income – that's more than 800,000 British Columbians!

The Cost of Eating in BC report profiles the struggles of many low income families in BC. According to 2003 report, published by the Community Nutritionists Council of BC and Dietitians of Canada - BC Region, the monthly cost to feed a family of four increased by 9% since 2000 yet the income for the same family on income assistance declined by 6%. As one mother living on assistance said, "My kids are supposed to grow up healthy yet I can't even afford to buy them food." A single parent bears undue stress when trying to look for work while worrying about providing shelter, a safe environment, clothing and healthy food for the family. Many of BC's poor spend hours foraging for food and bargains to help ensure their family's survival.

All British Columbians deserve the right to healthy food; no one should be required to visit food banks or soup kitchens to get enough to eat. Everyone has a role to play in ensuring this goal becomes reality. Here are some suggestions from the report:

- Educate yourself about poverty and food access issues in their community.
- Use the tips in the report to write a letter to your MLA and share stories that have touched you personally.
- Advocate for fair income assistance rates that consider the cost of safe shelter and a healthy diet.
- Collaborate with key players, including the BC Ministry of Human Resources, BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, BC Ministries of Health, BC Health Authorities and municipalities to determine effective, long-term solutions to poverty and food insecurity.

The cost of healthy eating for 2003 was determined by community nutritionists using Health Canada's standardized food costing tool. **The Cost of Eating in BC** has been published annually since 2000.

For the full report and access to news and views of dietitians, visit the Dietitians of Canada News Room at <http://www.dietitians.ca/news/media.html>. Dietitians of Canada represents 5000 dietitians nation-wide, providing a trusted voice for consumers regarding food and healthy eating. For further information and to arrange interviews, contact:

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