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**Editorial**  
**by Keith Davis**

Welcome to the first issue of Food Security News for 2004. Although this website has not been updated for some time we are in the process of revising our format and plan to publish issues more frequently.

Last year three member organizations of the Food Security Network collaborated on a food costing study for this province. They presented their findings in a discussion paper that was released this spring. Their study identified the extent of the food insecurity problem in this province. You can read more about this study in the articles written by Glendora Boland and Margaret Coombes.

Also of interest are the articles written by Eva Marsh and Stephen Byrne. Stephen reports on the Food Security Network 's World Food Day event. Eva gives us an update on Bridges To Hope's community gardens.

We hope that you enjoy these articles. Please feel free to contact us with your comments and watch for future issues of [www.foodsecuritynews.com](http://www.foodsecuritynews.com).

Food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (World Summit, Rome 1996).

*(Keith Davis is the Newsmagazine Editor and Co-Chair of the Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador )*

**The Cost of Eating in Newfoundland and Labrador ... More than just an Empty Grocery Cart**  
**by Glendora Boland**

Many people in Newfoundland and Labrador with low incomes cannot afford to buy enough healthy food to meet their needs. This is the conclusion of a discussion paper, The Cost of Eating in Newfoundland & Labrador – 2003, released on February 12, 2004 .

The Dietitians of Newfoundland and Labrador (DNL), the Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Association (NLPHA) and the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers (NLASW) collaborated to review current data concerning the ability of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with low income to afford sufficient, nutritious food.

According to the annual Newfoundland Nutritious Food Basket survey, many people who have low incomes (whether as low wage earners or in receipt of income support programs) are unable to buy enough nutritious food. The Nutritious Food Basket survey is a food costing tool that measures the cost of healthy eating based on current nutrition recommendations. Nutritious Food Baskets have been used for over 50 years to assess the cost of an adequate diet in both health and social service contexts.

Survey results for 2003 show that the average weekly food cost\* for the island portion of the province for a family of four ( a man and a woman aged 25 to 49 years, a boy 13-15 years, a girl 7 to 9 years ) was \$129.60 per week.

Low income and lack of access to sufficient, nutritious food impact the health and well being of the population. Food insecurity may affect health and well being in many ways. These include increased risk of chronic disease, increased stress levels, and decreased ability to learn and participate fully in society.

The discussion paper provides a review of the literature. Here are a few fast facts:

- 23.4 % of Newfoundlanders do not have enough disposable income to buy the necessities including food, shelter, & clothing.
- Based on before tax income, 26% of children living in this province in 2000 lived in poverty.
- 10% of Newfoundlanders surveyed said they worry about not having enough to eat.

The paper aims to bring attention to the issue, offer recommendations, and stimulate discussion on this important topic. The paper can be viewed at [www.nlasw.ca](http://www.nlasw.ca) (click on news)

For more information contact: Glendora Boland of DNL/NLPHA or Rosemarie Goodyear of NLPHA.

\* To date the survey has only been conducted on the island portion of the province. Plans are underway to conduct a food costing survey in Labrador in 2004.

*(Glendora Boland is a Registered Dietitian with Dietitians of Newfoundland and Labrador)*

### **The Cost of Healthy Eating by Margaret Coombes**

How much does it cost to buy the type and amount of food recommended by Canada 's Food Guide to Healthy Eating? To answer this question, dietitians with the Health and Community Services boards in the province, in cooperation with the Department of

Health and Community Services and the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency, conduct the Newfoundland Nutritious Food Basket Survey each year. The food basket survey is an important tool for monitoring the cost of healthy eating. The results can be used to promote and support policies and programs that increase access to healthy foods.

Each year during a designated 2-week period in June, a list of 63 basic food items based on Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating is priced in six grocery stores in each region of the province. (Note: The survey has only been conducted on the island portion of the province but plans are underway to have costing conducted in Labrador in 2004.)

The foods that are priced include a variety of basic food items from the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating: Grain Products, Vegetables and Fruit, Milk Products and Meat and Alternatives. The list of foods takes into consideration the kinds of foods that Newfoundlanders usually buy. The food basket does not include convenience foods, items with little nutritional value (soft drinks, candy, etc.), foods eaten away from home, or non-food items such as soap, toothpaste, toilet paper, and cleaning supplies.

Results of the survey give an idea of how much it actually costs individuals and families to buy healthy food in various regions of the province. The 2003 results show that the average weekly food cost for a Newfoundland family of four (a man and woman aged 25 to 49 years, a boy 13- 15 years, a girl 7 to 9 years) was \$129.60 per week in 2003. This is a slight increase from the results of the 2002 survey when the average weekly food cost was \$128.92.

The following table gives the breakdown of the average weekly cost for various age groups in each region. To figure out the cost of healthy eating for a particular household, add up the costs for each person from the table below and then multiply by the following figures (it costs a little more to feed a small group and a little less to feed a large group).

1 person - multiply by 1.15

2 people - multiply by 1.10

3 people - multiple by 1.05

4 people - make no change

5 people - multiply by 0.95

6 people - multiply by 0.90

Average Weekly Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket by Region\* (June 2003)

Group  
Age

Western  
Grenfell  
( Island portion only)  
Central  
Eastern  
St. John's

Family of 4

\$128.53  
\$132.17  
\$127.19  
\$130.96  
\$130.44

Child

1 year  
\$15.40  
\$15.95  
\$15.18  
\$15.71  
\$15.34

2-3 years

\$16.60  
\$17.11  
\$16.29  
\$16.86  
\$16.49

4-6 years

\$21.24  
\$21.84  
\$20.79  
\$21.49  
\$20.98

Boy

7-9 years  
\$25.33  
\$25.93  
\$24.82

\$25.60  
\$25.28

10-12 years  
\$31.18  
\$32.03  
\$30.66  
\$31.65  
\$31.27

13-15 years  
\$36.74  
\$37.74  
\$36.27  
\$37.35  
\$37.01

16-18 years  
\$42.58  
\$43.70  
\$42.16  
\$43.33  
\$43.48

Girl  
7-9 years  
\$23.95  
\$24.62  
\$23.57  
\$24.32  
\$23.93

10-12 years  
\$28.89  
\$29.79  
\$28.41  
\$29.40  
\$28.79

13-15 years  
\$29.98

\$30.86  
\$29.47  
\$30.49  
\$29.86

16-18 years  
\$29.49  
\$30.36  
\$29.13  
\$30.07  
\$29.77

Man

19-24 years  
\$40.09  
\$41.15  
\$39.75  
\$40.83  
\$41.14

25-49 years  
\$38.76  
\$39.85  
\$38.54  
\$39.58  
\$39.94

50-74 years  
\$36.29  
\$37.39  
\$36.18  
\$37.17  
\$37.55

75 + years  
\$33.57  
\$34.66  
\$33.48  
\$34.46  
\$34.73

Woman

19-24 years  
\$29.84  
\$30.72  
\$29.53  
\$30.44  
\$30.28

25-49 years  
\$29.07  
\$29.97  
\$28.80  
\$29.72  
\$29.55

50-74 years  
\$29.08  
\$29.98  
\$28.84  
\$29.75  
\$29.64

75 + years  
\$28.00  
\$28.91  
\$27.82  
\$28.69  
\$28.62

Note: For information about the cost of healthy eating during pregnancy and breastfeeding, contact the Health and Community Services of St. John's Region

\*Comparison between regions is not recommended since the average prices used to generate the nutritious food basket costs are not straight average and they do not reflect the relative market share of the stores priced.

*(Margaret Coombes is a Registered Dietitian and Regional Nutritionist with Health and Community Services, St. John's Region)*

**Bridges to Hope Community Gardens**  
**by Eva V. Marsh**

After a cool start to spring, the growing season is upon us. The community gardens did really well last year. We even grew tomatoes and strawberries!

Just as important, we also grew a network of friends. Last year, we had plot owners born and raised in Newfoundland working alongside newcomers from the Sudan , Columbia , and Quebec . There were low income families working with seniors and students – a great cross section of the community. We also want to comment Maggie Hyslop for her great job with the Youth Corp.

We expect to keep on growing this year. We have everything we need to begin this spring.

We still have plots available for anyone who is interested in joining us. Call Eva at 722-9225 or Connie at 722-4840 to get your space in the community garden project.

*(Eva Marsh is the Program Coordinator at Community Gardens)*

**World Food Day Awareness Day**  
**by Stephen Byrne**

October 16th marks World Food Day. On October 16, 2003 , the Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador (FSN) organized an evening event to celebrate and help create awareness of the issues of food security. The celebration was held at the MacMorran Community Centre in St. John's and brought together individuals and organizations concerned about hunger.

The keynote speaker was Sinfiorano Caceres, President of the Nicaraguan National Federation of Agricultural Cooperatives. Mr. Caceres discussed his experiences abroad and the international issues related to battling the problem of hunger.

Another highlight of the event was a panel presentation and discussion moderated by John Greene, the Co-Chair of the FSN. The room was filled to capacity to hear from three local personalities active in food security issues.

Catherine French of The School Lunch Association and Colleen Dingwell Corbin of The National Anti-Poverty Association (NAPO) made presentations on behalf of their respective organizations on hunger issues. Eva Marsh , Program Coordinator with the United Church Food Aid Centre stressed that “people who use food banks look no different than you or me. Our clients come from every walk of life and from every street in St. John's .”

The speakers stimulated a lively discussion about the problem of local and international hunger and ideas for combating hunger. Panellists and the audience spoke about:

- How his or her organization was addressing the hunger problem.
- The challenges her or his organization was encountering in working toward that goal.
- What organizations would like to see happen in years to come.

The 120 people in attendance enjoyed a dinner prepared by the MacMorran Community Centre with proceeds from the dinner going to support local projects. Some of the organizations represented were Oxfam, PovNet, The Gathering Place Soup Kitchen and Social Building , the Division of Community Health, Dietitians of Newfoundland and Labrador , and members of the general public.

*(Stephen Byrne is the Program Coordinator at the Food Security Network)*