

Food security for older adults

The importance of good nutrition for older adults is well accepted. With rising food costs, expected to climb 3.5 per cent in 2019, accessing quality food can be a challenge. Locally, the 2018 Nutritious Food Basket estimates a single woman over 70 would need \$49.82 each week (\$215.74 per month) to meet basic food needs. Many find this manageable; however, the 2018 Hunger Report by the Ontario Association of Food Banks shows a growing number of older adults need help to put food on the table. Over the past year, older adults using food banks has risen 10 per cent and they are twice as likely to use a food bank regularly compared to other community members. Food bank statistics don't tell the whole story since only about a quarter of food insecure households go to food banks as these types of services can create a stigma and isolation for those in need.

"Limited mobility, reduced ability to prepare meals, transportation barriers, and social or geographic isolation affects Grey Bruce seniors' food security." Says Jill Umbach of the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force. "We see many seniors who would rather stay silent than ask for help."

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Seniors Situation

Food insecurity is a significant health and social concern linked to chronic diseases such as heart disease, hypertension, diabetes, certain cancers and mental health problems like depression, social exclusion and anxiety. This takes its toll on more than the individual; health care costs are 23-121 per cent higher in food insecure households.

The cost of food is not the cause of food insecurity. The truth is more complicated. As living expenses rise, older adults are becoming more vulnerable. The safety nets of Old Age Security and the Guaranteed Income Supplement no longer cover living expenses. With expenses increasing but

incomes stagnant, some Grey Bruce residents must make difficult choices every day. Food or rent? Heat or clothing? Those experiencing poverty have few options, especially older adults who cannot seek out additional employment income.

Many contribute to food charity with time and tins of food. However, food charity is not a solution. The root cause of household food insecurity is poverty. Providing individuals with the resources and tools they need to be healthy will reduce the strain on our healthcare system and provide an investment in our community's future. Recent policy changes, such as the cancellation of the basic income pilot, raise concern for the integrity of Ontario's social safety net.

The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force supports an income response to address food insecurity. "We prioritize safe and affordable housing; and recommend addressing aging-at-home challenges and social isolation of seniors." Says Umbach. "Poverty is not an individual choice, however we can all choose to support policy changes aimed at reducing or eliminating its impact in our community."

Marketplace

OUR PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS FOR 2018!

The draw was made January 22, 2019.

Winners receive prizes and cash from Penetangear and Marketplace.



Connor McKay enjoying Marketplace while hiking up Mt. Etna, Sicily. **PENETANGEAR**



Michelle Shantz enjoys reading Marketplace while in Marseille, France. **PENETANGEAR**



Ken and Deb Davey enjoyed Marketplace while on vacation in Perito Moreno Glacier, near Calafate, Argentina. **PENETANGEAR**

Thank you to all who participated! It was great fun to see where all of our readers travelled. Keep sending in your pictures. The next draw is January 15, 2020.