



Research Audit

March 29, 2021
Food Collective

The research audit intent is to identify the research related to food insecurity completed in and including Prince Edward County only. The audit is a way to take a look at what we already know and to identify gaps in our knowledge. What do we need to know in order to push our work further? As an outcome of this process, a tool, a database, of research reports will be made available to Food Collective members to support program planning and resource development efforts. The tool will provide an overview of each report to make research report navigation friendlier. In starting out this research audit we were also aware that food programs collect raw data but we were not certain how it was being analyzed or collected in PEC to support our collective efforts and an inquiry has been made into local data collection processes.

Seventeen research publications were identified and seven food and social assistance programs are collecting raw data. The main research publications have been generated by HPE Public Health, The County Foundation, with an emphasis on Vital Signs and the Poverty Roundtable HPE which is no longer operating. CDC Quinte maintains a social planning component of their programming throughout HPE and has participated in a number of the research publications identified.

Summary: Problem identification for people who are food insecure

Food insecurity is an income shortage problem.

The living wage for PEC is \$17.35 as determined in 2019 through the Ontario Living Wage Network and in partnership with local agencies. The hourly rate is based on two people working full-time and with two children. The Living wage combines the annual income with government transfers estimated to be \$74,589 annual income needed to

meet a basic quality of life. Comparing the living wage data to census data shows there is a general gap in living wages in PEC. Stats Can Data based on 2015 data identifies the median household income at \$66,140. The average income for PEC indicates that the average household is not making enough to meet quality of life standards. The cost of a nutritious food basket according to HPEPH, 2018, is \$855.30 for a family of four per month. How many people are able to access affordable nutritious food across PEC?

The low income measure based on Stats Can Data from 2017 identifies there are 13.5% of the population in PEC living in poverty. Individuals (29%) and households with single parents (26%) live with significantly more income insecurity than the general population (13.6%). Food insecurity rates for HPE focused on moderate to severe food insecurity is estimated to be 10% of the population, in PEC that would be 2,473 people (HPEPH, 2018).

HPE Public Health defines three levels of food security:

1. Marginal: worrying about running out of food and /or limiting food selection due to lack of money for food.
2. Moderate: Compromising quantity or quality of food consumed.
3. Severe: Reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns due to lack of food, at most extreme may go day(s) without food

98 residents of PEC who experience food insecurity participated in Food Collective surveys in March 2021 to give feedback on how they get by, how food programs support them and what needs to happen next to meet food security in PEC.

50.6% felt food programs helped somewhat.

24.7% said food programs did not help them meet their monthly food needs

24.7% said food programs do help them to meet their monthly food needs.

We asked how do people get by?

- 65.3% eat cheap, processed, poor quality food (64 responses)
- 56.1% skip meals (55 responses)
- 43.9% use food programs (43 responses)
- 43.9% borrow from friends/family (43 responses)
- 40.8% go into debt (40 responses)
- 38.8% skip paying bills (38 responses)

A research audit conducted of current available published research focused on PEC, as well as an inquiry into what kinds of data food programs are collecting provided a picture of what we know, what we don't and that we are not utilizing what is available to us.

1. Community conversations, starting in 2018, have identified the major barriers and the priorities for both programming and policy advocacy in pursuing supports and solutions to food insecurity.

Durant, C., Bedore, B., Hodge, B., Bell-Rowbotham, B., Ingersoll, R. (2018) Leaning In: Community Conversations on Poverty in Hastings Prince Edward. Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward. Belleville, ON

Ecoethonomics. (2018). The County Community Foundation: Environmental Scan and Background Research Summary.

Ecoethonomics (2018). Theory of Change. The County Foundation.

Farrell Insight. (2019). Food & Food Insecurity in PEC, A Topline Report. The Food Collective. PEC, ON

Farrell Insight (2019). Living with Food Insecurity in PEC, A Topline Report. The Food Collective, PEC, On.

Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward, CDC Quinte, United Way HPE. (2018). Moving Forward: Recommendations for Community Action. Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward. Belleville, ON

Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward (2018). Summary of Community Conversations on Poverty in Prince Edward County. Poverty Roundtable HPE

2. Census data on population, income, as well as housing costs, and data collected on the cost of living provide rich data and provides a snapshot of costs vs reality for many in PEC

Calculating the Living Wage in Hastings & Prince Edward Counties (2019). Poverty Roundtable HPE, CDC Quinte, United Way HPE, Ontario Living Wage Network.

The Real Cost of Eating Well (2018). Hasting and Prince Edward Public Health.

3. The Vital Signs reports appear to be the only reference for most food programs as they talk about their food programs in relation to the broader PEC region or/and in applying for funding to support their work/start/pilot new programs. Vital signs synthesizes census data as well as community conversation data into an easy reference point and highlights community priorities.

Prince Edward County Vital Signs Report (2018). Working Together to Build a Place Where Everyone Belongs. The County Foundation.

Prince Edward County Vital Signs Report (2013). Taking the Pulse of Our Community. The County Foundation

Prince Edward County Vital Signs Report (2015). Moving Forward Together. The County Foundation.

4. A demographic profile of HPE and the social determinants of health published by HPEPH provides valuable data on the connections between health and poverty, between lower education levels, unemployment experiences, healthy childhood development, etc. that support expanding programs and understanding the impacts of poverty and health beyond food programs. While the Food Collective includes strategies that are anti-poverty in nature, this resource is helpful in broadening the quantitative data around further impacts as the Food Collective prepares to address the root cause of food insecurity.

The Social Determinants of Health: A Snapshot of Hasting and Prince Edward Counties (2017). HPE Public Health.

5. Raw data collected by food programs is generally sent to provincial and federal bodies and added to collective data to make a case for financial support to programs and for policy advocacy for better incomes. Raw data is not being analyzed locally and there is little policy advocacy taking place in PEC. Generally the data being collected includes: demographics, income source, new and existing households, geographical location
 - a. Agencies collecting data include: Storehouse Foodbank, Picton Food Bank, Salvation Army, PELASS, CDC Quinte, Food Depot, Food to Share
6. The research audit portion of this work included asking what don't we know that would help the Food Collective respond, plan and act. What we don't know includes:
 - a. How many PEC residents are leaving PEC because of the cost of living?
 - b. Are people who are using food programs also connected to other programs? E.g. income supports, system navigation supports, tax filing, legal support, mental health support, etc.
 - c. Assessments for community programming are missing, while not research in itself. There has not been a consultation or assessment, for example on the need for a Community Food Centre vs benefits of providing low overhead and more support of choice through grocery cards as an income supplementation.

Overall knowledge and research gaps identified by Food Collective members are connected to quality of programming and service provision for PEC residents with needs.

Recommendation Summary

1. The provision of a synthesis of data around food insecurity as a communications tool is recommended as well as a review of what research has already happened, through a panel of local researchers highlighting key findings for the Food Collective, to bring the Food Collective up to speed on what we know already.
2. Poverty reduction, and public health are connected to population indicators. It is recommended to consider how food program data and aligned programs can collect data that will provide some level of population indicator information.
3. That an annual review of the data currently being collected is created and analyzed, including being able to compare differences over years with the purpose of supporting programming, resource development and policy advocacy.
4. Focus on individual programs collecting data, and doing consultations with program users on services used/wanted. Research interests should be connected with a commitment to actions that can be taken. Consultations should lead to action. Assessing needs vs wants in terms of large capital campaigns vs looking at alternative cost effective measures, this includes the need for emergency supports vs building community belonging and wellness - which one meets priorities? One does not preclude the other, however, assessments and consultation are relevant in identifying what the priorities should be and what priorities cannot be lost.

Conclusion: If we are looking to “move the needle” on food insecurity and associated health outcomes at a population level, we need to coordinate local data collection and analysis, such as in a collective impact model.

Reports

Bedore, M., Lamotagne-Dupuis, (2017). Great Food, Great Variety, Great Price: a review of the Community Development Council of Quinte’s Good Food Box Program. Queen’s University, Kingston, ON.

Attracting and Engaging the Evolving Workforce (2020) Chamber of Commerce PEC. PEC, ON

Calculating the Living Wage in Hastings & Prince Edward Counties (2019). Poverty Roundtable HPE, CDC Quinte, United Way HPE, Ontario Living Wage Network. Belleville, ON

Community Food Assessment for Hastings and Prince Edward Counties (2019). Hastings Prince Edward Public Health.

Durant, C., Bedore, B., Hodge, B., Bell-Rowbotham, B., Ingersoll, R. (2018) Leaning In: Community Conversations on Poverty in Hastings Prince Edward. Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward. Belleville, ON

Ecoethonomics (2018). Theory of Change. The County Foundation.

Farrell Insight. (2019). Food & Food Insecurity in PEC, A Topline Report. The Food Collective. PEC, ON

Farrell Insight (2019). Living with Food Insecurity in PEC, A Topline Report. The Food Collective, PEC, On.

Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward, CDC Quinte, United Way HPE. (2018). Moving Forward: Recommendations for Community Action. Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward. Belleville, ON

Poverty Roundtable Hastings Prince Edward (2018). Summary of Community Conversations on Poverty in Prince Edward County. Poverty Roundtable HPE

Prince Edward County Vital Signs Report (2018). Working Together to Build a Place Where Everyone Belongs. The County Foundation.

Prince Edward County Vital Signs Report (2013). Taking the Pulse of Our Community. The County Foundation

Prince Edward County Vital Signs Report (2015). Moving Forward Together. The County Foundation.

The Impact of Opioids and Other Drugs in Hastings and Prince Edward Counties: A Situational Assessment (2019). Hastings Prince Edward Public Health.

The Real Cost of Eating Well (2018). Hasting and Prince Edward Public Health.

The Social Determinants of Health: A Snapshot of Hasting and Prince Edward Counties (2017). HPE Public Health.