

## Cost of Healthy Eating

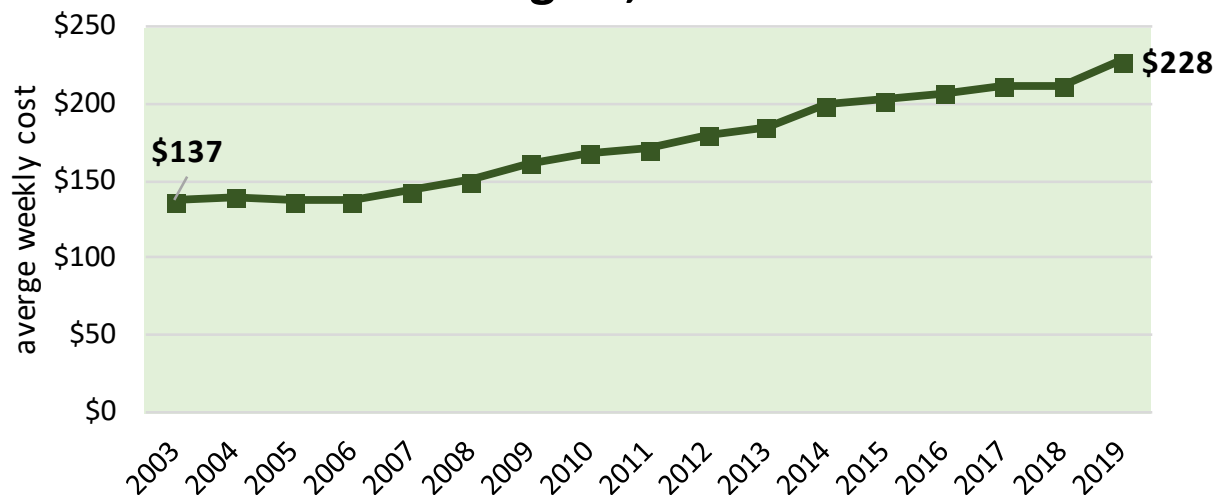
Healthy eating is fundamental to good health and is a key element in healthy human development, from the prenatal and early childhood years to later life stages. Healthy eating is equally important in reducing the risk of many chronic diseases.<sup>1</sup>

The Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) includes approximately 60 food items that represent a nutritious diet for individuals in various age and gender groups. Under the 2018 modernized Ontario Public Health Standards, public health units are required to monitor food affordability at a local level,<sup>2</sup> and in Halton, this is now referred to as the Household Food Affordability survey.

The cost of a basic healthy diet for a Halton family of four (two parents age 37, a boy age 14 and a girl age 8) in 2019 was \$228 per week or \$989 per month. Since 2003, the cost of a healthy diet in Halton has risen by 71%<sup>3</sup> while the Canada's Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 30.3%.

The cost of the NFB is based on the 67 food items collected from 7 stores across Halton. Five percent is added to the basket cost to cover the cost of miscellaneous foods used in meal preparation, such as spices, condiments, and baking supplies.<sup>4</sup> For most part, the NFB excludes processed convenience foods, snack foods, and foods of little nutritional value.

### Cost of a Nutritious Food Basket Halton Region, 2003-2019



Community Development Halton/Source: Halton Region, Health Indicator Report

1 Health Canada, Nutrition and Health Eating, <http://bit.ly/320j5pZ>

2 Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, <http://bit.ly/2PxH516>

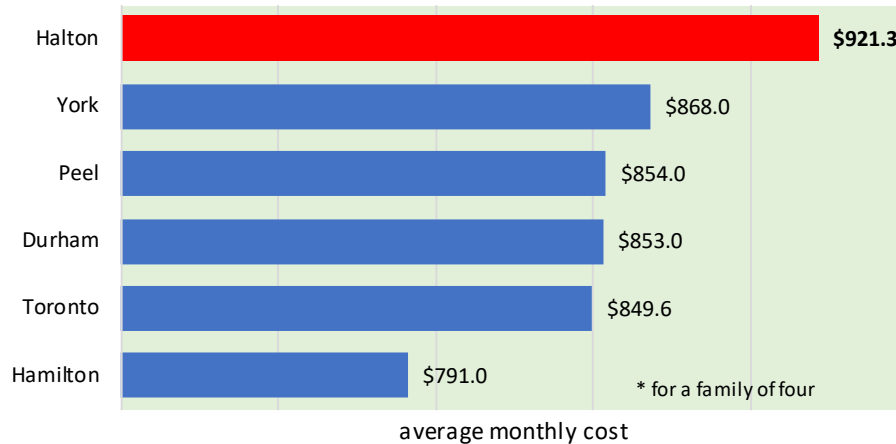
3 Halton Region, Household Food Affordability, Health Indicator Report, 2019

4 Halton Public Health, Monitoring Food Affordability-Weekly Cost of Nutritious Food in Halton – May 2018

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In 2018, among the six regional municipalities within the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), Halton had the highest NFB cost at \$921.30 per month for a family of four. Hamilton had the lowest at \$791, representing a difference of 16%. The NFB cost for the other four jurisdictions clusters between \$850 and \$870. The mix of stores and the approach to store selection may be different among municipalities.

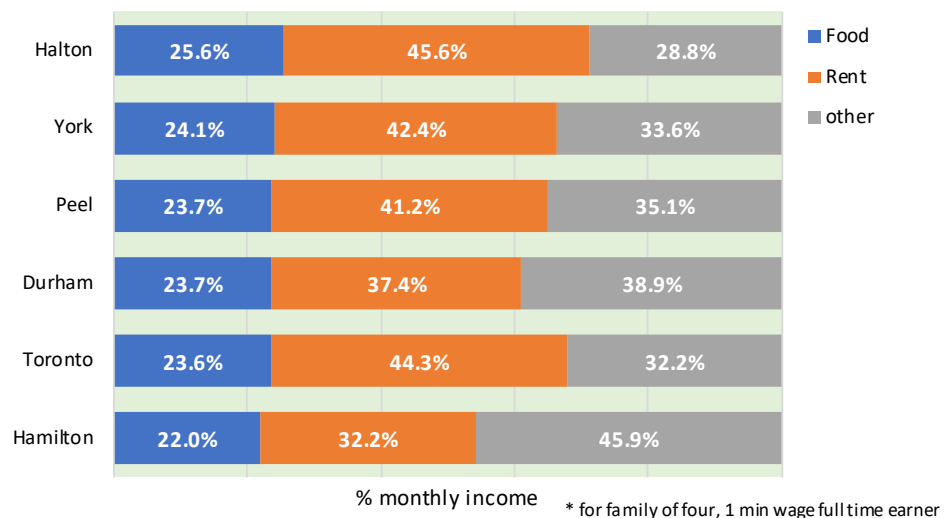
### Cost of Nutritious Food Basket,\* Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA), 2018



Community Development Halton/Source: Public Health Departments

The affordability of healthy eating becomes challenging especially for low income individuals and families. As an illustration, for the reference family of four in Halton with one parent working full year, full time at minimum wage (\$14/hour), a healthy food diet will consume over one-quarter (25.6%) of its total income. After paying rent, the family has less than 30% of its income to pay for other daily necessities such as transportation, clothing, telephone, school supplies, childcare, household, and personal care items.

### Percentage Distribution of Nutritious Food Cost and Rent\*, Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, 2018



Community Development Halton/Source: Public Health Departments in GTHA



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