### PURPOSE

#### The challenge

In recent years, the narrative around the BC food costing report has focused on rising food costs despite the report’s intent to highlight food affordability. Health authorities have also experienced challenges in disseminating the report and clarifying the report’s intent of highlighting food affordability rather than the cost of food.

#### The intended outcome

The purpose of the Food Costing Dissemination Project is to implement a coordinated approach with health authorities to align their food security messaging to:

- Shift the discussion of the Food Costing in BC report from rising food costs towards affordability and household food insecurity; and
- Mobilize partners in food security and poverty reduction to advocate for income-based solutions to household food.

### BACKGROUND

Household food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints. There are divergent perspectives on the problem and solutions to household food insecurity.

- Traditionally, the response to food insecurity has been through food-based approaches like food banks and community gardens, but there is no evidence that these initiatives reduce household food insecurity.
- Rising cost of food in BC is often linked to food insecurity. But according to the latest evidence, the root cause of food insecurity isn’t the price of food—it’s poverty.
- The strongest predictor of food insecurity is household income.
- Canadian research shows that policies to improve household income, such as a basic income guarantee, are the most effective way to lower food insecurity.

Every day, more than half a million British Columbians struggle to afford a basic healthy diet. Households, especially those led by single mothers, are at highest risk.

- Working households comprise the majority of the food insecure households in BC, although those on social assistance have the highest rates.
- Food insecure individuals are at increased risk of chronic conditions, difficulty managing diseases and depression amongst other health impairments.
- Health care costs can be up to 76% more for those who are food insecure compared to those who are food secure.

The average monthly cost of a basic healthy diet as a proportion of income is an indicator of food insecurity in BC.

- The Population and Public Health team at BCCDC works with the Ministry of Health and the five regional health authorities to biennially monitor the percentage of a basic healthy diet an average household experiences in BC.

### OUTCOMES

#### Key Messages

- **Every day across the province, more than half a million British Columbians struggle to afford enough nutritious food to stay healthy.**

- **Household food insecurity is a serious problem in British Columbia due to the major toll it takes on our health, and our provincial health care system.**

- **The root cause of food insecurity isn’t the price of food—it’s poverty.**

- **Household food insecurity can’t be fixed through charity and community food initiatives.**

- **The latest evidence shows that the key to solving household food insecurity is to ensure that we all have adequate incomes to buy healthy food after covering other basic needs.**

- **Individuals, communities and governments all have a role to play in making BC food secure. Together, let's FACE the facts on household food insecurity and give all British Columbians a fair chance to put healthy food on the table.**

### REFERENCES

5. Statistics Canada. (2018). Household food insecurity is the inability to access necessary food at all times. Retrieved from: [Household food insecurity is the inability to access necessary food at all times](https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/daily-questions/2018-06-05/00197-eng.htm)