



Food Insecurity and Potential Solutions in York Region

Presented to HSPB-YR

Dr. Richard Gould
Associate Medical Officer of Health
Public Health Branch
September 22, 2017



Outline

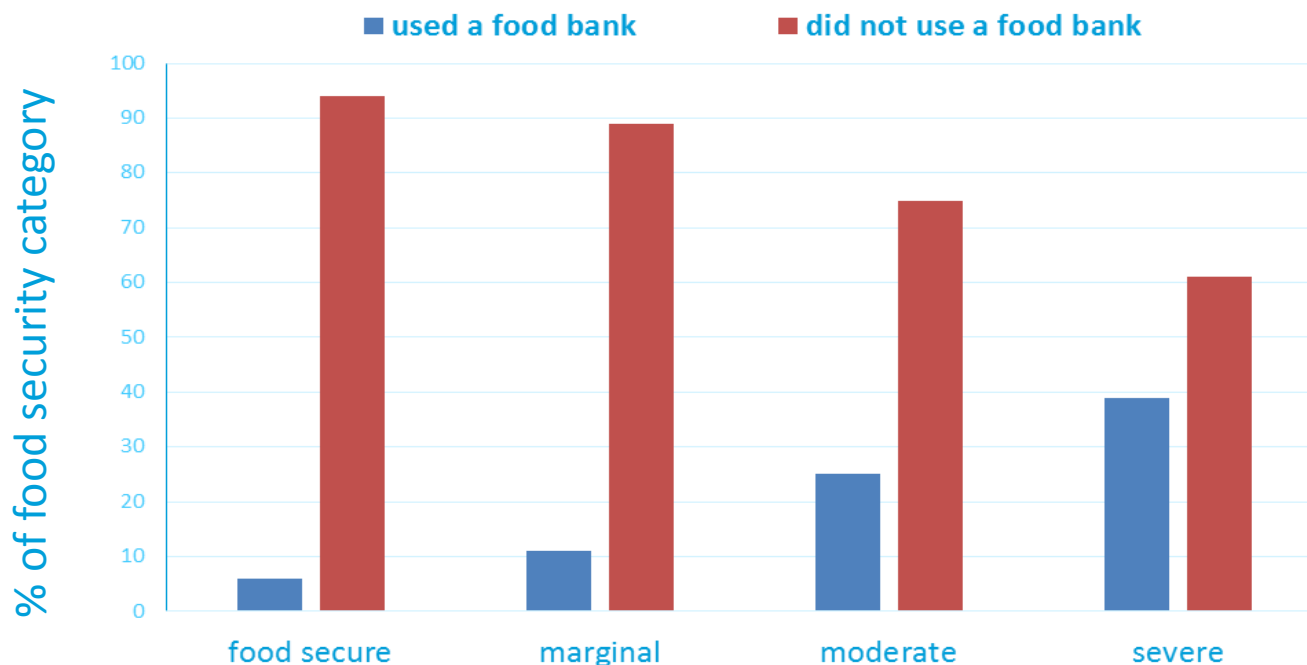
- CHS Food Systems Ad Hoc Working Group
- “Food security” compared to “food insecurity”
- Food insecurity in York Region
 - Prevalence, health effects, Nutritious Food Basket
- Findings from Food Systems WG
 - Food responses and income responses
 - Data collection
- Alignment with HSPB
- Next steps?



Background to Food Systems WG

- Discussion at CHS Department Leadership Team (DLT) about food drives and food insecurity in York Region
- CHS Food Systems Ad Hoc Working Group began meeting in the fall of 2014
- Conducted a literature review
- Conducted surveys and focus groups with CHS staff, external agency staff, and clients

Proportion of families who used a food bank in the past 12 months, by household food security status



From: PROOF Food Insecurity Policy Research:
<http://proof.utoronto.ca/food-bank-stats-dont-tell-the-story-of-food-insecurity>



Household Food Insecurity

Inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints.

Tarasuk, V., Mitchell, A., Dachner, N., Household food insecurity in Canada 2012, 2014. Available from:
<http://nutritionalsciences.lamp.utoronto.ca/>

Food security

Exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

World Food Summit, 1996

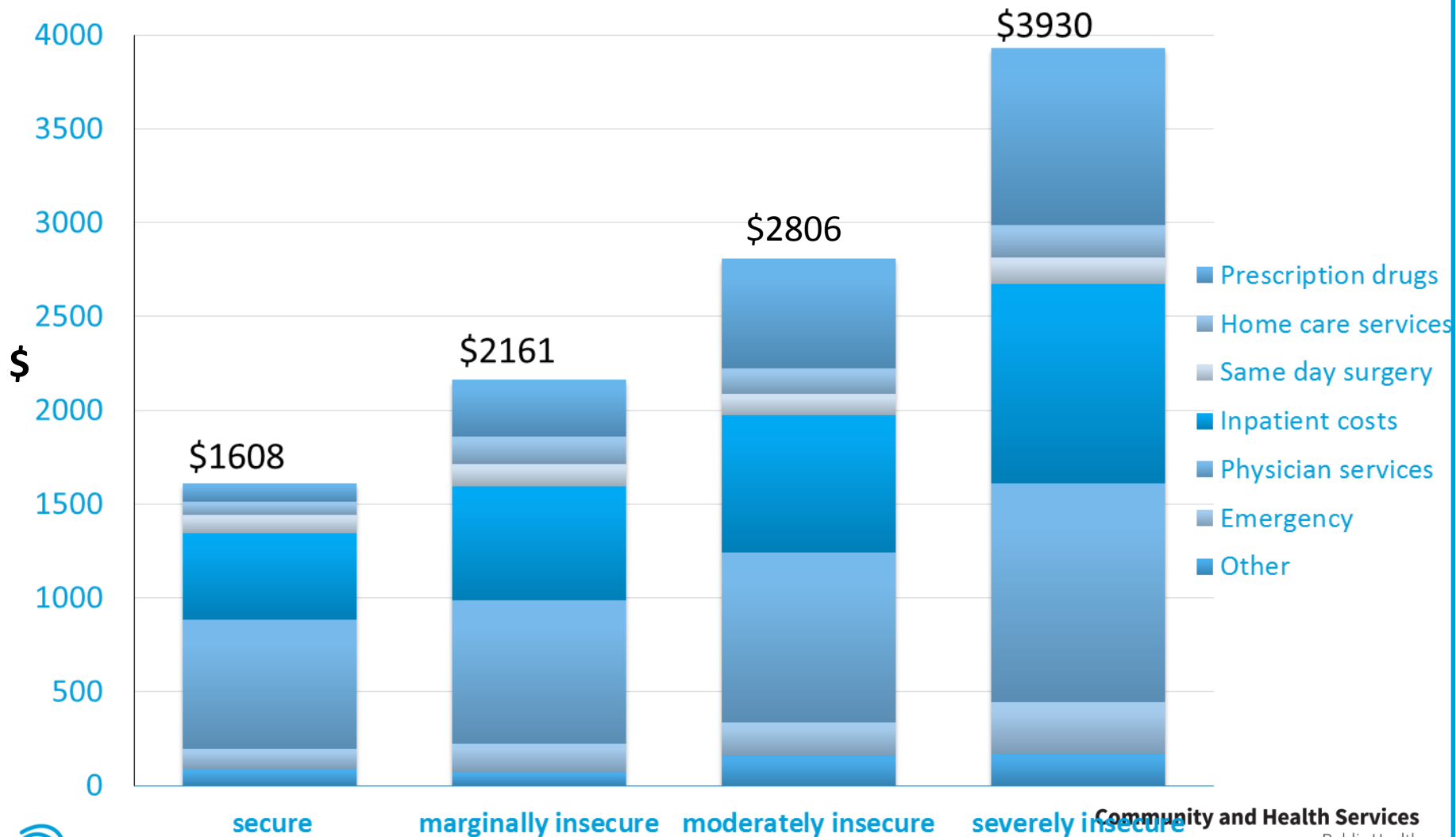
Food Insecurity in York Region

- 7% +/- 1% of York Region households experienced food insecurity between 2009 and 2014
- Applied to 2016 household numbers -> 24,700 food insecure households in the Region

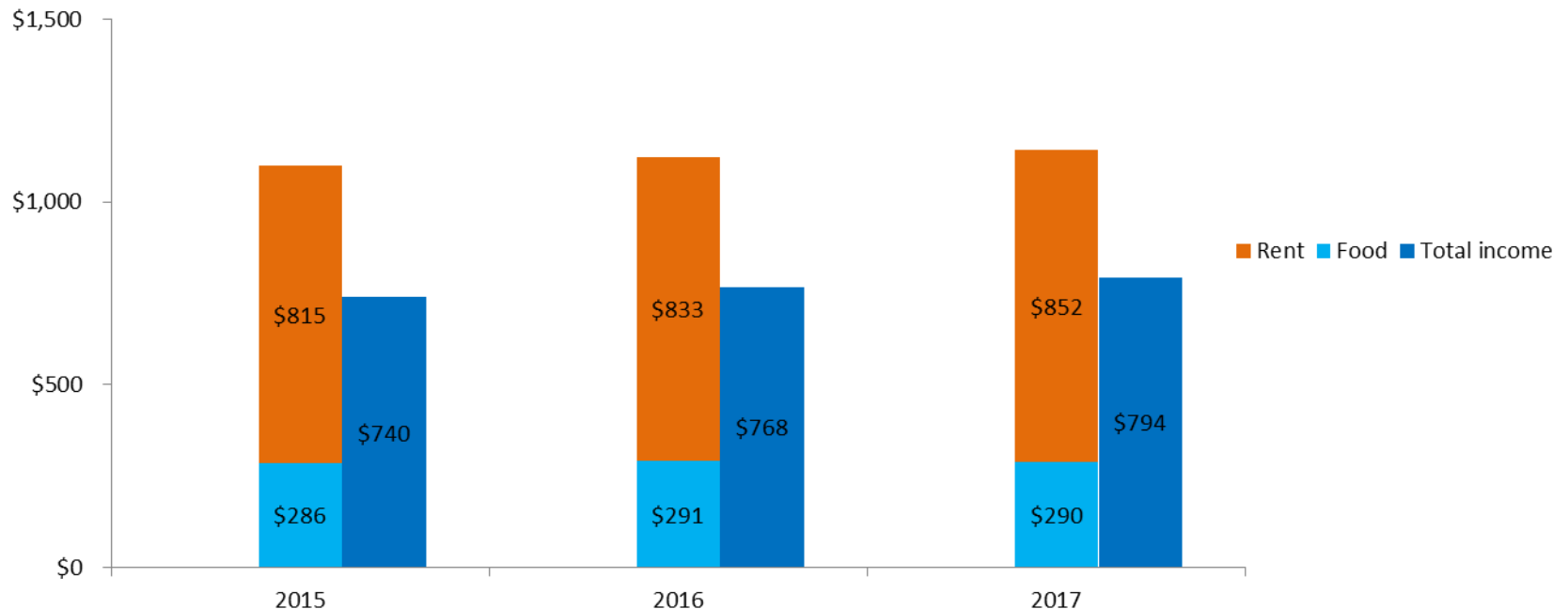
Health effects of food insecurity

- Poorer self-rated health and greater stress
- More likely to suffer from chronic conditions such as hypertension and mood and anxiety disorders
- Higher rates of diabetes, heart disease and depression
- More difficult to manage existing chronic conditions such as heart disease, diabetes and HIV
- Children at greater risk of asthma and depression

Annual average health care costs per person for Ontario adults (18-64 years of age), by household food insecurity status



Single person on Ontario Works

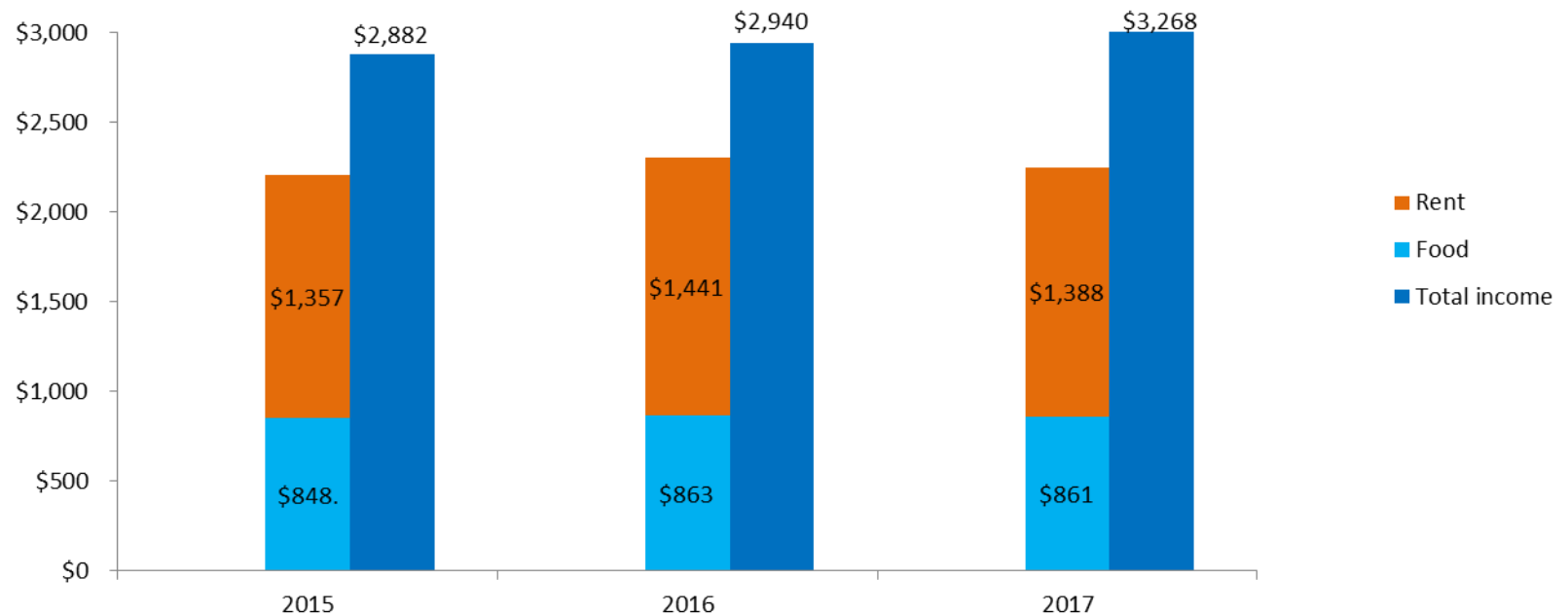


Rent costs from Rental Market Report: Ontario Highlights. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Fall 2016.
 Income from Social Assistance, Pension and Tax Credit Rates April to June 2017, Ministry of Community and Social Services
 Food costs from York Region Public Health



Family of 4

1 full-time minimum wage earner



Rent costs from Rental Market Report: Ontario Highlights. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Fall 2016.
 Income from Government of Ontario <https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act/minimum-wage>
 Food costs from York Region Public Health



Food responses to food insecurity

- Examples are school meal programs, community gardens, community kitchens, food skills workshops, food banks, meal programs
- Can have educational, health and social benefits for users
- Have not been shown to reduce food insecurity

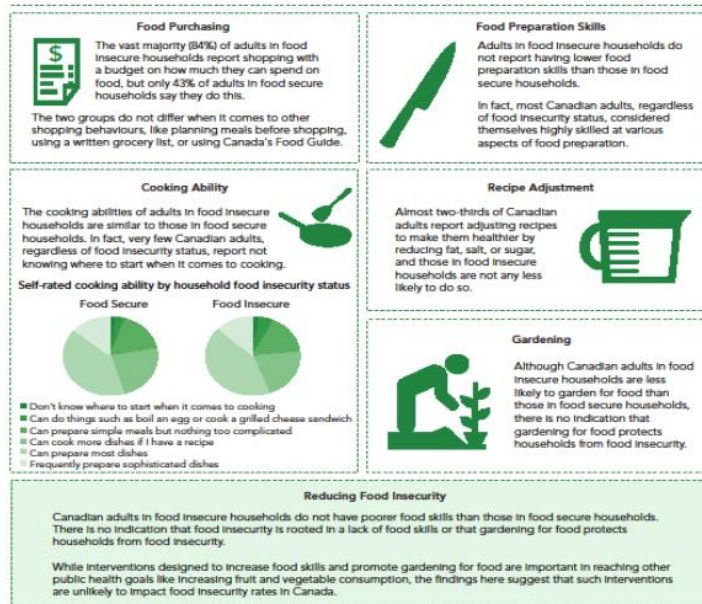
“There is no indication that food insecurity is rooted in a lack of food skills or that gardening for food protects households from food insecurity.”



Food Procurement, Food Skills & Food Insecurity

Food insecurity - the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints - is a serious public health problem that affects over 4 million Canadians. It negatively impacts physical, mental, and social health, and costs our healthcare system considerably.

Statistics Canada began monitoring food insecurity in 2005 through the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS). In 2012 and 2013, questions were included on the CCHS to assess the food skills and practices of adults with sample of 10,000 Canadians for each year. This factsheet summarizes the findings from a recent study using that data.¹



PROOF
FOOD INSECURITY
POLICY RESEARCH

PROOF is a CIHR-funded, interdisciplinary research program working to identify effective policy interventions to reduce household food insecurity in Canada. For more information, visit proof.utoronto.ca or @proofcanada

¹ For more information about this research, see: Huskain, A., Cho, S. K., & Tarasuk, V. (2017). Adults' food skills and use of gardens are not associated with household food insecurity in Canada. Canadian Journal of Public Health, 107(6), e526-e532.



Income responses to food insecurity

- Researchers and community organizations advocate for
 - Living wages
 - Decreases in precarious employment
 - Increases to social assistance rates
 - Increases in affordable housing
 - A Basic Income Guarantee or guaranteed annual income



Food Systems WG research

Top ranked approaches to address food insecurity

Rank	CHS teams	Community agencies	Food Systems Work Group
1	Advocacy for income	Public and political awareness of food insecurity	Advocacy for poverty issues
2	Food literacy workshops	Subsidized housing (<i>tied</i>)	Increase employment (<i>tied</i>)
3	Advocacy for food programs	Secure employment, living wage, etc. (<i>tied</i>)	Increase income (<i>tied</i>)
4	Housing stability programs	Address root causes	Secure employment, living wage, etc. (<i>tied</i>)
5	Employment assistance programs	Advocacy for poverty issues	Address root causes

Summary of Food Systems WG literature, surveys and focus groups

- Charitable approaches and food programs not effective at reducing food insecurity
- Inadequate income is the underlying cause of food insecurity
- Need to address income adequacy



Alignment to HSPB Community Results

- Housing options that are affordable for everyone in our community
- Progressive employment opportunities in a changing economy

How can HSPB play a role in addressing food insecurity in York Region?