

## **Manitoba *HungerCount* 2011 – Provincial Report**

### **Overview**

In Manitoba, according to Food Banks Canada's 2011 *HungerCount*:

- Food bank use is down slightly, by 4 percent.
- Usage remains at the second highest level on record, second only to 2010.
- 42 percent of Manitoba food banks reported an increase in use.
- 50 percent of Manitoba food bank clients are children living in poor families.
- Manitoba is second only to Newfoundland & Labrador for having the highest percentage of the population assisted by food banks – 4.5 percent.
- In 1989, Canada promised to eliminate child poverty by 2000. Since that time, Manitoba has been one of the top three provinces for child poverty in all but two years. For nine of those years, Manitoba was the child poverty capital of Canada.

### **2011 Manitoba Flood**

Flooding throughout Manitoba in 2011 was among the worst the province has ever experienced, affecting thousands of people along the Red, Assiniboine and Souris rivers. Rural municipalities, First Nations communities, home and cottage owners, seniors, farmers and their livestock were all affected.

Brandon was evacuated in May from 4th Street North to 26th Street North and from McDonald Avenue to the Assiniboine River, due to the high risk of flooding. About 1,000 residents were told to leave approximately 900 homes. This also affected employment rates.

Many highways remained impassable for long periods of time and hundreds of thousands of acres of farmland were left unseeded. The long-term effect on food prices is not yet known. Short-term problems of food insecurity are still evident in the affected communities.

One Manitoba First Nations community, Lake St. Martin, was a complete write-off, according to the 2011 Manitoba Flood Report. More than 600 people had to be relocated to Winnipeg and other communities.<sup>1</sup>

### **Food Prices Increase**

Statistics Canada reports that, after a brief respite, food prices continue to increase in Canada above the rate of general inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index. Food prices rose 4.4% in the 12 months to August, after increasing 4.3% in July. There were broad-based price increases for food purchased from stores. Consumers paid more for bakery and cereal

products (+6.1%), for meat (+5.7%) and for dairy products and eggs (+3.4%). They also paid more for fresh vegetables and fresh fruit.

The below table shows that for the 12 months ending August 2011, the annual increase in food prices once again outstripped overall inflation, as it has for all recent years except 2010. In some cases in 2008, prices for food staples such as flour and pasta rose 30 percent higher than overall inflation and have not decreased significantly since.<sup>2</sup>

**Consumer Price Index (CPI): Food Prices Rising More Quickly than Inflation**

Time period	CPI category	Change in CPI	Change in Price of Food	Difference (Food - CPI)
Aug 2010 – Aug 2011	All items	3.10%	4.4%	1.3%
	Bakery/cereal products		6.1%	3.0%
	Meat		5.7%	2.6%
	Dairy & eggs		3.4%	0.3%
2010	All items	2.40%	1.7%	-0.7%
2009	All items	0.30%	4.9%	4.6%
2008	All items	2.30%	3.5%	1.2%
	Bread		15.1%	12.8%
	Flour		34.5%	32.2%
	Pasta		31.9%	29.6%
	Rice		17.4%	15.1%
2007	All items	2.20%	2.7%	0.5%
	Bakery/cereal products		4.6%	2.4%
	Pasta		6.4%	4.2%
	Rice		2.5%	0.3%

**Food Banks Providing Services Beyond Food Assistance**

Many food banks provide a range of services in addition to food hampers and meals. For example, Winnipeg Harvest operates a free tax return service for its clients and other people with low income. Many low-income people end up getting money back from the government, through GST rebates, income tax refunds or other credits they're eligible for.

Based on information from the Canada Revenue Agency, Winnipeg Harvest estimates up to

\$7 million will flow back this year into the pockets of the more than 3,000 clients and other low-income Winnipeggers who use the free tax return service.

"We want to encourage and educate people on the benefits of doing their taxes so they can have monies that they are entitled to. Money in their pockets is money that gets put back into the community," said Morgan Thomas, referrals coordinator at Winnipeg Harvest.

### **The Politics of Hunger and Poverty**

The October 4<sup>th</sup> Manitoba election was an opportunity to force politicians to deal with issues of hunger and poverty. An all-party election forum called "How Can Manitoba End Hunger and Poverty?" was held September 26. The forum was sponsored by Winnipeg Harvest, the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and Make Poverty History Manitoba.

### **Unemployment Rate**

- Manitoba's unemployment rate in May was 5.3 percent, second lowest among the provinces.
- In 2011 (year-to-date), Manitoba has the lowest unemployment rate among provinces at 5.3 percent, well below the 7.7 percent national average.
- In 2010, Manitoba's unemployment rate was 5.4 percent, second lowest behind Saskatchewan. The youth unemployment rate was 11.1 percent, the second lowest in Canada.
- Over the past decade, Manitoba's unemployment rate has averaged 2.2 percentage points below Canada. In 2010, this spread increased to 2.6 percentage points.<sup>3</sup>

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### **NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Manitoba Water Stewardship (2011). *Flood Response*. Winnipeg: Government of Manitoba.

<sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada (2011). *The Consumer Price Index*. Ottawa: Government of Canada.

<sup>3</sup> Manitoba Finance (2011). *The 2011 economic review and outlook*. Winnipeg: Government of Manitoba.