

## More dough needed for good food

Welfare increase of \$100  
being proposed  
to help recipients

By Kristen Haveman

A proposal to increase welfare by \$100 for healthy food has found both support and caution with Belleville city council.

Coun. Garnet Thompson said that council overwhelmingly supported the proposal. The main concern is that the province pays for any inquiries or increases.

Thompson said the city of Belleville is also recommending that the province look at social services amounts in general, not just the Belleville area.

“Every municipality has people on social services and every municipality is concerned,” said Thompson.

He added the basic welfare cheque for a single person is about \$583, while the average price of rent for an apartment is \$600 to \$700. He said he wants the provincial government to look at the cost of living and to be realistic about it.

As a councillor and taxpayer, Thompson said he wants to be sure that any changes don't fall onto the municipal taxpayer's backs as it would if the municipality had to pay for any increases.

Belleville resident Drew Arens said that \$100 would help but he was unsure if it would be enough.

As a single father, Arens, who is currently looking for work and waiting to be reaccepted to social assistance, said it is hard to get by on the amount given. His monthly rent is \$490 plus utilities while his assistance payments were \$550. He has mostly been relying on his grandparents and the food bank to get food and buying what he can at discount stores. Arens said that at times he has to sell personal belongings like DVDs to make ends meet.

“I have handed out probably 200 resumes over the last two weeks. I come home, make dinner and wait by the phone but no one has called back. In the meantime, you just fall further behind.”

Coun. Pat Culhane, who supported the proposal, said nutritious food is just beyond the reach of most people on social services, especially in the winter. She said that there are programs like the Good Food Box but not enough people know about it.

“You see people eating high starch, high fat, high sugar, non-nutritious diets. Basically, people get whatever is cheap,” said Culhane.



Photo by Kristen Haveman

Drew Arens looks into his fridge at his small Belleville apartment. Arens is a recipient of Ontario Works who says that the money is just not enough to stretch for food and shelter for him and his son.

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Councillor Pat Culhane

Arens agreed that he ends up buying a lot of canned foods and TV dinner meals, but said that the hardest part is getting stuff like diapers and toiletries. He explained that diapers cost \$17.99 and that his son has sensitive skin, meaning that he has to buy special shampoos and soaps that don't irritate his son's skin.

Diana Chard, a dietitian with the Belleville health unit, said it is hard for people to afford nutritious meals. She said there has been significant increases in food costs but that there have not been increases in social assistance programs.

Chard explained that children who do not get a healthy diet have problems with growth and development. Adults have a harder time concentrating and avoiding diseases as well as recovering if they do get sick.

Chard said the findings of a report called “Can Everyone in Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Afford Healthy Food?” was discussed Wednesday morning at a health unit meeting but that any decisions have been deferred to the next meeting.

The report that can be found online states it costs \$178 a week, or \$770.74 a month, to feed a family of four (two parents and two children, a girl aged eight and a boy aged 14). A family of four with two average incomes needs to spend 16 per cent (down from 18 per cent) of their income on food, while a one-wage family will spend 29 per cent, (up from 28 per cent.)

A family of four on social service would need to spend 38 per cent (up from 37 per cent) of their income to meet the basic requirements of a healthy diet.

Funding for social services is typically shared between the province and the municipality, depending on the size of the township.

Brian Cousins, treasurer of the city of Belleville, said for 2011, the city spent \$5,137,000 for social services and \$3,154,000 on social housing, making up approximately 11.8 per cent of the city's budget.

## Student stress a common concern

By Rhea Munroe

It's two in the morning on a Tuesday and your brain feels like shutting down for the night, but closing your eyes is the easy part.

Getting to sleep is a whole other story.

There could be many reasons for your inability to sleep. Perhaps you have more homework to do. Maybe you're worrying about finishing school, or your financial situation isn't exactly what you had hoped.

All of these fall under the category of stress. Stress is felt by people of all ages, but is often a big problem with students. The uncertainty of the future and what your life will end up like can be both worrying and stressful. Stress can make college feel like a two-year course in sleep deprivation.

Scott Tinsley, a first-year police foundations student at Loyalist College, said people are by no means guaranteed jobs when they finish school. This is a contributor to the stress around graduation time.

Kelly McGuire-Smith, a student success mentor at Loyalist said, “Stress is a common concern. Managing stress is an important piece to success.”

One of the things McGuire-

**‘The brain needs oxygen, sun, and water to work well. When you don't sleep, you don't breathe deeply enough and lessen the amount of oxygen your brain receives.’**

Kelly McGuire Smith, student success mentor

Smith tells students to help them limit their stress is something that she calls mental hygiene. She described it as a habit you do every day, like brushing your teeth, but for your mind.

“The brain needs oxygen, sun, and water to work well. When you don't sleep, you don't breathe deeply enough and lessen the amount of oxygen your brain receives,” explained McGuire-Smith.

“You can feel stress both physically and emotionally,” said Lauren Deans, the college's nurse. She

added stress can cause a decrease in the immune system, leaving you more susceptible to illness. It can lead to such things as stomach problems, high blood pressure, sleep deprivation, fatigue, headaches, and depression.

Statistics Canada 2009 stress statistics state 21.1 per cent of women ages 15 to 19 feel stress on a daily basis and only 11.7 per cent of men in the same age group feel stress. A 2007 Statistics Canada survey also found students who work while they attend school are more likely to feel stress than those who just focus solely on their schooling. It also states that the hours people spend on homework and how often they procrastinate can also be a contribution.

There are no de-stressors that are guaranteed to work for everyone, but McGuire-Smith said generally deep breathing and meditation are good starting points.

Tinsley said, “I find running and reading relaxing. But I also make sure to take the time to talk to my family as well.”

If you're struggling from stress you can call Open Line, Open Mind at 310-OPEN for support and advice, or visit the college's guidance counsellors in the student hub.



Photo by Tristan Kong

Fire fighters clean up after a fire broke out on the third story of a Trenton home on Feb. 1. at 79 Ontario Street. A witness said black smoke started pouring out of the attic window and was then followed by huge flames. According to Greg King, the senior fire prevention officer, there was \$60,000 in damage but no one was injured during the fire. They would not release any further details at this time.

## Keeping safe on the toboggan hills

By Marina Sanford

There have been some reports of tobogganing accidents this winter in Belleville.

Although not yet officially confirmed, someone was reportedly taken to hospital last Sunday afternoon from North Park Street hill with undetermined injuries.

North Park Street hill and Zwick's Park hill have been very popular sledding destinations for kids this winter, despite the strange weather conditions. And this year, like many others, wipeouts have

been common. Sometimes, those tumbles can result in something serious.

Last winter, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, there were 171 hospitalizations from tobogganing accidents in Canada.

Some are from adults going sledding, and sometimes it's parents going down the hill with their children. However, a large number of these accidents happen to children aged 10 to 19.

Larry Glover, the parks manager for the City of Belleville said he

and his staff do their best to keep the coasting hills in Belleville safe, but can't do everything.

“We fill in holes during the summer, and let Mother Nature provide during the winter. Beyond that, we pick up debris but can't have someone out there to supervise.”

The North Park Street hill, as well as the hill in Zwick's Park, are both maintained by the city, but are used by the public at their own risk. Glover said it's important for parents to supervise their children when they go sledding.

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