

# Poverty in Guelph and Wellington County

■ The following fact sheet provides information on factors influencing poverty in the City of Guelph and Wellington County.

## Defining Poverty

Poverty can be measured in two ways: absolute and relative. Absolute poverty is measured by taking a person's income and comparing it against the cost of a predetermined basket of goods. If that person's income is insufficient to cover the cost of the basket then they are deemed to be living in poverty. Relative poverty compares a person's total income and spending patterns with those of the general population. People spending a larger proportion of their income than the threshold that is deemed typical of the general population are considered to be living in poverty.<sup>1</sup>

## Low Income Cut-offs (LICO)

*The Low income cut-off (LICO) is one of a number of measures of low-income that are often used as indicators of poverty. LICOs are income thresholds, determined by analyzing family expenditure data, below which families will devote a larger share of income to the necessities of food, shelter and clothing than the average family would. To reflect differences in the costs of necessities among different community and family sizes, LICOs are defined for five categories of community size and seven of family size.<sup>2</sup> For this report all LICO measures will be the before tax figures.*

- There are 200,425 people living in the whole of Wellington County. The population of the City of Guelph is 114,943 and the population of Wellington County is 85,482.<sup>3</sup>
- In all of Wellington County (City of Guelph included) 8.7% of all individuals are living below the Low Income Cut Off (LICO).<sup>4</sup>
- 9.4% of women living in Wellington County (City of Guelph included) are living below the LICO.
- 9.6% of children 18 years of age or less are living below the LICO.<sup>5</sup>



- 7.4% of seniors living in the City of Guelph are living below the LICO.<sup>6</sup>

## Food Security

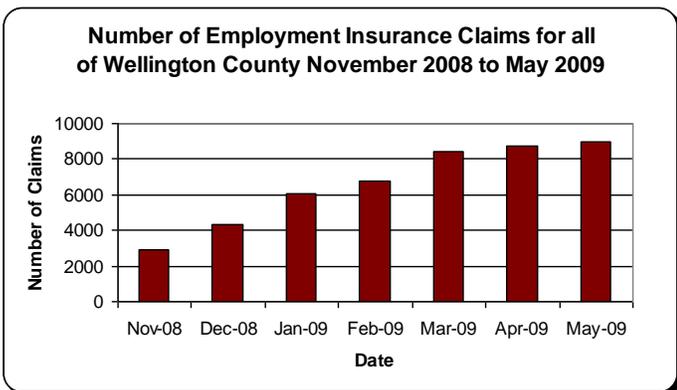
*Food security continues to be an issue in Guelph and Wellington. Below are some highlights from the food banks and pantries in Guelph and Wellington that are members of the Ontario Association of Food Banks. Please note that there are several other resources throughout the community.*

- The use of food banks has increased in both Wellington County and the City of Guelph over the past 4 years.<sup>7</sup>
- A survey completed by all member agencies of the Ontario Association of Food Banks (OASFB) shows that there was an increase of 37.8% in the number of individuals served through the food banks in all of Wellington County (including the City of Guelph) between March 2005 and March 2009.
- The number of Ontarians using food banks has risen 19% between 2008 and 2009.<sup>8</sup>
- In 2009 in Ontario the price of key food items have all increased at least 10%. Some of these items include; milk, peanut butter, butter, flour, pasta, canned soup, baby food, and potatoes.<sup>9</sup>
- In 2009 37% of food banks in Ontario did not have enough food to meet the needs of their clients.<sup>10</sup>

**Employment**

Several local employers are feeling the strain of the current economic climate within their specific industries. The information below offers a glimpse into how this is affecting the current job market in Guelph and Wellington County.

- Between January and December of 2008 there was a 13.6% increase in the monthly Ontario Works caseload for the whole County of Wellington (including the City of Guelph).<sup>11</sup>
- Broken down, the monthly caseload for Ontario Works increased by 13.9% in the City of Guelph and 9.7% in the County of Wellington from January to December 2008.<sup>12</sup>
- As of December 2008 there were approximately 1100 individuals from the City of Guelph and 280 individuals from the county of Wellington on the Ontario Works caseload<sup>13</sup>
- There was a 201.5% increase in the number of Employment Insurance Claimants in the City of Guelph between November 2008 and May 2009<sup>14</sup>
- There was a 236% increase in the number of Employment Insurance Claimants in the County of Wellington between November 2008 and May 2009.<sup>15</sup>
- The chart below illustrates the number of Employment Insurance Claimants per month for 2008 in the whole of Wellington County (including the City of Guelph). There was a 211.4% increase in claimants between November 2008 and May 2009.<sup>16</sup>



**Housing Security & Shelter Usage (cont.)**

Access to affordable housing is a key indicator of poverty. Below is some information on housing in Guelph and Wellington County.

- The average rent cost for a one bedroom apartment in Guelph and Wellington as of Oct. 2009 was \$766. As of April 2008 a two bedroom was \$866.<sup>17</sup> A single individual with no dependents receiving Ontario Works receives \$356 per month for shelter costs.<sup>18</sup>
- Guelph and Wellington have 2,754 social housing units (2238 in Guelph and 516 in Wellington) of those 2,430 are Rent Geared to Income units.<sup>19</sup>
- There are 211 Rent Supplement Units (50 are subsidized units in affordable housing).<sup>20</sup>
- The shelters in Guelph and Wellington continue to be used frequently. There were a total of 1660 individual visits to shelters in 2008.<sup>21</sup>
- In 2008 approximately 138 visits were made to the shelters by individuals each month.<sup>22</sup>

**Education**

Level of education is an indicator of poverty. Below is some information on the level of educational attainment for individuals living in Guelph and Wellington.

- 14.8% of individuals aged 25 to 64 years living in all of Wellington County (City of Guelph included) do not have at least a high school certificate. This is higher than the provincial rate for the same population which is 13.6%.<sup>23</sup>

**Summary**

The statistics are very clear and indicate that there is an increasing need for services that will assist individuals living in relative and absolute poverty. Observations made by service providers already indicate that they are seeing an increase in families and individuals using their services and they are stretched to their limits. As the costs of housing, basic food items, and the number of individuals in need of Ontario Works and Employment Insurance supports all increase, planning around how to support individuals that are going to be in need of the services in our community, is essential.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> Government of Canada (2006). Economic Concepts: Poverty. Retrieved January 2009, from <http://canadianeconomy.gc.ca/english/economy/poverty.html>
- <sup>2</sup> Statistics Canada (2006/2007). Low Income Cut-offs for 2007 and Low Income Measures for 2006. <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75f0002m/75f0002m2008004-eng.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada (2006) Community Profiles: Wellington County: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92591/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=3523&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&Data=Count&SearchText=wellington>
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid
- <sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada (2006). Income Status Before Tax and Income Status After Tax (8) and Economic Family Status and Age Groups (80) for the Persons in Private Households of Canada, Provinces, Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations, 2005. <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/topics/RetrieveProductTable.cfm?TPL=RETR&ALEVEL=3&APATH=3&CATNO=&DETAIL=0&DIM=&DS=99&FL=0&FREE=0&GAL=0&GC=99&GK=NA&GRP=1&IPS=&METH=0&ORDER=1&PID=94206&PTYPE=88971.97154&RL=0&S=1&ShowAll=No&StartRow=1&SUB=0&Temporal=2006&Theme=81&VID=0&VNAMEEF=&VNAMEF=&GID=844116>
- <sup>7</sup> Ontario Association of Foodbanks Annual Survey results. Information retrieved: January 2009.
- <sup>8</sup> Ontario Association of Foodbanks (2009). Hunger Report. <http://www.oafb.ca/assets/pdfs/OHR2009Red.pdf>
- <sup>9</sup> Ontario Association of Food Banks Special Report: In The Midst of the Storm: The Impact of the Economic Downturn on Ontario's Food Banks. <http://www.oafb.ca/assets/pdfs/SpecialReport.pdf>
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> Personal Correspondence with Wellington County Social Services employee Rico Sabatini. January 2009.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> Personal Correspondence with Service Canada employee Joanne Delaney. January 2010.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>17</sup> Wellington and Guelph Housing Services (2008). 2008 Housing by the Numbers.
- <sup>18</sup> Personal Correspondence with Wellington County Social Services employee Rico Sabatini. January 2009.
- <sup>19</sup> Wellington and Guelph Housing Services (2008). 2008 Housing by the Numbers.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Personal Correspondence with Wellington County Social Services employee Goldie Barth. February 2009.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Statistics Canada (2006) Community Profiles: Wellington County: <http://www12.statcan.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/prof/92591/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=3523&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&Data=Count&SearchText=wellington>