

## **Nutrition North Canada**

- **Nutrition North Canada helps to make perishable and nutritious foods more affordable and accessible to residents of eligible isolated northern communities that lack year-round road, rail or marine access.**
- **The program subsidizes perishable foods flown in by air, and certain non-perishable and essential items brought in by seasonal sealift, barge or winter road.**
- **Nutrition North Canada has expanded its list of subsidized food and essential items to include cleaning and personal hygiene products.**
- **Northerners are now also benefiting from the program's new Harvesters Support Grant which is increasing access to traditional foods and alleviating the high costs associated with hunting and harvesting activities.**

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**If pressed on COVID-19 measures**

- To offset the financial burden caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government of Canada has also announced a one-time financial injection of \$25 million to the NNC subsidy program. This is to ensure that Northern families have access to nutritious food and personal hygiene products.
- Subsidy rates will be increased on basic and essential goods that families require during this challenging period.
- By providing additional subsidies on a broad range of items, residents of isolated communities are better able to afford to feed and protect themselves and their families.
- This measure came into effect on May 1<sup>st</sup> and will extend until March 31, 2021.
- We trust that retailers are enacting social distancing in their stores, in keeping with provincial and territorial guidelines.

**If pressed on food eligibility:**

- To help northerners afford nutritious food and other essentials their families need, Nutrition North Canada has added more non-perishable food and hygiene items.
- Canned meat, with the exception of canned fish and seafood, and boxed macaroni and cheese are not currently eligible.
- The eligibility list continues to be updated in conversation with our Indigenous partners, and we will be guided by their advice as we work to improve it.

### **If pressed on the Harvesters Support Grant**

- Our Government understands how important it is that northern families have access to more affordable, healthy food.
- This is why, in collaboration with Indigenous partners, we have developed the Harvesters Support Grant, to improve access to traditional foods by alleviating the high costs associated with traditional hunting and harvesting activities.
- Funding for the first year of the Grant has been allocated to Indigenous partners, and the Government of Canada is working to quickly deliver the next wave of money.

### **If pressed on Transparency regarding the Subsidy**

- In order to further enhance transparency, the program is committed to working with Indigenous and northern partners on establishing a northern-based audit review committee to ensure that suppliers and retailers have passed on the subsidy to consumers.

### **If pressed on Food Security**

- The objective of Nutrition North Canada is to help make perishable, nutritious food more accessible and more affordable than it otherwise would be for residents of isolated northern communities.
- Food security is a complex, multifaceted and multijurisdictional issue, requiring an array of innovative and horizontal approaches.
- No single department, institution, organization or initiative has the capacity required to address the issue of food security on their own.
- That's why we are committed to improving food security in the North through a whole-of-government approach that includes working with Provinces, Territories, and Indigenous leadership and communities.

## **Background**

The Nutrition North Canada program's objective is to help make perishable, nutritious food more accessible and more affordable than it otherwise would be to residents of isolated northern communities that lack year-round surface access (i.e. permanent road, rail, or marine). There are currently 116 communities eligible for the full subsidy available under the program.

The impact of the program on food prices is measured through a "Revised Northern Food Basket", which reflects the cost of food in isolated northern communities. The cost of the Revised Northern Food Basket in March 2019 was lower by \$4.41 (or 1.03%) than in March 2011, prior to the launch of the program. According to Statistics Canada, the price of food purchased from stores elsewhere in Canada increased by 10.5% over that same time period.

In the 2018 Fall Economic Statement, the government announced an additional investment in the program of \$62.6 million over five years starting in 2019–20, with \$10.4 million per year on an ongoing basis. These investments support program enhancements such as a new targeted subsidy level for essential food items and childcare goods for communities most in need, and a seasonal surface transportation subsidy for items shipped by sealift and winter road. Additionally, the program continues to develop a Harvesters Support Grant, to help alleviate the high costs associated with traditional hunting and harvesting and improve access to country foods.

To face the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government announced a one-time financial injection of \$25 million in order to increase Nutrition North Canada's subsidy rates on nutritious food and essential items. The targeted/highest subsidy level has been increased by 50cents/kg, and the higher subsidy level has been increased by \$1/kg. By providing an additional subsidy on a broad range of items, residents of isolated communities will be better able to afford to feed and protect themselves and their families. These changes are temporary measures to assist residents of isolated northern communities during this challenging period. This decision will extend until March 31, 2021.

Program development and implementation is informed by the Nutrition North Canada Advisory Board, which provides advice to the Minister, and two important engagement forums at the working level: the Indigenous Working Group, which is made up of representatives of First Nations organizations that serve communities eligible for Nutrition North Canada; and the Inuit-Crown Food Security Working Group, which was created by the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee to work towards food security across Inuit Nunangat. The Department continues to work with its Indigenous partners to enhance the program in making it more accountable, transparent, and culturally relevant for Northerners.

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<b>Riding:</b>	Larry Bagnell, Yukon (Lib); Michael McLeod, Northwest Territories (Lib); Mumilaaq Qaqqaq, Nunavut (NDP); Niki Ashton, Churchill - Keewatinook Aski (NDP); Sylvie Bérubé, Abitibi-Baie-James-Nunavik-Eeyou (BQ); Yvonne Jones, Labrador (Lib).	
<b>Contact Person:</b>	Emilija Charest	(819) 956 -5212
<b>Consulted:</b>	N/A	
<b>Parliamentary:</b>	Rebecca Wong	(819) 953-9603
<b>Approved by:</b>	Serge Beaudoin/ADM-NAO	(819) 953-3760