

Food costs up to 93 per cent more in Nunavik than in Quebec City: Laval price study

Price of food is highest in Inukjuak and Quaqtak

SARAH ROGERS

KUJJUAQ — When you buy food in Nunavik you'll pay an average of 65 per cent more for the food you buy than someone in Quebec City.

That's the latest finding of a team of Université Laval researchers who compared 133 food products in Nunavik stores with those in Quebec City area this past spring.

"We did similar research five and 10 years ago," Laval researcher Gerard Duhaime told a meeting of Kativik Regional Government regional councillors Sept. 15. "This time, we have the new results, and I have to say they are pretty much consistent with what we've observed in the past."

The Nunavik Comparative Price Index 2011 shows that items like milk costs \$3.79 in Nunavik compared to \$2.31 in the South.

And Nunavimmiut pay \$4.17 for carton of eggs — much more than the \$2.91 cost in Quebec City.

Food prices are highest in Inukjuak, where residents pay 86 per cent more for food, and in Quaqtak, where they pay 92 per cent more.

The prices of household and personal items show even sharper differences between north and south.

Powdered laundry detergent costs \$17.92 in Nunavik, almost double the \$7.99 cost in the Quebec City area.

And Nunavimmiut pay \$28.89 for diapers, a lot more than the \$16.74 cost in the South.

Overall, 2011 consumer prices for household products come up 114 per cent more expensive in Nunavik than in the Quebec City area, while personal care products are 76 per cent more expensive.

On average, the Laval study shows consumer prices are higher in all villages compared to Kuujuaq, where residents pay about 46 per cent more than shoppers in the Quebec City area.

When researchers collected their data in April, 2011, the price of gasoline was on average six per cent less expensive in Nunavik than in the Quebec City area.

But, a longer-term look at prices between August 2010 and May 2011 showed gasoline to be more expensive in Nunavik by eight per cent.

Research was conducted by local employment officers in all but one community.

Duhaime and his Laval colleagues plan to carry out an additional analysis of food prices every four months, from September, 2011 until December, 2012.

That's to evaluate any changes to prices as the Nutrition North program is finally implemented in October, 2012 and that program's list of subsidized items is finalized.

Due to those upcoming changes, Duhaime suggested KRG officials wait on the next round of data before

deciding to modify subsidies to different villages or items.

The analysis of food prices under Nutrition North follows a recommendation of a group looking at ways to reduce the cost of living in Nunavik.

“Despite all the financial assistance available, Nunavik consumers continue to pay much more for their consumer goods and services than residents of other regions of Quebec,” said this working group’s report.

Louis Mercier, the KRG’s political attaché in Quebec City, said the regional government hopes Quebec will partner with Nunavik to look at the impacts of Nutrition North in the region

“There’s this concept that there will always be a cost difference between north and south, but I don’t accept that,” he told regional councillors last week.