

Project Summary:

In Cape Breton, as more families leave the island and the number of seniors grows, organizations like New Dawn Meals on Wheels find themselves stepping in to provide support services that allow seniors to live happy, healthy and independent lives in their own homes. Aging in place can create numerous nutrition-related challenges. Inadequate diet can lead to compromised health and poorer ability to rebound after illness or surgery. Meals on Wheels delivers over 9000 meals a year to seniors who are unable to prepare meals for themselves, providing nutritious foods as well as social interaction and relief to caregivers.

Ensuring food security for a nutritionally at-risk aging population through sustained supply of nutritionally rich, fresh foods, while maintaining economic affordability is a challenge on Cape Breton island. This project will engage with researcher(s) at Cape Breton University to develop nutritional guidelines, identify gaps existing in achieving those nutritional requirements, and formulate strategies to fill those gaps. Continued consultation between nutrition educators, Meals on Wheels volunteers, and local food experts may identify specific foods which are valuable for their nutritional value and palatability. These foods could be grown locally in collaboration with the Cape Breton University greenhouse to enable extended season supply of these fresh ingredients.

Projected Benefit

Age-related conditions can change a senior's relationship to food, creating the need for more nutritionally dense food. Better meeting their nutritional needs will benefit their health and allow them to more quickly recover from illness and surgery. In addition, working with the Cape Breton University greenhouse could improve crop planning and provide a wholesale market for the crops.

Increasing accessibility to nutritious foods is empowering for communities. Enabling sustained supply of nutritionally rich foods that are locally produced is an opportunity to support our local communities through increased capacity and realization of community economic development goals.