SUBJECT: Emergency Food System Strategic Directions (CS09072) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

(a) That the “No One Goes Hungry: Strategic Directions for Hamilton’s Emergency Food System Plan 2010-2012” attached as Appendix A to Report CS09072, be approved.

(b) That staff and the Emergency Food System Planning Team be directed to report back to the Emergency & Community Services Committee on or before October 20, 2010, to provide an update on the implementation of “No One Goes Hungry: Strategic Directions for Hamilton’s Emergency Food System Plan 2010-2012”.

(c) That funds in the amount of $45,000, to be funded from the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program, be provided to Hamilton Food Share in support of its member agency’s 2009 Christmas Hamper Program.

(d) That Item “I” – Strategic Plan for the Emergency Food Sector, be considered complete and removed from the Emergency & Community Services Committee’s outstanding business list.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Emergency food providers for both food banks and hot meal programs in Hamilton collaborated with the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction to develop a joint vision and strategic direction called “No One Goes Hungry: Strategic Directions for Hamilton’s Emergency Food System 2010 - 2012 (attached as Appendix A). This is the first time emergency food providers and the City of Hamilton have worked together to articulate a vision for emergency food services and a plan to achieve it. The strategic plan represents a new level of cooperation and commitment by the emergency food providers and the City of Hamilton. Prior to the present economic downturn, high rates of service use strained the ability of emergency food providers to meet the needs of the community. The economic downturn has created even higher levels of food bank use and has further highlighted weaknesses within the system such as inadequate staffing and provision of food within the programs. Although the report is high-level in nature, it provides strategic direction to the food banks, hot meal programs and the City of Hamilton for the next three years. Details of the strategies will be further expanded in the development of the implementation plan.

Community Services staff will seek funding from the federally-funded Homelessness Partnership Strategy (HPI) for a Project Manager to support implementation of the plan as outlined in the report. Although the participating agencies are committed to progressing with the plan their limited resources are directed to direct service delivery.

Hamilton Food Share and its member agencies are once again seeking support for their Christmas Hamper Program (attached as Appendix B). Hamilton Food Share has requested $100,000 to support the Christmas Hamper Program for 2009. Community Service has identified $45,000 in unallocated funding from the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program (CHPP) that may be directed to Hamilton Food Share to support the Christmas Hamper Program for 2009. The CHPP funding has no net levy impact. Unlike other years, The City of Hamilton has responded by providing $184,000 for staffing and food purchases during the critical summer period. This money was an emergency stop gap measure to ensure that the service would continue to operate during a period of increased demand. Additionally, Ontario Works has begun a pilot project to provide food vouchers to Ontario Works clients. This $200,000 initiative is as an important strategy to reduce food bank use.

BACKGROUND:

History of a Strategic Plan for Hamilton’s Food Banks

The idea of developing a plan for Hamilton’s emergency food system dates back to 2005 when The City of Hamilton funded a needs assessment of food banks and hot meal programs in Hamilton. The primary purpose of the needs assessment was to inform the development of a Call for Applications (CFA) from the federally-funded Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI). One of the findings from the needs assessment was that the sector would benefit from enhanced coordination and
planning. The development of a plan within the emergency food sector became part of the City of Hamilton’s strategic plan to address homelessness, *Everyone Has a Home*, which was approved by Council in March of 2007 (ECS07020).

In 2007, Council approved a staff recommendation to provide financial support to the Christmas Hamper Program conducted by Hamilton Food Share and its member agencies (ECS07101(a)). That report also indicated that support for future requests would be contingent upon the development of a strategic plan for the emergency food sector.

**Planning Process**

The City of Hamilton provided financial support to the planning process for this report through the federally-funded Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI). A consultant, Karen Smith of EnMark Consulting was retained through a Call for Applications (CFA) to conduct an initial environmental scan which provided the foundation for the development of the strategic plan which was completed in May 2009. The report was informed by scanning other communities for promising practices, reviewing relevant literature, interviews with community stakeholders, a focus group with food bank and hot meal program clients and interviews with stakeholders including representatives from:

- The Campaign for Adequate Welfare & Disability Benefits
- Community Food Security Stakeholders Advisory Committee
- Good Shepherd Centres
- Hamilton Community Foundation
- Hamilton Food Share
- Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction
- Living Rock Ministries
- Welcome Inn, and
- The City of Hamilton – Community Services, Public Health Services and Ontario Works

A planning team was convened in the summer of 2009 to develop the strategic plan. The planning team members are listed below:

- Denise Arkell, Neighbour to Neighbour
- Kari Astles, Welcome Inn
- Dinzel Baggs, Salvation Army, Hamilton
- Lisa Burrows, Salvation Army, Hamilton
- Tamara Coleman-Lawrie, Wesley Urban Ministries
- Tom Cooper, Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction
- Alan Craig, Living Rock Ministries
- Brian Kreps, City of Hamilton, Community Services
- Tom Heeney, Mission Services
- Sue Mastracci, Ontario Works
- Shirley Molloy, Salvation Army, Dundas
The planning process included two workshops with the planning team members. A consultation was also held with community stakeholders to receive feedback on the draft plan.

**No One Goes Hungry: Strategic Directions for Hamilton’s Emergency Food System 2010-2012**

The plan is presented in its entirety in Appendix A and is summarized below. The vision is that “Hamilton, as the best place to raise a child, has an integrated, sustained and coordinated system of emergency food services that responds effectively to those in need. No one goes hungry.” The vision builds on the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction’s aspiration by focusing on the importance of preventing hunger. A coordinated and stable system of emergency food services is seen as a critical part of the fight against hunger.

Five strategic directions to help achieve the vision are identified in the report:

*Financial Stability* – This is a crucial strategic direction which focuses on the pursuit of financial resources to provide an annual, stable source(s) of funds for emergency food services. Food banks and hot meal programs are largely funded through individual and corporate donations of money and food. These resources are dependent on the economic environment which is unstable and therefore reduces the ability of food banks and hot meal programs to serve people in need.

*Standards* – Focuses on improving formal standards across the emergency food services system in order to improve the quality and quantity of food provision, service standards, nutrition standards, and the overall capacity of the system.

*Education* - Focuses on education about food security, nutrition, appropriate and effective donations, and how financial contributions may be leveraged to provide the maximum amount of food. It includes education for the community at large, for donors, for volunteers, for staff of emergency food service agencies, for funders and for other stakeholders.

*Advocacy* - Focuses on collective advocacy efforts that will capitalize on the unified voice and the first-hand knowledge of emergency food providers and the people they serve. It includes advocating for a realistic living wage, for enhanced social assistance benefits, for action at all levels of government, for better nutrition in schools, for a Healthy Food Supplement, and for allocation of funds from targeted sources.

*Integration and Coordination* - Focuses on efforts to integrate the work of emergency food providers so that resources may be effectively used and that people may be served better. This will include better coordinating the hours of food bank operations,
distribution of food resources and human resources. Opportunities will be explored to work with other community organizations that are not currently involved with providing emergency food assistance and who are working on longer term strategies for food security.

Next Steps

The strategic directions presented in the report are high level and must be further developed. The Planning Team members have committed to continuing to meet to develop an implementation plan with specific activities and timelines. A progress report will be brought back to Council in one-year’s time.

To facilitate the development of the implementation plan, the Planning Team is seeking resources to hire a project manager to coordinate the development of the implementation plan. Emergency food providers have a small number of employees and rely heavily on volunteers. While they are committed to carrying out the plan, they have limited resources to devote to the coordination of the plan. It is recommended that a project manager be hired through Food Share or one of its member agencies. The cost is estimated to be $73,000 including wages, benefits, office expenses and training. Community Services staff will seek funding from the federally-funded Homelessness Partnership Strategy (HPI) for a Project Manager to support implementation of the plan as outlined in the report. City staff will maintain an active role in the project as it moves forward.

Hamilton Food Share and its member agencies are once again seeking support for their Christmas Hamper Program (attached as Appendix B) Food bank use has increased dramatically over the past year. Hamilton Food Share’s data shows that food bank use increased by 26% from March 2008 to March 2009. Individual food banks have indicated that this trend has continued. This has raised concerns among food banks about their ability to meet demand for hampers during the Christmas holiday season. Hamilton Food Share has requested $100,000 to support the Christmas Hamper Program for 2009. Community Service has identified $45,000 in unallocated funding from the Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program that may be directed to Hamilton Food Share to support the Christmas Hamper Program for 2009.

ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

Unlike other mandated social service programs such as Social Housing, Child Care or Ontario Works, municipalities have no provincially legislated mandate to manage or fund emergency food services. The services provided by food banks and hot meal programs are recognized as a critical lifeline for many Hamiltonians experiencing a financial crisis or living on a low income. In Hamilton, decisions related to emergency food services have been made on an ad hoc basis as there is no existing framework or strategic plan to work within. The strategies as outlined in the report represent an important step forward for emergency food services, for the community and for the City. While the vision and directions are presently at a high level, they provide a critical framework for future planning.
Although the city is not a service system manager for the emergency food system, it does play a significant role in the service as a funder and service delivery partner. Financial assistance and case management services are delivered through the Ontario Works Program to a common client group - those who are most in need in our community.

The City of Hamilton provides funding for and works in partnership with the emergency food service system through Community Partnership Grants, Emergency Food Assistance funding, ad-hoc funding requests and for projects such as the subject of this report.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:**

Funding for only a portion of Hamilton Food Share’s request has been identified. Council could choose to support the full request and the remaining $55,000 would be added to Community Service current budget deficit for 2009. Funding the full request would further enhance Food Share and its member agencies’ ability to serve families in need through the Christmas Hamper Program.

**FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The City of Hamilton provides limited annual funding for food banks and hot meal programs through the maintenance budget. Funding in the amount of $306,909 is also provided to several food banks and hot meal programs through the Community Partnership Program. Agencies raise most of the funding for these services through individual and corporate donors.

Due to the financial downturn, 2009 has seen a marked increase in food bank use. The City of Hamilton has responded by providing $184,000 for staffing and food purchases during the critical summer period. This money was an emergency stop gap measure to ensure that the service would continue to operate during a period of increased demand. Additionally, Ontario Works has begun a pilot project to provide food vouchers to Ontario Works clients. This $200,000 initiative is as an important strategy to reduce food bank use.

Funding for the project manager will be sought from the federally-funded Homelessness Partnering Strategy. It would be an important investment in the development of the system. It would help lay the ground work for increased collaboration through the development of the strategic plan. It would also provide a valuable resource for outreach to other potential partners.

There are no staffing or legal implications to note.

**POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:**

None.
RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

The strategic plan was developed with participation of members of the Project Team which included representatives from Hamilton Food Share and its nine member agencies as well as representatives from Social Housing and Homelessness Division, Ontario Works, Public Health Services and the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction. Service users and community stakeholders were also consulted during the development of the scan and the plan itself.

A representative from Finance and Administration reviewed this report.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, and economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Partnerships are promoted. Endorsing this plan would also formalize the partnership between the City of Hamilton and the emergency food providers to work together to alleviate hunger in Hamilton.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☐ Yes ☑ No

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Poverty is reduced. Access to adequate food is a precursor to reducing poverty. If people are concerned with life’s necessities it is hard to focus on efforts to build personal resources. Endorsement of this plan would help ensure that Hamilton’s in emergencies or living on low incomes have access to food through the emergency food system.

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines? ☐ Yes ☑ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☐ Yes ☑ No
NO ONE GOES HUNGRY

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR HAMILTON’S EMERGENCY FOOD SYSTEM 2010-2012

OCTOBER 2009
The preparation of this document was made possible through the financial support of the City of Hamilton, Community Services.
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We work towards a day when every individual across Hamilton has sufficient and appropriate food to meet their needs, including their cultural and nutritional needs. A day when no one goes hungry. Until that day, many in our community will continue to need assistance to access and obtain food and to avoid hunger. This strategic plan, a first for our collective system of services, is directed at meeting the needs of those individuals over the next three years. It represents an opportunity for us to work better together, to enhance partnerships and to seek out new and innovative initiatives. The bottom line is that things must improve. Although the challenges are substantial, our commitment is significant. We cannot and should not, however, face these challenges alone.

We have sought out the support and endorsement of stakeholders beyond our own system of services, and we have been informed by the voices of those who use food banks and hot meal programs. We have worked to align our thinking with existing community initiatives and sought consistency with the City of Hamilton’s stated vision and directions.

We have prepared this plan intending to build on work that has already been done, and respectful of the many stakeholders who are or may one day be involved in service provision as well as users of our services. This plan looks ahead three years – not a particularly long time in the overall scheme of things. But it is a solid step in the right direction, and one we hope can be followed by future planning efforts to further strengthen Hamilton’s emergency food system.

Hamilton, October 2009.
Providers of emergency food services in Hamilton have wanted a strategic plan for some time, and the City has encouraged its development. This planning document follows on the recent review of issues and challenges facing Hamilton’s emergency food network by the City of Hamilton’s Community Services Department (see: Hunger in Hamilton – Emergency Food Considerations for the City of Hamilton, May 2009). The Hunger in Hamilton report provided a comprehensive snapshot of the emergency food landscape in Hamilton, including data and stakeholder input that informs the planning process in additional and meaningful ways. A strategic plan sets out a direction (or strategy) and allocates resources to pursue that strategy. By definition, it concerns itself with future activities. Given the shifting landscape in Hamilton’s emergency food sector in recent times, it seemed prudent to set this plan over a 3-year period rather than attempt to craft anything longer term.

In its simplest form, a strategic plan concerns itself with the present day (where we are now) in order to set a direction for the future (where do we want to be?) and a plan for implementation (how will we get there?). An additional component, evaluation, determines whether or not the plan has been effective in its outcomes and achievements. This precedent-setting document sets a course for our network of emergency food providers in Hamilton, and we believe our collective commitment to strengthen this community’s response to hunger will be a significant asset as implementation of this plan moves forward. The organizations, large and small, providing emergency food services presently carry the lion’s share of this community’s burden in responding to food insecurity. For many years we have occupied the front lines alone, with scant resources and an almost incomprehensible network of volunteer labour. This plan sets out our vision and strategy to strengthen these efforts. It recognizes that we can no longer meet the needs of hungry Hamiltonians by ourselves, and that, together, we can benefit from collective efforts, community support and strategic action.

Although this plan specifically seeks to implement steps within the emergency food network over the next three years, it will fall to the entire community to support this effort and continue to take steps to alleviate hunger. It will be important that this plan be integrated along with other community initiatives, and embraced by stakeholders and community members across the city.

There is much yet to be done, and we face some significant challenges. This plan is a preliminary step – our implementation efforts will need to be carefully thought out as well as widely supported. We can’t do it alone.
The providers of emergency food services in Hamilton are independent organizations but are also members of Hamilton Food Share. This afforded an obvious opportunity to build on the membership’s collective work by allocating a central planning role to Food Share as a hub organization. The Executive Director of Hamilton Food Share, Joanne Santucci, worked closely with City staff and with EnMark Associates (the planning consultants) during the preliminary stages of this planning project. As work progressed, individual provider agencies and key stakeholders were asked to take part in specific planning exercises to refine and focus the plan.

The Planning Team, in its entirety, was comprised of:

Denise Arkell, Neighbour to Neighbour  
Kari Astles, Welcome Inn  
Dinzel Baggs, Salvation Army, Hamilton  
Lisa Burrows, Salvation Army, Hamilton  
Tamara Coleman-Lawrie, Wesley Urban Ministries  
Tom Cooper, Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction  
Alan Craig, Living Rock Ministries  
Brian Kreps, City of Hamilton, Community Services  
Tom Heeney, Mission Services  
Sue Mastracci, Ontario Works  
Shirley Molloy, Salvation Army, Dundas  
Wendy Roy, St. Matthews House  
Carmen Salciccioli., Good Shepherd Centres  
Joanne Santucci, Hamilton Food Share  
Lisa Taraba, City of Hamilton, Public Health Services
Overview of the Emergency Food System

Hamilton has a formal network of 9 organizations providing food to those in need, each an independent organization but also a member of Hamilton Food Share (making a total of 10 organizations):

- Good Shepherd Centres
- Living Rock Ministries
- Mission Services of Hamilton
- Neighbour To Neighbour
- St. Matthew’s House
- The Salvation Army
- Stoney Creek Food Bank
- Welcome Inn
- Wesley Urban Ministries
- Hamilton Food Share

This network of emergency food services spends more than $3.3 million annually to feed those in need. Hamilton Food Share also extends its services to assist a number of women’s shelters, men’s hostels, youth programs and breakfast programs. A number of other community food programs exist, however these are informal or periodic programs that are not officially integrated with the providers listed above or with Hamilton Food Share.

The City of Hamilton’s Public Health Services Department has identified¹ the following (including Food Share member programs):

- 3 community gardens
- 1 community kitchen
- 7 congregate dining locations
- 12 food banks
- 6 free meal programs
- 5 Meals on Wheels programs
- 5 perinatal programs (multiple locations)
- 7 shopping/transportation services
- 1 student nutrition network

Although they are not all specifically referenced in this plan, these programs should be recognized for their contributions to the community and encouraged to join with our collective efforts at alleviating hunger. We will seek ways to connect with these programs and invite their input and participation as we move forward.

Who Uses Emergency Food Services?

The needs of families and individuals who turn to emergency food services for assistance have been central to our planning process. Their input to our work has informed our thinking, and our combined front-line experience has served to guide our strategic choices. Things must improve for those who are experiencing hunger, and our response to their needs is tantamount to any measure of our success.

More than 19,600 Hamiltonians used local food banks in March 2009 (more than 8,300 of these were children), and still others are relying on hot meal programs. We do not know how many more are helped by neighbours, given assistance by a faith group, or otherwise given support in informal ways.

### Food Bank Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>March 2009</th>
<th>March 2008</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>11,289</td>
<td>9,284</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>8,313</td>
<td>6,227</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total People</td>
<td>19,602</td>
<td>15,511</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Households</td>
<td>7,685</td>
<td>6,234</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emergency Food Action Committee, 2009

The total number of people accessing food banks in March 2009 was the highest ever recorded by a Hamilton Hunger Count report (Emergency Food Action Committee). The system trying to feed them has also grown – more than 50 front-line staff and some 7000 volunteers distributing 4.8 million pounds of food. Still, providers are reporting anticipated shortfalls for the coming year.

*The share of low-income families in Hamilton is greater than Ontario as a whole.*

In 2005, 11.7% of Ontario’s families were living in low income as measured using Statistics Canada’s Low Income Cut-Off. The proportion of low-income families in Hamilton was higher than Ontario overall at 14.3%\(^2\).

Statistics Canada figures (May ’09) confirm a 97% hike in employment insurance recipients in Hamilton (March ’09 compared with March ’08) and a local unemployment rate hovering at about 8%. The local Ontario Works caseload stands at about 12,000 cases.

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According to *Incomes and Poverty in Hamilton* (April, 2009):

- Households on social assistance are not even able to access the basic necessities of life
- Those among the lowest income groups face daily trade-offs and compromises like paying the rent instead of buying food
- Poverty is unevenly distributed across the City of Hamilton
- The poverty rate among children in Hamilton is increasing
- More than 50% of recent immigrants live below the Low Income Cut-Off
- Social assistance benefit rates have historically provided emergency incomes far below the poverty line
- Monthly income from social assistance is not enough to cover even a handful of the basic necessities (e.g. heat, hydro, clothing, bus tickets, telephone, laundry, personal hygiene items) after paying for food and rent

*Given the inadequacy of current benefit rates, most households on Ontario Works (OW) are dependent on local food banks to survive. In addition, given that the average rental unit in Hamilton is beyond their means, these households are often forced into unsuitable or unsafe housing. From previous recessions, we know that it is the poorest people in a community who suffer the biggest brunt of economic downturns...for those on OW, the hope of leaving social assistance gets dimmer as the competition for low wage jobs increases during a recession.*

Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton, April 2009, *Incomes and Poverty in Hamilton*

**The Community Environment**

There are important documented differences between providing emergency food and helping people escape poverty. While closely connected, these are different goals and require different approaches, tools and resources. Emergency food providers know this and continue to look for ways to be effective on both counts wherever we are able.

*The relegation of food issues to the lower end of the urban agenda means that the varied and complex ways that food issues are embedded in our lives are not well understood by city residents. The same holds true for most urban policy officials who fail to comprehend the importance of the urban food system for the quality of urban life. In fact, food is very much an urban issue, affecting the local economy, the environment, public health, and quality of neighborhoods.*

Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999

Our efforts to collect and utilize enhanced data through HIFIS\(^3\), for example, are now paying off with more and better information that can guide our planning and help to inform our partners, our funders and other stakeholders.

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\(^3\) Homeless Individuals and Families Information System, initially utilized by shelters but recently revamped for use by emergency food services.
Two focus groups held in March 2009 will help to further inform our thinking. Hosted by the Community Action Program for Children (CAPC), these focus groups examined the needs of individuals using programs in two east-end neighbourhoods – the Riverdale Community and the CATCH Community (Quigley Rd.). Emphasis was placed on considerations for children 0-6 years. From these discussions, we know that these neighbourhoods see food and good nutrition as important to their children’s health and wellbeing. In the CATCH neighbourhood the food bank is well utilized and cited as an important community program. They identified a bigger food bank with a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables and more gardens as part of their “ideal” community. The Riverdale community identified a nutrition program as a missing component in their service mix and said that a nutrition program as well as after school snacks and a community garden would be part of their “ideal” community.

Our consideration of advocacy will be informed by Winston Husbands’ work in advocating for Toronto’s major food bank network to transform itself into an anti-hunger movement, with the Daily Bread Food Bank (at the centre of this network and Canada’s largest food bank) becoming an anti-hunger organization.

Despite their stated intentions, these food banks have not succeeded in addressing the structural features of this problem. This failure, though understandable, reflects the limitations of the traditional food bank system. Traditional food banks are geared to providing emergency assistance (hunger alleviation) but not to addressing hunger as a structural phenomenon.

Pothukuchi (2007) looked at a five-year period evaluating more than 200 projects funded by the USDA Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program. This research highlighted the key factors that were identified as contributing to a successful Community Food Project.

Other than substantive objectives related to local food production and meeting the food needs of low income populations, the CFP Program specifies numerous process-related objectives and priorities. These include community capacity building, collaborative stakeholder processes, multi-system and interagency approaches, and resident participation in addressing local food, agriculture, and nutrition issues. Sustaining activities and outcomes beyond the life of the project is another key program priority.

Key characteristics of successful community food projects were identified in

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Pothukucki’s study as follows:

- They show progress in meeting particular community food needs.
- They are able to “hit the ground running”.
- They gain community buy-in and support of activities.
- They adapt effectively to changing and unforeseen conditions.
- They are able to build and strengthen effective community-based networks.
- They develop innovative, multi-sector approaches.
- They build community food leadership.
- They are able to sustain selected activities after the grant ends.

**Additional Planning Considerations**

Much of the early planning and development work that is incorporated in this plan was based on the findings of previous reports and research conducted in Hamilton. We have individually and collectively crunched numbers, analyzed information and considered the thoughtful input of many people. We have concerned ourselves with what others are doing, what works and what needs further investigation. Part of our deliberations included a review of what can be considered “best practices” in the field. These were summarized in the *Hungry in Hamilton* report along with the work of Mark Winne, a Food and Society Policy Fellow and co-founder of the national Community Food Security Coalition in the United States, who has looked at these best practices and concluded\(^5\) that planning efforts should be informed by the indicators found in a typical community food assessment:

- The number and accessibility of affordable retail food stores that carry a wide range of healthy food choices in or near lower-income neighborhoods
- Public transportation systems and their ability to easily connect residents of lower income communities to affordable, high quality food stores and farmers’ markets
- Rates of diet-related health problems including obesity and diabetes as well as infant mortality, low-birth weight babies, and iron-deficient anemia.
- The prevalence, adequacy of funding, and the coordination between public health and nutrition education efforts that are designed to address the above conditions
- The amount of time that a school system devotes to nutrition education in their standard curriculum; and the degree to which the school system promotes healthy eating through the food choices in their cafeteria and vending machines
- The adequacy of funding and staff to do outreach for food assistance programs
- The viability of the local and regional agriculture sector, use of sustainable farming practices, and the availability of distribution channels to make local and

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regional farm products available to all residents, businesses, and public institutions
- The average age of farmers, the loss of prime farmland, and other measures of farm viability
- The size of emergency food providers relative to demand, and progress toward downsizing food banks as demand declines and lower income families have the means to secure food through normal channels
- The existence of active venues for local and state food system planning, such as food policy councils, comprised of public agencies and private sector representatives.

These indicators extend beyond the current scope of our planning, but serve to inform our thinking as we look to implement strategic priorities in the future.

Winne has also studied a number of U.S. emergency food programs and found that they share several common strengths in their approaches and structures. Where appropriate, we will look for ways to address these as we move ahead with implementation of this plan:

- Address the food and nutrition needs of low income households and communities
- Synthesize two or more fields, e.g. food production and nutrition education
- Unite rural and urban concerns as well as producer and consumer concerns
- Achieve multiple benefits, e.g. create new supermarkets in low-income areas and provide job opportunities for neighborhood residents
- Incorporate community food system assessment, research, and planning into their work
- Take a systems approach to food system problems
- Create a broader constituency for food system issues

The research available to us included bold examples of other planning initiatives to help inform and encourage our thinking. For example, The Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care, the province’s population health promotion strategy, identified four priority areas around which it focuses its health promotion efforts – accessible nutritious food is one of these priorities. Their plan emphasizes “upstream” approaches that “work to address root causes of ill health by focusing on changing the conditions and environments in which people live, work and play. By developing healthy public policy, creating supportive environments and strengthening a community’s ability to take action on issues, the Strategy will work to remove or reduce barriers that make it harder for some people to be healthy than it is for others”. Even though this is a provincial strategy (with short-, medium- and long-range goals extending ten years into the future), we can be informed by its evidence-based approaches (i.e. The Good Food Box; the Community Schools Program; Food For All Coalition; and Food Charters) and inspired by its vision.
Priority goals for achieving accessible nutritious food have been established in Saskatchewan’s strategy:

To increase opportunities for people to enjoy more nutritious food in homes and community settings.  
To reduce the economic, geographic, social and cultural barriers that limit healthy eating habits.  
To advocate for food policies that promote and protect the health of Saskatchewan residents.

Food Banks Canada has developed a program to provide training and education about food handling safety for food banks across the country. The Safe Food Handling Program\(^6\) incorporates the standards of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency and provincial regulations in developing standards for its member food banks. The standards themselves were released in April 2009 along with a Food Bank Self Assessment, Donor Intake Form and a guide to food product codes for best before and expiry dates (training materials and workshops are to follow). The core program contains controls that all food banks have been asked to implement, while an additional 11 modules provide specific standards that food banks should implement as they apply to their own operations. A series of ten posters has also been produced for food banks to post within their facilities (e.g. handwashing, temperature, can defects). We will be incorporating this work into the development of our implementation plan.

The City of Toronto’s “official” definition of food security (Food and Hunger Action Committee, 2000; Toronto Food Policy Council, 1994) is a solid one:

1. The availability of a variety of foods at a reasonable cost.  
2. Ready access to quality grocery stores, food service operations or alternate food sources.  
3. Sufficient personal income to buy adequate foods for each household member each day.  
4. The freedom to choose personally acceptable foods.  
5. Legitimate confidence in the quality of the foods available.  
6. Easy access to understandable, accurate information about food and nutrition.  
7. The assurance of a viable and sustainable food production system.

As the City of Hamilton pursues options for food-related policy, including the potential for a food charter and a food policy council, we will urge the careful consideration of these defining elements.

While this document was being finalized, the Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB), of which Hamilton Food Share is a member, released current information about the state of food banks in Ontario. It reminds us of several disturbing trends experienced in the province as we near the close of 2009 and underscores the need for our strategic directions to be implemented:

- Ontario’s food banks are under tremendous pressure due to growing unemployment, continually increasing food prices, and rising demand.
- Over 225,000 full-time jobs have been lost in the province over the past twelve months and Ontario’s unemployment rate continues to rise.
- The price of groceries continues to rise at a rate well beyond inflation (4 per cent versus -0.8 per cent).
- Rising demand has placed pressure on the existing operations of Ontario’s food banks. Over 350,000 Ontarians are turning to food banks every month in 2009, a figure that has increased by 20 per cent since last year.
- Many food banks have struggled with declines in food donations in 2009. Approximately one in three food banks in Ontario have seen a decline in individual and corporate food and financial donations in 2009.
- The food supply of many of Ontario’s food banks is precariously low (the highest proportions of reported challenges with food supply since data collection began in 2005).
- Ontario’s food banks have been forced to respond to these challenges by purchasing more food, and in some cases, by rationing the available supply of donations. One in four food banks in Ontario have needed to reduce the average amount of food distributed in hampers in 2009.
- The average weekly expenditure for groceries for a typical family of three has increased by $432.64 annually since January 2008 (roughly the equivalent of more than 5 weeks of groceries).

Now more than ever before, we must work diligently to achieve results that are in line with our core mission as food banks working for a hunger free Ontario: to meet the immediate needs of those we serve, and to work towards actions that eliminate the need for our services. Our work is a reflection of society’s collective will to provide an immediate response to circumstances that should not exist in Ontario. No one should go hungry in our province.

Ontario Association of Food Banks 2009

Appendix C of this document also includes excerpts from How Much Does Healthy Eating Cost? (City of Hamilton, Public Health Services, July 2009) and The Cost of Basic Nutritious Food (City of Hamilton, Public Health Services, 2009).

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Within the broader context of the City of Hamilton’s vision, and the rallying cry that we be “the best place to raise a child”, we have developed a vision for the future of emergency food services in this community:

**Hamilton, as the best place to raise a child, has an integrated, sustained and coordinated system of emergency food services that responds effectively to those in need. No one goes hungry.**

While we collectively want to envision and strive for a community without hunger, we realize that all communities have a responsibility to ensure that emergency food services are in place for those who may need them regardless of the precipitating cause. We know that hunger often results from poverty, but we also recognize that other circumstances can lead to food insecurity. In order for our community to maintain the full continuum\(^8\) of food security measures known to be effective and essential, it is necessary to have emergency food services in place. Our vision, stated above, is that these services are integrated, sustained and coordinated, thereby responding effectively when called upon.

Our ultimate goal, and our ongoing rallying cry, is **no one goes hungry**.

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\(^8\) Please see the appendix of this document for a copy of *The Food Security Continuum*. 
We have collectively identified the following five strategic directions to guide our work over the coming 3 years and act as the focal points for further planning and development.

**Strategic Direction I – Financial Stability**

*Note: this is an overarching priority and will impact all the other strategic directions. We will pursue the remaining directions independently, but are unlikely to realize the full potential of those strategies without seeing success in this first priority.*

This crucial strategic direction focuses on the pursuit of financial assistance to provide an annual, stable source(s) of funds for emergency food services. It will strategically target sources for that funding, including the City of Hamilton. It includes funds needed for food, staffing, infrastructure (e.g. storage, transportation) and capital (i.e. updated and appropriate facilities). It also includes strategies such as finding leverage wherever possible in order to secure additional resources and aligning those resources appropriately in order to achieve our strategic directions.

Collectively, our system of emergency food services allocates a significant amount to this purpose annually (reflecting the sizeable contributions of our donor base). We are committed to working as a system in the collective pursuit of sustainable funding to meet the needs of those who rely on our services. This means not only planning together in a systemic fashion, but also allocating our resources and pursuing new resources in a collective and collaborative fashion. Our collective commitment to do this represents a significant change for our network of services, and potential risk given the autonomy of our individual agencies. Our strategic directions will guide these efforts and act as a filter through which we can assess and allocate resource opportunities strategically, and will apply to:

- allocating base resources
- pursuit of new initiatives
- pursuit of new funding
- realignment of existing resources
- leveraging opportunities
We will seek opportunities to involve funders (and potential funders) in this collective process. A number of key steps remain in our planning and pursuit of this direction – next steps will include defining and refining the specific needs across our system, identifying current system-wide allocations (our base), and quantifying the gap between the current financial base and the need in our community. Some of our immediate next steps in this regard will be informed by recent data collection efforts (e.g. summer 2009 Emergency Food Action Committee report). This data will provide a starting point from which we can build a more comprehensive financial picture and funding strategy. As well, we remain committed to ongoing efficiency efforts that will see the best possible use of all allocated funds.

**Strategic Direction II - Standards**

This strategic direction focuses on improving formal standards across the emergency food services system in order to improve the quality and quantity of food provision, service standards, nutrition standards, and the overall helping capacity of the system.

Along with the implementation of enhanced standards, we see opportunities for enhanced accountability. There will be a need to inform and educate our donor base about these issues, and to identify an appropriate process for complaints to be received and handled in a more systemic fashion. We are also committed to the application of standards that address the kinds of pressures and difficult circumstances our front line staff and volunteers are exposed to on a regular basis.

**Strategic Direction III - Education**

This strategic direction focuses on education about food security, nutrition, appropriate and effective donations, and how financial contributions may be leveraged to provide the maximum amount of food. It includes education for the community at large, for donors, for volunteers, for staff of emergency food service agencies, for funders, and for affiliated stakeholders (e.g. health, education, economic development, waste management, other City departments, advocacy groups, self-help groups, and media).

We recognize the need to go beyond simply providing educational messages and information. Our strategy will be about more than raising awareness or knowledge levels. It will also seek to build skills (i.e. among our staff and volunteers). Just as important, we will focus on the information we provide in our educational efforts, seeking ways to ensure that it remains accurate, consistent and relevant.
**Strategic Direction IV - Advocacy**

This strategic direction focuses on collective advocacy efforts that will capitalize on the unified voice and the first-hand knowledge of our network of emergency food providers. It includes advocating for a realistic living wage, for enhanced social assistance benefits, for action at all levels of government, for better nutrition in schools, for a Healthy Food Supplement, and for allocation of funds from targeted sources.

We will focus not only on advocating for specific initiatives but also advocating with those in our community who are already working to bring improvements to our collective situation. This will be done in concert with our efforts to integrate with existing City initiatives and with others involved in similar efforts. Again, the quality of information used in the pursuit of this direction will be an important consideration.

**Strategic Direction V – Integration and Coordination**

This strategic direction focuses on efforts to integrate our work, to collaborate and coordinate our efforts, and to share the responsibility of emergency food provision (not only among our network, but across the community in meaningful and targeted ways). It includes assessing our own roles and responsibilities, connecting with community initiatives and community partners, and integrating the food insecurity crisis with broader activities. It also includes asking others to assume appropriately their own roles and responsibilities in addressing what is ultimately a community issue. We envision new opportunities in partnership with the City of Hamilton and enhanced efforts to connect with this community’s informal network of food provision (e.g. churches, neighbourhood programs) as part of our integration focus.
### Strategic Direction I – Financial Stability
- Annual, stable funding for food, staffing, infrastructure, capital needs – system approach to funding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic Direction</th>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Priority for implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Improved quality, service, nutrition and system capacity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Education about food security, nutrition, donations, leveraging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Advocacy</td>
<td>Unified voice advocating for (and “with”) better wages and social assistance, government action, Healthy Food Supplement, school nutrition, and funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Integration and Coordination</td>
<td>Integrate, collaborate, share responsibilities; assess roles, connect with community, integrate food insecurity into broader activities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is vital to point out that the providers of Hamilton’s emergency food services continue to support advocacy efforts that seek solutions to the broader issues of poverty and income insufficiency. Our position is consistent with that of Food Banks Canada:

*The challenge is immense and complex and the issues of poverty and hunger must be placed onto the agendas of governments of all levels to restructure the welfare system and provide an adequate social network before another generation is subjected to poverty and its inherent outcomes.*


The role of the City of Hamilton in implementing this plan will be crucial. We have been fortunate to have three City staff members on our planning team, but the success of this plan will depend on the broadest possible involvement and assistance of the City at all levels. This is especially true in terms of advocacy, where research (Tarasuk, V., 2001; Kirkpatrick, S., 2008; Winne, M., 2005; Theriault and Yadowski, 2000) is clear about the need for municipal governments to be involved (Food Banks Canada, World Hunger Year, Community Food Security Coalition, Bissell Centre, The Food Project). It will be crucial that the City of Hamilton continue to raise this issue with its provincial and federal partners in order to address the underlying problems that result in food insufficiency, hunger and the use of emergency food services. Toronto (dubbed a
“municipal pioneer of food security” has been the subject of considerable research revealing both the need for and the importance of municipal involvement.

In spite of a variety of scattered initiatives to deal with food poverty, there is virtually no official systematic policy at any level of government to tackle the problem of food insecurity in Canada. Traditional responses to food insecurity in Canadian cities have involved charitable food distribution through food banks, an incomplete response to food poverty.

Social housing authorities are in an ideal position to develop and maintain community food security initiatives by incorporating them into food security policy frameworks that also focus on, and harness, community building.

While issues of food insecurity are usually equated with financial insecurity, the social housing sector cannot rely solely on whether or not senior levels of government address social program spending and other initiatives that affect households’ financial resources, although these upstream policies are fundamental to any long-term strategy to tackle food security.

Abigail Friendly, Towards Food Security Policy for Canada’s Social Housing Sector, 2008.

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9 Abigail Friendly in Towards Food Security Policy for Canada’s Social Housing Sector, 2008.
Our next steps will involve the development of a plan to implement our strategic directions and to maintain our planning commitments over the coming 3 years. We are acutely aware that organizational capacity is a critical issue for our agencies, whose efforts will be essential to implementing this plan. Peter Eisinger of Wayne State University has studied this issue among food pantries, soup kitchens and other street-level organizations10 and concluded that effectiveness is dependent on critical capacity elements. These include resources, effective leadership, skilled and sufficient staff, a certain level of institutionalization, and links to the larger community from which an organization might draw help. Mobilizing these capacity elements will be paramount in the implementation of this plan.

The role of the City of Hamilton is vital. Within our planning team we have been fortunate to count Public Health Services, Ontario Works, and Community Services, City expertise that can be of tremendous assistance to inform and partner in our efforts. Their support and involvement will be an important asset in the implementation of this plan. This should include careful integration of emergency food related initiatives with those unfolding in the Public Health realm, Ontario Works and Community Services (and vice versa). For example, and as is the case in other communities across Canada, our local public health professionals are engaged in initiatives that will ultimately help to shape our local food system – community gardens, markets, food co-operatives, food research and food policy initiatives are among these. The Community Nutritionists Council of B.C. suggests a clear link between these efforts and public health-related outcomes.

Health outcomes realized by these endeavours include: local food self-sufficiency, improved local economies, improved performance of children in schools, increased social cohesion around food security, increased knowledge of healthy eating, increased consumption of healthy foods, decreased food bank use and much more.

As we move forward with implementation of this plan, we hope that parallel efforts in the City’s other pursuits will engage and integrate with our own efforts to the greatest possible extent in order to maximize the success of both. Our local Public Health Services Department has gone further than many in addressing food security (see next page) and the continuum of food security. Where our efforts, at the short-term end of the continuum, are specifically aimed at temporary hunger relief, public health professionals are largely focused on the remainder of the continuum. It will be important that we each

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10 Eisinger, P. “Organizational Capacity and Organizational Effectiveness Among Street-Level Food Assistance Programs”. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 2002; 31; 115.
COMMUNITY FOOD CONTINUUM
STAGES TO ADDRESS FOOD SECURITY

Stage 1: Short Term Relief
- Actions to provide temporary or immediate relief to hunger - addresses individual need and efficiency.

Stage 2: Building Capacity and Empowering Individuals and Community
- Actions to provide education, skill building, collaboration, partnerships, increased accessibility to appropriate, safe and nutritious food, and identification of systemic issues, involves participation and transition.

Stage 3: Systemic Shift for Sustainability
- Actions over the long term to address systemic issues including the development of a food charter, support of local agriculture and food systems, protection of the environment, and policy change for a living wage.

Example Initiatives: Some programs will fall on more than one point along the continuum

Food Banks/Emergency Food
- Food Meal programs
- Subsidized Meals
- Student nutrition programs

Community Kitchens
- Community Gardens
- Local vegetable markets
- Nutrition sessions and workshops such as Supermarket Granny, Ontario Early Years Centres workshops, and cooking clubs
- Meals on Wheels and similar programs
- Consecutive Portion Nutrition Programs
- Food Handler Training
- Shopping/Transportation Services
- Food costing surveys such as the Hamilton Food Basket
- Point-of-purchase information
- City of Hamilton annual Food Access Guide
- Awards for high standards of food service

Development of visionary tools - food charts, community food policy
- Mobilization of community support through food security networks or committees to advocate for sustainable food systems
- Municipal economic development plan that supports: - land use policies that facilitate urban agriculture - local food businesses in low-income neighborhoods - increased community capacity for self-reliance for nutritious food
- Support for local farmers - buy local campaign and eat local initiatives
- Agricultural Economic Viability
- Food Distribution Systems
- Actions to ensure a living wage, adequate welfare and affordable housing so people can purchase safe and nutritious food

Community Food Security Continuum
A community food security continuum is a coherent whole characterized by a progression of actions. These actions are visually represented as falling into three stages. Actions that provide temporary or immediate relief to hunger do not address food security in its broadest sense, but are considered to be in the first stage of a continuum moving to food security. The next stage would be moving towards building capacity of individuals and communities to actively participate in their requirement of appropriate food. This stage also involves the identification of systemic issues that can assist in transitioning to a more food secure environment. The third stage is a sustainable community food system that improves the health of the community, environment, and individuals over time. This involves a collaborative effort to build locally based, self-reliant food systems and economies (3).

Food security is the satisfaction of five elements:
- **Availability** - sufficient supplies of food for all people at all times
- **Accessibility** - physical and economic access to food for all at all times
- **Acceptability** - culturally acceptable and appropriate food and distribution systems
- **Adequacy** - nutritional quality, safety, sustainability of available sources/methods of food supply
- **Action** - ensuring the social and economic infrastructures are in place to enable action that will ensure the previous four elements of food security.

(Adapted from the work of Rod McRae)

Food security is often recognized as a public policy issue related to income and health. The role of agricultural policy in affecting food security is not well understood. Decisions made about what foods to produce, how to process and market foods and what policies to use to support farm incomes can all ultimately affect food security. A holistic conceptualization of food security involves agricultural and ecosystem sustainability, community economic development, and dignified access to food.

Although the causes of food insecurity are diverse, the most important outcomes are health related, giving public health a unique role to play in improving food security in Hamilton. Creating multi-sector partnerships and networks, including government and public health agencies, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and the volunteer sector will be vital for developing the infrastructure needed to achieve food and nutrition security (4).
recognize the efforts of the other across the entire continuum, looking for linkages and supporting collective action wherever possible. We look for these same links with Ontario Works and Community Services initiatives that relate to our own efforts. Broader community initiatives – from poverty reduction to school nutrition – will also offer important partnerships for us to pursue.

We will be considering the appropriate membership for our planning team – to expand or reconstitute as needed – as we move forward. It will be important that we bring the right people to the table for next steps to be accomplished successfully.

Our immediate next steps will include:

- seeking enhanced connections/entrée to key stakeholder groups whose input and involvement will be key to implementation efforts
- ongoing planning sessions to refine and develop our implementation plan
- confirmation of the most appropriate mechanism for organizing our work and determining ongoing resource needs to support planning and implementation
- enhancing and aligning our system leadership to focus on strategic implementation
- identifying specific priorities for implementation – those that can be pursued without needed resources as well as those that will require funds for successful implementation
- additional processing of data and information to inform our work

Our Specific Request to City Council

We are asking Council for a commitment in principle to the strategic directions set out by our emergency food services team. We recognize Council for having initiated this planning process (and having requested that a strategic plan be developed) and we are asking that Council continue to contribute to our efforts with additional supports throughout the coming implementation period – continued participation on our planning team by City staff, project management assistance, administrative support, facilitation resources, and communication resources are all anticipated requirements that we look to the City to continue to provide as an active partner in this process. We ask that Council also acknowledge the roles and responsibilities of the City of Hamilton as we move forward. We will be considering the most appropriate configuration of our planning team during the next phase (implementation) and ask that Council also support our efforts to involve funders (including the Province) and other key stakeholders as and when appropriate.

Premier Dalton McGuinty said in January 2009\(^\text{11}\) “our government firmly believes that everyone in Ontario must have the opportunity to succeed, and this means responding to the needs of low-income Ontarians across the province. That is why our government has

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created a new cabinet committee on poverty — one that is working hard to develop a focused strategy to reduce child poverty and to lift the standard of living of more Ontario families. We have made children the first priority of this strategy because by helping kids now, we can break the cycle of poverty.”

Mayor Eisenberger recently wrote to the Premier\textsuperscript{12} to remind him that “food and income security are two critical elements of a poverty reduction strategy. Children and families who have adequate and sustainable levels of financial resources have the increased capacity to live a healthier quality of life”. These are important messages and vital assets in our work. In partnership with the City of Hamilton, and together with other key stakeholders, we are confident that implementation of our strategic directions can succeed in making significant and substantial changes and improvements to the system of emergency food services in this community and bring us closer to our vision that no one goes hungry.

\textsuperscript{12} October 1, 2009 letter from Mayor Fred Eisenberger to Premier Dalton McGuinty re: Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) Report (BOH09024).
Appendix A – References


City of Toronto. *Toronto’s Food Charter*.


Eisinger, P. Organizational Capacity and Organizational Effectiveness among Street-Level Food Assistance Programs. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 2002; 31; 115.


Pothukuchi, K., Kaufman, J.L. Placing the food system on the urban agenda: The role of municipal institutions in food systems planning. *Agriculture and Human Values* 16: 213–224, 1999.


Appendix B –

The Community Food Security Continuum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Continuum</th>
<th>Efficiency Strategies</th>
<th>Transitional Strategies</th>
<th>Redesign Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Counsel clients to maximize access to existing programs providing food and nutrition assistance</td>
<td>Connect charitable food programs with local food producers</td>
<td>Advocate for minimum wage increase, adequate social assistance and more affordable housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education on healthy food and lifestyle options</td>
<td>Multi-sector partnerships and networks that work toward CFS</td>
<td>Work with governments and communities to develop policies to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies and Activities</td>
<td>Support existing charitable food outlets</td>
<td>Facilitate development of: community kitchens, community gardens, good food box programs</td>
<td>• Land use that facilitates urban agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Map the location of charitable food outlets</td>
<td>Facilitate low-income consumers’ access to farmers’ markets, community gardens and other CFS programs</td>
<td>• Increasing communities food self-reliance and achieving nutrition goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Document the nutritional value of charitable foods as a baseline for improvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Tax incentives and financing mechanisms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify price imbalances in low-income neighbourhoods, using the nutritious food basket</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adopt healthy food and nutrition food policies within government</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Short Term</th>
<th>Medium Term</th>
<th>Long Term</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Source: MacRae et al. (1999); McCullum et al. (2005); Kalina (2001).

Appendix C –
How Much Does Healthy Eating Cost?
and The Cost of Basic Nutritious Food

What foods were priced?
The foods for the Nutritious Food Basket survey are based on Canadian eating patterns and buying habits* as well as nutritional value. The survey collects the lowest cost at each grocery store for 67 foods, and estimates the average cost.

The foods surveyed are found in Canada’s Food Guide:
- Vegetables and Fruit
- Orange Vegetables and Fruit
- Dark Green Vegetables
- Whole Grains/ Whole Wheat Products
- Non Whole Grain Products
- Milk and Milk Alternatives
- Meat, Poultry, Legumes, Eggs and Fish

These foods can be used to prepare nutritious meals and snacks. To get the total cost for a week, an extra 5% was added to account for additional food items used in meal preparation such as spices, seasonings, condiments, baking supplies, soups, coffee and tea.

*Eating patterns and purchasing frequency based on the Canadian Community Health Survey 2.2 results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nutritious Food Basket Weekly Costs</th>
<th>City of Hamilton, 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>Food Cost per week ($)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy</td>
<td>21.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>27.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>20.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girl</td>
<td>26.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>51.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-8</td>
<td>36.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>19-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-13</td>
<td>50.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-18</td>
<td>46.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-30</td>
<td>43.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-50</td>
<td>14.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>9-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-18</td>
<td>31.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-30</td>
<td>37.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-50</td>
<td>38.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-70</td>
<td>33.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 70</td>
<td>33.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnant</td>
<td>18 and younger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-30</td>
<td>41.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-50</td>
<td>42.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lactation</td>
<td>18 and younger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-30</td>
<td>41.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31-50</td>
<td>43.66</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>42.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Produced and distributed by City of Hamilton Public Health Services.
Nutrition and Physical Activity Advice Line: 905-546-3630
Eat Right Ontario: 1-877-510-5102 or www.Ontario.ca/EatRight
Healthy Living

The Cost of Basic Nutritious Food

Can People in Hamilton Afford a Nutritious Diet in 2009?

Many people in Hamilton with a limited income often face the daunting task of choosing between eating well or paying the rent to survive. The increasing cost of living, balanced against the low-income of many individuals and families living on minimum wage or social assistance, does not leave enough money to buy food. The following report discusses the cost of nutritious food, the ways that people cope with a limited income, and some suggestions on how to improve food access in Hamilton.

Balancing Bills and Nutrition

Every year, as mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, and the Ministry of Health Promotion, Registered Dietitians in Public Health Services conduct a Nutritious Food Basket survey to determine the average lowest cost of a nutritious diet. In 2009, six local grocery stores were surveyed to find the lowest price of 67 commonly purchased and nutritious foods based on Canadian eating patterns and buying habits as well as nutritional value.

In 2009, an average family of four, (a man and woman each aged 31 to 50 years; a boy, 14 to 18 years of age; and a girl, four to eight years old) living in Hamilton, needs $162.10 a week, or $701.89 a month, to meet their nutritional needs.

The Nutritious Food Basket does not include convenience foods, snack foods, or other purchases such as toilet paper or dish soap. It also makes the assumption that most people have the skills necessary to prepare and store foods, and does not include eating out or cooking for additional friends or family.

The Hamilton Nutritious Food Basket survey reflects a similar rise in the Canadian Consumer Price Index, published by Statistics Canada. It reported that the cost of food purchased from stores rose 7.4% in May 2009, compared with May 2008. This was led by 16.4% increase in fresh vegetables, and a 13.9% increase in fresh fruit.

For low income or fixed income families, increases in food prices limit accessibility to nutritious foods.

Making Ends Meet

Most people will pay their fixed expenses such as rent, hydro and heat, first. When money is tight, it is challenging to cover other basic monthly expenses. Some of these necessities may include:

- Telephone
- Transportation
- Toiletries
- Household items
- Medications
- Clothing
- Laundry
- Child care services
- Insurance
- Unexpected expenses
Fixed Income Households

Low-income households in Hamilton often live in rental housing. In 2009, the average monthly cost for a three-bedroom apartment is $900. For a family of four receiving Ontario Works assistance, this represents 50% of their monthly income. Many individuals and families receiving Ontario Works assistance, Ontario Disability Support Programs or working in minimum wage jobs do not have enough money left to purchase nutritious food on a regular basis.

The following chart depicts the average monthly Ontario Works rates for a family of four, the cost of housing, and the cost of a Nutritious Food Basket in 2009.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Income</td>
<td>$1804.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rent</td>
<td>$900.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutritious Food</td>
<td>$701.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s LEFT</td>
<td>$202.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Estimated monthly income and costs for a family of four (a man and woman each aged 31 to 50 years, a boy 14 to 18 years of age, and a girl from four to eight years old) living in Hamilton in 2009.

Many families face a precarious balancing act every day. With the increasing cost of living, small changes in their income or expenses could make the difference between food and hunger.

Our Health

Families and individuals with limited resources may have difficulty accessing healthy, nutritious food. Not being able to afford a nutritious diet can affect health.

Research shows that the poorest one-fifth of Canadians, when compared to the richest twenty percent, have:

- More than double the rate of diabetes and heart disease;
- 60% greater rate of two or more chronic health conditions;
- More than three times the rate of bronchitis;
- Nearly double the rate of arthritis or rheumatism;
- A staggering 358% higher rate of disability;
- 128% more mental and behavioural disorders;
- 95% more ulcers;
- 63% more chronic conditions; and
- 33% more circulatory conditions.

Daily Activities & Productivity

When people do not consume an adequate diet, they are often distracted and have a harder time focusing in school and at work. Many studies show that children who skip breakfast in the morning have trouble concentrating at school and are more prone to colds and infections.

Nutrients & Long-term Health

Undernourished individuals may not obtain adequate amounts of key nutrients, such as calcium or folate. If dietary intake is inadequate for an extended period of time, this may have serious health consequences. For example, an adult may increase his or her risk of developing osteoporosis with an insufficient intake of calcium and vitamin D. A pregnant woman with an inadequate intake of folate during the early stages of pregnancy is at an increased risk of carrying a baby with neural tube defects.
October 15th, 2008

Ms. Joe-Anne Priel
Community Services Department
Office of the General Manager
1 Hughson Street N. 2nd Floor
Hamilton, ON L8P 4Y5

Dear Joe-Anne,

Frontline hunger relief agencies are now preparing for their Christmas hamper programs. As you are aware many agencies have experienced a shortage in food supplies throughout the summer months, and this is of particular concern at Christmas time when hamper activities increase the need for food supplies for this vital service.

Last year 10,347 hampers were given out, representing a 4% increase over 2007. These hampers assisted 25,458 people, representing a 21% increase in the number of people reaching out for help at Christmas 2008.

Agencies are bracing for an increase in need yet again for the 2009 Christmas season. Our Hunger Count taken in March showed an overall increase of 26% total people accessing a food bank every month. These levels have not dissipated since March 2009, and in many instances the numbers have risen further. Agencies will be meeting in the near future in an attempt to estimate the increased number of hampers and Christmas meals that may be needed.

We ask for your support again this year with a grant of $100,000.00. Total costs for the Christmas programs are financed by fundraising efforts and gifts in kind contributions at the agency level. The $100,000.00 contribution from the City of Hamilton last year assisted greatly in covering approximately 12.8% of the total collective costs to provide this service (estimated at $776,025.00).

The funds allowed community organizations to maintain their level of support from the previous year and serve approximately 5,000 more people who reached out for help during the 2008 holiday season.

Each of the following agencies would receive support through this grant; The Good Shepherd Centres, Living Rock Ministries, Mission Services of Hamilton, Neighbour To Neighbour, Salvation Army Dundas, Salvation Army Hamilton, St. Matthew’s House, Stoney Creek Food Bank, Welcome Inn, and Wesley Urban Ministries.
Hamilton Food Share is willing to provide the services of a Transfer Payment Agency to distribute 100% of the grant to the above agencies to support the Christmas Hamper programs this holiday season.

On behalf of all of the food banks I would like to thank you, your staff and our City Council members for your previous contributions. It is our greatest hope that the City of Hamilton can assist these front line agencies so they can maintain their level of support to hurting families and individuals who may otherwise go without this Christmas season.

I look forward to your timely reply and I thank you for your kind consideration regarding our request.

Yours truly,

Joanne Santucci
Executive Director
Hamilton Food Share
Chairman, Emergency Food Action Committee.

c.c. Brian Kreps Manager, Homelessness, Community Services Department
c.c. Ron Sharegan, Chairman, Food, Shelter and Housing Advisory Committee