Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentleman, on behalf of the CAWDB, we are thankful that we can come before this committee again.

We are responding to the report that has been prepared after we spoke at the Board of Health Committee last September.

It is agreed that the amounts that people receive from social assistance are not sustainable and that we acknowledge the recommendation that Mayor Eisenberger must write to the provincial government about this very serious issue. It is equally disturbing that with the recent budget, that the government is planning to cut the special diet. Currently it is unknown what changes will happen and how people will be affected. The 1% percent raise to social assistance rates that is actually replacing the 2% percent raise, is alarming. It seems that it is very unfair and unjust that the government is further marginalizing those in our community who are the most vulnerable. Given that it has been over a year now since the implementation of the poverty reduction act and we have seen very little movement from the provincial government to address the growing dire situation across the province.

We at the CAWDB, feel that some headway has been made since our presentation, our members are reporting that they are seeing inspection reports at the foodbanks and recently a food bank in Ancaster posted an ad in the Spectator and in the ad we saw the words, no expired food to be accepted. We are thankful for this small victory.

However, people are still getting food that is expired, as reported by our members. I personally had called Carmen at the Good Shephard and he stated that people just have to call and the food would be replaced, however, that also is not happening, as calls are not returned and it would seem that front line staff are not aware of such policy. We would like to make a recommendation that the foodbanks set a policy, that is clear for both the people accessing services and the staff at the food banks when expired food is given out and how this can be returned and replaced.

With the appointment of Mary Long at the Hamilton District Labour Council and the current campaign to buy local, we feel that this will help the local economy. It is great that there is initiative to have more food stalls put into neighbourhoods. Our concern is still if people have inadequate amounts to live on how can they buy food, so again it goes back to have the rates raised to a level that is sustainable.

We also acknowledge that there is an initiative to have community gardens at several of the
social housing locations. Participation is an issue but we feel that once people see the potential that it will go a long way to providing fresh vegetables for the many that struggle. We recommend that there should be an educational process in the community to make people aware of the potential and that it would empower community members.

There is one area we feel that the public health department has missed in regard to educating community groups that collect food that is given out. I am providing lists of food that was received at two locations:

Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits said...

I was given a ticket for a box at the stadium yesterday. It was advertised in the spec as containing food for 3-4 days. (for 1500 families from feed the children) Everyone got the same size box. It was very quick to get it but other than that it was a disappointment. I will list the contents.
3 voortman apple turnover cookies
2 boxes of weird cereal (1 expired)
vitamin drink crystals
dented 1 can tomato sauce
2k bag of ring shaped pasta (1 can of sauce would go far...)
1 large bag of chocolate chip cookie
apple-strawberry spread
Orville Redenbacher microwave popcorn
1 can mini ravioli
box of premium crackers
digestive bars
organic peanut butter (no date)

I can't see how this would feed a family like it said. Notice the complete lack of fruit/veggies/meat etc as usual.

Today a church downtown does its food bank (only open 3 times a year for holidays) It was a 2 hour wait and the line was still huge after me.

Contents of a family box: (singles got less and no chicken)
1 frozen chicken
2 onions
1 box raisin bran (expired Jan. 09)
teapasta sauce
3 Kool-Aid jammers
potato flakes (expired Nov. 08)
evaporated milk (expiry April 09)
spaghetti
peanut butter (expiry Feb. 08!)
rice mix
cookies
3 Mr. noodles
Campbell instant noodles
1 can tuna

I did phone there to ask about the old food afterwards but I doubt I will ever get an answer

http://www.thespec.com/News/Local/article/651242

http://www.thespec.com/News/Local/article/651241

The public health department needs to do more work to ensure that food that is collected and given out is safe to eat.

The Stop Community Food Center had the following campaign, in which they got 10 members in the community to try and live on the food that is given out by the food banks. I refer you to this article in the Globe and Mail:


The responses from the participants are very thought provoking and at least these ten people now know what it is like. The true life experience of those who do not struggle and trying to cope tells us a lot. We encourage everyone at this committee to Do the Math and to get everyone they know, friends, family, and neighbours to go to this website and to DO THE MATH:

http://dothemath.thestop.org/

Our community is struggling and with the recent news of the impending job losses at Lakeport, Siemans and Steel Car, that the crisis is far from over and the Mayor and City Council needs to step up to the plate and speak very loudly and stand up for all Hamiltonians.

Thank you very much

Michelle Hruschka

on behalf of the members of the CAWDB