SUBJECT: Food Security BOH07031 (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

That Public Health Services staff be directed to form an advisory group, including staff from Community Services, Planning and Economic Development, Emergency Planning and Public Works to develop a food continuum policy and strategic action plan, with community input.

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Medical Officer of Health
Public Health Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

City of Hamilton policies affect access to sufficient, healthy and safe food for over five hundred thousand citizens. Decisions about food production, processing, access, marketing, protection of agricultural lands and the ecosystem all ultimately affect the health and safety of citizens, the state of the environment and the local economy. Thus it is necessary to bring all of the partners together, to scope, prioritize and develop action plans.

Working within existing resources, staff are recommending that a cross corporate advisory group (including Public Health Services, Emergency Planning, Planning and Economic Development, Community Services and Public Works) be convened to:

- establish formal connections to share information
- inform mutual long term planning on development of a food policy
- collaborate on identified opportunities
- expand capacity within the community
identify key policy issues, priorities, and potential projects/strategic initiatives that will lead to a food policy that is integrated with Hamilton’s long-term sustainability plan.

BACKGROUND:

The use of the terms “food security” and “food insecurity” are used in different ways by different groups, most often focusing on access to a sufficient food supply among those in need. A holistic conceptualization of community 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.

Public Health Services presented an Information Report - Food Security: Planning Strategy and Approach to Policy Development PH06024 on June 26, 2006 to the Board of Health. Direction from the board at that time was to provide staff support to Eat Local, to expand the internal working group (to include Economic Development), to complete a city-wide food continuum, and to prepare and submit a report to the Board of Health.

Overview of Program Activities June 2006-June 2007

Public Health Services has assumed a lead role in carrying out the following:
1. Staff support was provided to the Eat Local Advisory Committee of Environment Hamilton to:
   • form a Good Food Hamilton Committee addressing food security
   • hold a community forum “Planning for Food Security in Hamilton” at the Spectator auditorium on February 21, 2007
   • submit a Farm Fresh Hamilton grant proposal to Friends of the Greenbelt
   • develop a Buy Local campaign

   These projects have highlighted the wide scope of community food security by moving the issue beyond food emergency, and have generated increased interest and mobilization of public at large.

2. A staff work group from Public Health and Community Services was expanded to include representation from Economic Development.

3. A Community Food Continuum for Hamilton was developed to further inform internal and community planning discussions (Appendix A). The tool indicates known assets and gaps that need to be addressed should resources become available.
ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:

In addition to the lead role Public Health Services has played in 2006, there is expanded city capacity that supports sustainability.

- Economic Development and Planning has developed an agricultural action plan for the city aligned with community food security.

- Public Works has established the Green Cart Program which returns food wastes and acceptable materials to the earth as compost. Keeping food wastes out of landfill reduces greenhouse gas emission and the amount of waste going to landfill.

- Eat Local events indicate a growing awareness (e.g. protection of agricultural lands, local economic impact, social determinants of health, food emergency) and considerable interest from diverse groups (e.g. farmers, youth, university students, faculty, elderly, restaurant owners, chefs, multi-cultural advocates) in Hamilton’s food system.

There is strong support for the City to play a leadership role to develop policies, educate the public, coordinate City/community efforts and implement actions through innovative partnerships, to make the Hamilton community food secure.

This recommended approach is in line with the progressive policies and plans promoted by the Ontario Public Health Association, the Dietitians of Canada and neighbouring public health units (e.g. Peel, Waterloo, Toronto and Sudbury) to ensure that Ontario communities are food secure.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

As an alternative, Public Health Services could work on food security related initiatives with a limited capacity, without collaborating across the corporation.

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

Public Health Services would lead this process through 2007 with existing resources. City staff representatives from departments involved with sectors that influence Hamilton’s food chain and long term sustainability plans would make a commitment of approximately 3-4 hours per month through 2007.

There are no legal implications.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

Provincial Policy Framework
Public Health
The Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines mandates Ontario’s Public Health Units to work with community agencies and groups to promote access to sufficient, safe, nutritious and personally acceptable food for people of all ages.¹

This recommendation is aligned with three of the goals of the Public Health Services Approved Strategic Plan 2007-2010:

Goal A. Implement public health initiatives to improve local air quality.

Goal B. Support community preparedness for and response to public health emergencies.

Goal C. Maximize impact on community health in four key areas of chronic disease prevention: tobacco control, nutrition, physical activity and mental health.

Ontario Greenbelt Plan
The Ontario government’s Greenbelt Plan 2005 provides the framework and lays out broad objectives that support community food security planning efforts, for example:

- Preserving agricultural land as a continuing commercial source of food and employment / recognizing the critical importance of the agriculture sector to the regional economy, promoting sustainable resource use and strengthening the economic viability of farming communities
- Providing the protection needed to maintain, restore and improve ecosystems in the greenbelt area
- Ensuring transportation and other infrastructure projects are developed in an environmentally sensitive way

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

This recommendation reflects input from
- an internal staff workgroup (2006) with representation from Public Health Services, Community Services Economic Development (April 2007)
- Corporate Management Team
- Public Works Department
- the community and public at large who attended the Community Food Security Forum held at the Spectator Auditorium on Feb. 21, 2007
- members of the Good Food Hamilton committee of the Eat Local Project
- the Manager of community engagement with the Hamilton Poverty Roundtable.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

Community Food Security supports the triple bottom line approach. Expanded staff participation will ensure alignment with corporate strategic direction. A food policy and

¹ Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines, Chronic Disease Prevention, Program Standards, page 24
action plan would provide a basis/framework upon which future policies and program
decisions could be realized.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No

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
## Community Food Continuum
### Stages to Address Food Security

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage 1: Short Term Relief</th>
<th>Stage 2: Building Capacity and Empowering Individuals and Community</th>
<th>Stage 3: Systemic Shift for Sustainability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actions to provide temporary or immediate relief to hunger - addresses individual need and efficiency.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
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</tbody>
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### Known Assets and Gaps in the Community - June 2007

**Assets**
- Community Kitchens (1-2), and Community Gardens (15)
- Local Farms selling directly to consumers: more than 60 producers including 3 Community Shared Agriculture programs
- City of Hamilton Public Health group nutrition education sessions and skill building workshops, over 200 annually
- Congregate Dining & Meals on Wheels - 8 organizations preparing, serving and /or delivering hot nutritious meals
- Hamilton Prenatal Nutrition Project, 3 agencies providing 12 weekly food preparation and education sessions reaching 750 pre and post-natal participants annually
- Food Handler Training and restaurant inspections
- Shopping/Transportation Services, Grocer Ease and privately operated services
- Nutritious Food Basket Food Costing Survey and City of Hamilton Annual Food Access Guide (mandated public health programs)
- Awards for high standards of safe and healthy food (e.g. Eat Smart! Workplace Cafeteria Program, 3 sites, and Healthy Living Hamilton School Awards, 63 schools)

**Gaps**
- Gleaning Good Food Box
- Comprehensive community and city-wide policy to support community food security

**Assets**
- Mobilization of community support through food security networks or committees to advocate for sustainable food systems (Some work begun by grass roots organizations)
- Greenbelt Plan, City of Hamilton Long Term Sustainability Plans, Agricultural Economic Viability (promising)

**Gaps**
- Development of visionary tools - food charter, community food policy
- Citizens Food Advisory Committee
- Municipal economic development plan that supports:
  - land use policies that facilitate urban agriculture (pending)
  - local food businesses in low income neighbourhoods
  - increased community capacity for self-reliance for nutritious food
- Support for local farmers - Buy Local Campaign and Eat Local Initiatives
- Corporate “Eat Local” Policies
- Food Disclosure Systems (pending)
- Corporate “Eat Local” Policies
- Actions to ensure a living wage, adequate welfare and affordable housing so people can purchase safe and nutritious food
Community food security is “a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice (1), without resorting to emergency food sources”(2) (3).

There are two main dimensions of food security: 1) the ability of individuals to reliably access food and 2) the production and supply of 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 acquisition 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 MacRae)

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).

(1) Hamm and Bellows, J Nutr Educ Behav. 2003; 35:27-43