TO: Chair and Members
Emergency & Community Services Committee
WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE

COMMITTEE DATE: October 6, 2010

SUBJECT/REPORT NO:
No One Goes Hungry: Strategic Directions for Hamilton’s Emergency Food System 2010 – 2012 (CS09072(a)) (City Wide)
(Outstanding Business List Item “O”)

SUBMITTED BY:
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SIGNATURE:

RECOMMENDATION

(a) That an increase in annualized funding for Hamilton Food Share and its member agencies in the amount of $350,000 be referred to the City of Hamilton’s 2011 budget process for consideration.

(b) That, upon approval of funding through the 2011 budget process, the General Manager of the Community Serviced Department be authorized and directed to execute the Service Agreement, between the City of Hamilton and Hamilton Food Share, and all ancillary documents in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

(c) That Item “O”, respecting the update on “No One Goes Hungry: Strategic Directors for Hamilton’s Emergency Food System Plan 2010-2012, be considered complete and removed from the Outstanding Business Item List.

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Values: Honesty, Accountability, Innovation, Leadership, Respect, Excellence, Teamwork
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Food banks are a critical lifeline for many Hamiltonians experiencing a financial crisis or living on a low income. An increase in the use of food banks is taxing an over-burdened emergency food system. In March 2010, 30% of food banks said they had run out of food in the last year and 80% had to purchase food at some point.

Food banks are funded primarily through donations and are staffed largely by volunteers. It is estimated that more than 75% of the food distributed by food banks is donated and that approximately 50% of their labour is volunteer.

The challenges are most noticeable during the summer and at Christmas. During the summer, visits to the food banks increase as children are no longer participating in school-based nutrition programs. Hamilton Food Share and its member agencies strive to ease the burden on families at Christmas by providing hampers.

Annualized funding of $350,000 will allow Hamilton Food Share and its member agencies to meet the high demands for their services and facilitate the implementation of No One Goes Hungry: Strategic Directions for Hamilton’s Emergency Food System 2010 – 2012 (CS09072), approved by Council in November 2009. The total amount represents $100,000 for the Christmas Hamper Program and $250,000 to address the summer shortfall in volunteers and donations.

During the past year, the food banks have worked with the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, Public Health Services and the Housing and Homelessness Division to implement the plan. Accomplishments include:

- Secured federal funding for a Project Manager to implement the strategic directions;
- Developed a Project Charter for the implementation of the strategic directions;
- Conducted a survey of emergency food services to identify service gaps;
- Developed the first draft of service standards for food safety practices, customer service and program guidelines; and,
- Developed a plan to consult with clients to provide input on the standards.

Once fully implemented, the strategic directions will improve service and provide increased accountability for program delivery.

**Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable**

**FINANCIAL / STAFFING / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**
Financial:
Of the $350,000, $100,000 is for the Christmas Hamper Program and $250,000 is to address the summer shortfall in volunteers and donations.

A portion of the funding will be used to pay for staff during the summer period. All funding allocated for staff will focus on enhancing front line service delivery rather than for administrative costs. Additional front-line staff will enable administrative staff to concentrate on soliciting donations of food and additional funding resources.

A Service Agreement will be developed with Hamilton Food Share that will specify performance measures. Expenditures and performance measures will be monitored and reported to the City on a quarterly basis. A full financial report must be submitted at the end of each year.

Staffing:
There are no staffing implications associated with Report CS09072(a).

Legal:
Housing and Homelessness Division staff will work with Legal Services Division to develop the Service Agreement with Hamilton Food Share.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND** (Chronology of events)

From 2004 to 2009, the Hamilton City Council supported Hamilton Food Share and its member agencies in the delivery of their Christmas Hamper Program with one-time funding of $100,000 per year. Christmas hampers include a meal, three days of food, plus gifts for children. This is a major investment of resources for the food banks between September and December. This funding represented 10% of the cost of the service and was leveraged to raise funds for the balance. As well, in 2009, City Council approved $186,430 to address the shortfall in summer supplies and increased use (Food Bank Inventory Shortage-Report CS09046).

In May 2010, Hamilton City Council approved one-time funding of $350,000 (2010 One-time Funding for Hamilton Food Banks-Report CS10048) for the Christmas Hamper program and inventory and staff shortages. The 2010 one-time funding provided relief to food banks and hot meal programs. While inventories still dipped low in the summer of 2010, they did not reach the critical levels they had in past years. The food banks purchased an additional $210,000 worth of food totaling approximately 500,000 pounds. The funding was also used to support staffing hours over the summer period ($39,000). The remaining $100,000 will be used to support the 2010 Christmas Hamper Program. This funding will leverage an additional $900,000 in donations which will provide approximately 13,000 hampers.

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All of this one-time funding is in addition to an annual budgeted amount of $135,100 under the Emergency Food Assistance Program to support Hamilton Food Share’s food recovery and distribution efforts.

The intent of developing a strategic 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 meals programs. One of the findings from the needs assessment was that the sector would benefit from enhanced coordination and planning.

An environmental scan provided the foundation for the development of the strategic plan which was completed in May 2009. Emergency food providers for both food and hot meal programs collaborated with the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Poverty 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. The strategic plan represented a new level of cooperation and commitment by the emergency food providers and the City of Hamilton.

Some of the key initiatives within the plan include:

- The development of standards for customer service including offering more nutritious and culturally appropriate food choices and implementation of a complaints process;
- Enhanced standards regarding food safety in food banks;
- Better coordination of hours of service to ensure that emergency food services are available when people need them;
- Increased advocacy for adequate income for people in receipt of social assistance;

On April 21, 2010 Emergency and Community Services Committee received a Report CS10045 - Ensuring Safe, Healthy and Adequate Food for Those in Need. The report provided a detailed response by the Community Services Department and Public Health Services staff to issues raised by the Campaign for Adequate Welfare and Disability Benefits (CAWDB). CAWDB expressed concerns regarding emergency food services and barriers to access healthy food that exist for people who receive social assistance. Implementation of the No One Goes Hungry Strategic Directions will address their concerns through the development of service standards for the food banks.

**POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no policy implications associated with Report CS09072(a)
RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Hamilton Food Share and its member agencies were consulted in the development of this report. They confirmed the need for annualized and stable funding so that they may become more proactive and continue implementation of the strategic directions for the emergency food system.

The Chair of the Food Shelter and Housing Advisory Committee was consulted. He confirmed that the recommendation is consistent with earlier recommendations from the Committee.

The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and Public Health Services are participating in the implementation of the strategic directions through membership on the project team. Implementation of the strategic directions complements the work of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction on child nutrition and Public Health Services’ work on increasing community food security.

ANALYSIS / RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Annualized funding will assist in the implementation of the No One Goes Hungry: Strategic Directions, which will represent an important move towards the proactive development of the emergency food services.

Unlike mandated social service programs such as Social Housing, Child Care or Ontario Works, municipalities do not have a provincially legislated mandate to manage or fund emergency food services. The services provided by food banks and hot meal programs are, however, recognized as a critical lifeline for many Hamiltonians experiencing a financial crisis or living on a low income.

The approval of $350,000 in annualized funding will assist both food banks and hot meal programs in meeting the continued high demand for their services. In spite of positive signs in the local economy; there continues to be high unemployment and a high Ontario Works caseload.

From 2008 to 2009, food bank usage in Hamilton increased by 26%. A total of 19,602 visits to Hamilton Food Share member agencies were recorded in March 2009 compared to 15,511 in March 2008. The 2010 Hunger Count recorded a slight decrease in use of 5% over 2009.

The economic downturn produced high levels of unemployment in Hamilton and consequently an increase of the Ontario Works caseload. While the economy has begun a slow recovery, the unemployment rates, social assistance caseloads and the
Social Housing Waitlist have seen no decreases. The Ontario Works caseload was 13,527 cases in June 2010 compared to 10,292 in January of 2007. The Social Housing Waitlist was 5,428 households in August 2010 in comparison to 4,182 households in January 2009. The unemployment rate in Hamilton was 7.7% in June 2010 compared to 6.2% in January 2007.

This increase in food bank usage has taxed already over-burdened emergency food services which are funded primarily through donations and staffed largely by volunteers. It is estimated that more than 75% of the food distributed by food banks is donated and that approximately 50% of the labour is volunteer. The local food production system has also changed with a number of local producers closing or moving operations out of the area. Remaining producers have increased efficiencies in production leaving less for recovery by the emergency food system. In spite of local generosity, food drives have not kept up with food bank needs. In March 2010, 30% of food banks said they had run out of food in the last year and 80% had to purchase food at some point.

The challenges were most noticeable over the summer season and at Christmas. During the summer, visits to the food banks usually increase as children are no longer participating in school-based nutrition programs. Donations also decline as donors focus on summer activities. In the spring of 2009, some agencies found it necessary to turn people away because they did not have adequate staff or volunteers to stay open for longer hours. In other instances, they were not able to provide as much food or variety because supplies were low.

**ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION**

There are no alternatives for consideration for CS09072(a).

**CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN**


**Social Development**

- Residents in need have access to adequate support services
Healthy Community

- Adequate access to food, water, shelter and income, safety, work, recreation and support for all (Human Services)

APPENDICES / SCHEDULES

Appendix A to Report CS09072(a)
COMMUNITY FOOD CONTINUUM
Stages to Address Food Security

The Community Food Continuum describes all of the stages necessary to achieve community food security. The Emergency Food System Strategic Directions directly address Stage I and to a lesser degree stages II and III.

<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>
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</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, production of the environment and policy change for a living wage</td>
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Example Initiatives: Some programs will fall on more than one point along the continuum

- Food Banks/Emergency Food
- Free Meal Programs
- Subsidized Meals
- Student Nutrition Programs

- Community Kitchens
- Community Gardens
- Local Farmers’ Markets
- Nutrition session and workshops such as Supermarket Safaris, Ontario Early Years Centers workshops and cooking clubs
- Meals on Wheels and similar programs
- Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs
- Food Handler Training
- Shopping/Transportation Services
- Food Costing surveys such as the Nutritious Food Basket
- Point-of-purchase information
- City of Hamilton annual Food Access Guide
- Awards for high standards

- Development of visionary tools – food charter, community food policy
- Mobilization of community support through food security networks or committee 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 neighbourhoods)
  - Increased community capacity for self-reliance for nutritious food
- Support for local farmers – buy local campaign and set local initiatives
- Agricultural Economic
Community Food Security Continuum

A community food security continuum is characterized by a progression of actions 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.

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 & 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