Information Report

To: Mayor and Members
   Board of Health

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Re: Food Security: Planning Strategy and Approach to Policy Development
   PH06024  (City Wide)

Council Direction: N/A

Information:

The purpose of this report is to bring the Board of Health up to date on food security planning strategies and policy development. It summarizes several key points including internal activities that have informed development thus far and describes current capacities in Public Health Services (PHS) and the community.

PHS supports a community-driven approach to inform food security planning and will build upon existing community and internal capacities to strengthen City and community based developments.

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 Across Ontario, many cities (for example Sudbury, Waterloo and Toronto) have developed policies and action plans to create food secure communities.

Policy Development

City of Hamilton policies affect the food security of over five hundred thousand citizens. Many City programs impact the production, distribution, access and consumption of food as well as the health status and quality of life of citizens.

Public health initiatives (E.g. Nutritious Food Basket, the Obesity Strategy), chronic disease prevention studies and local health status reports have underscored the need

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1 Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines, Chronic Disease Prevention, Program Standards, page 24
to find sustainable solutions to affordable and adequate amounts of safe, healthy, nutritious, culturally acceptable food.

More City departments are involved when transit, land use and economic policies are considered as relevant to food security. For example, transit policies and pricing affect access to stores and food programs. Economic development policies affect the growth and viability of local food-based businesses.

The Concept of Food Insecurity and Food Security

The terms ‘food security’ and ‘food insecurity’ are understood and used differently by groups and individuals. Frequently, the term food security is used when food distribution, production and consumption at a broad community level is discussed. The term food insecurity is frequently used to discuss economic and physical access to food at an individual or household level.

Recent studies in food security use a definition that incorporates both. This results in collaborative planning where a range of partners can work together and advocate for:

- adequate incomes for consumers and producers,
- local and diverse food production,
- environmental sustainability,
- widespread access to healthy safe food,
- food-based community economic development, and
- social cohesion (Source: Ontario Public Health Association, 2002)

PHS uses the term ‘food security’ in this manner so that in addition to strategies targeted to individuals or households, discussion can be broadened to include the local economy, environment and the cultural-social aspects of the food system.

Community Based Assets

In Hamilton, there are several initiatives aligned with food security development. Local initiatives establish a rich foundation from which to build and inform collaborative efforts targeted to health promotion, disease prevention and poverty reduction. Opportunities to build multi-sectoral partnerships and to support and inform community driven solutions are in place.

For example:

- The Community Services Department and Public Health Services tabled several Council/Board of Health Reports that raised awareness of the health status of citizens and the impact of poverty on those twenty per cent of Hamiltonians (or 95,605 residents) living at or below the low income cut-off point. (Note: An update to Council on the Dietary Food Allowance is forthcoming from the Community Services Department-Fall 2006)

- The Poverty Reduction Roundtable co-convened by the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation was implemented and continues to gain
momentum. Links between illness and poverty have been well documented (see Appendix Three).

- The establishment of the new Ministry of Health Promotion speaks to government investments toward the prevention of chronic disease(s). Millions and perhaps billions are spent annually on health care in Ontario that can be traced to diet-related health problems.

- Eat Local, a community based group of volunteers has expressed strong interest in collaborating with a range of community partners (see Appendix One). Their tentative mandate is to:
  - improve access to fresh, nutritious, affordable food that meets the dietary needs and preferences of all Hamiltonians;
  - develop a sustainable and vibrant local food system in Hamilton;
  - promote local economic and community development.

- Public Health Services plays a significant and mandated role to promote nutritional health. Mandatory Health Programs include:
  - The Nutritious Food Basket, food cost monitoring activity
  - The local Food Access Guide,
  - Welcome Baby Prenatal Program, Hamilton Prenatal Nutrition Project
  - OEYCS Nutrition Workshops
  - Early ID Clinics – screening for nutrition concerns
  - Food Bank Sampling program
  - Student Nourishment Programs
  - Obesity Strategy

**Key Informant Interviews and Staff Workgroup Findings**

To inform the development of a nutritious food security policy and action plans, key informant interviews were held with Public Health staff, Community Services staff, service providers in the emergency food sector and with Eat Local. Findings included a mix of policy and development issues.

Also, a joint Community Services-Public Health Services workgroup was established to review and analyze current local food security and food insecurity activities, assets, gaps, opportunities and challenges.

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3 MANDATORY SERVICE GUIDELINE, CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION, OBJECTIVE: 8

The Board of Health shall work with community agencies and groups to promote access to sufficient, safe, nutritious and personally acceptable food for people of all ages. This shall include at a minimum: a. monitor annually, the cost of a nutritious food basket according to the Ministry of Health Monitoring the Cost of a Nutritious Food Basket Protocol (June 1, 1998). Information about the cost of a nutritious food basket is to be used on an ongoing basis to promote and support policy development to increase access to healthy foods; b. develop and disseminate an inventory of local programs and services which increase access to healthy foods. The inventory shall be updated annually. c) Work with community agencies and groups to improve access to healthy foods on an ongoing basis; and d) promote and provide consultation and training sessions to community agencies and groups that are involved in increasing access to healthy foods on an ongoing basis.
Key findings are described below. Outcomes have informed the next phase of planning described on page 5 of this report.

- Informants that served families in crisis advised that the City should play a stronger role to address food insecurity⁴, by advocating through Council to the provincial and federal governments to eliminate the National Child Benefit claw back and increase the minimum wage and Ontario Works/ODSP rates. Informants expressed that the state of food insecurity for many families would be improved by providing those most in need with adequate financial supports.

- Informants expressed that the emergency food sector would benefit from improved system standards and service co-ordination. This point was echoed in the recently released Emergency Food System Phase Two Report (2006), completed by the Social Planning and Research Council. (Note: An update to Council on the Emergency Food System Report will be tabled at the June 27th 2006 Committee of the Whole meeting).

**Staff identified the following issues:**

- Currently in Hamilton a patchwork of food related initiatives, programs and an array of services across several sectors exist. Some are targeted to poverty reduction, others to population health promotion, disease prevention, and others to planning, economic growth and development.

- There is some collaboration amongst existing stakeholders particularly amongst emergency food services providers. However there are few if any opportunities where representatives across the broader food continuum are able to learn about each other, concerns, strengths and priorities. More collaboration is needed amongst partners that are part of the broad food system (e.g. growers).

- Solutions to hunger and access to nutritious affordable food extends beyond the emergency food system. The food charity and emergency food system, driven by caring individuals and organizations, does not have the capacity or resources to address the deeper structural issues that have created conditions of poverty and hunger.

- Education of the population is a key component of individual household and community food security planning.

- Comprehensive policies and action plans to support food security are essential to the eventual elimination of hunger and improved health.

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⁴ Food Insecurity was defined as “Limited or uncertain access to nutritious, safe foods necessary to lead a healthy lifestyle; households that experience food insecurity have reduced quality or variety of meals and may have irregular food intake. (USDA / Life Research Office [www.worldhungryyear.org/fslc/faqs/ria_074.asp](http://www.worldhungryyear.org/fslc/faqs/ria_074.asp))
Overall, informants expressed the need for city-wide sustainable solutions and strategies to improve access to nutritious, culturally acceptable foods at the neighbourhood level. In order to find solutions, consultation opportunities and new partnerships need to be developed with citizens, suppliers, service providers and local growers (see Appendix Two).

**PHS Planning Support**

Many of the existing North American Food Security models require a significant investment of time and human resources. Before recommending a heavily resourced planning approach to the Board of Health, staff will build on local assets and work from within current capacity to inform strategic planning, develop tools to encourage local engagement and support the food systems planning efforts of Eat Local.

**Projected outcomes June-September 2006:**

- Provide staff support to Eat Local as this group works to develop a Terms of Reference for a broad based community Food Security Steering Committee\(^5\). (E.g. access to best practice literature; inform the development of linkages and nutritional expertise).
- Continue to function in leadership role on staff work group with expanded representation (E.g. in addition to Community Services, expand representation to include Economic Development).
- Complete development tools such as a Hamilton Food Continuum and Food Charter (draft), to inform further internal and community planning discussions.
- Prepare and submit a report with recommendations to the Board of Health October 2006.

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Public Health Services

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\(^5\) See Appendix One: Scope of Food Security Sectors/Groups: Source: Eat Local, April 2006
Scope of Food Security Sectors/Groups¹

City of Hamilton
- Community Services Department
- Public Health Department, (sponsor agency for Hamilton Prenatal Nutrition Project, a 3-agency partnership of 11 weekly Pre/post-natal groups)
- Health Promotion in Schools, Community Nutrition, Obesity Strategy
- City of Hamilton, Parks — Community Gardens
- Transit (food access)
- GRIDS, Economic Development, Planning

Urban Agriculture
- Green Venture community garden
- North Hamilton CHC Children’s garden and Community garden
- Grow-a-Row, Plant-a-Row, City of Hamilton
- Kids Gardening Zone
- Wentworth-Burlington chapter - Canadian Organic Growers (COG)

Community Health
- Aboriginal Prenatal Nutrition Program
- Francophone Community Health Centre
- Hamilton Prenatal Nutrition Project
  -- Baby’s Best Start, St. Joseph’s Centre for Ambulatory Health Services
  -- Healthy Moms, Healthy Babies, North Hamilton Community Health Centre
  -- Welcome Baby, Public Health Services, Family Health Division
- Community Health Centres -- North Hamilton CHC, Urban Core CHC, St Joseph’s CHC
- Canadian Red Cross Society – Hamilton Branch
- Partners in Nutrition (SPRC)

Community
- The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction
- Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton Planning Priorities
- Hamilton Campaign for Adequate Welfare

Environmental-sustainability
- Hamilton Eat Local Project (HELP), Environment Hamilton
- OPIRG McMaster (has a ‘Local Food’ working group and “Food not Bombs”

Emergency Food
- Hamilton Food Share
- Emergency Food and Shelter Committee, City of Hamilton
- Flamborough Food bank
- Stoney Creek Community Food bank
- Neighbour to Neighbour Centre
- Good Shepard Centre (Food Share)
- Living Rock Ministries
- Wesley Urban Ministries (Food Share)
- Salvation Army, Dundas
- Salvation Army, Booth Centre
- Salvation Army, Community and Family Services Food Bank
- Olive Branch Christian Centre

¹ Adapted from primary source: Eat Local 2006
o Welcome Inn (*Food Share)
o Living Water Ministries: Community Support Program (* Food Share)
o Hamilton Out of the Cold
o Mission Services (Food Share)
o St. Matthew’s House
o Roxborough Centre (a program of St. Matthew’s House)
o St. John’s Community Support Programs (St. Matthew’s House)
o Agape Community Resource Centre

**Rural Agriculture:**
o Economic Development Division, Planning & Economic Development Department, City of Hamilton -- City of Hamilton, Agricultural Economic Impact and Development
o Christian Farmers Association of Wentworth and Brant
o Hamilton Wentworth Federation of Agriculture
o Hamilton Wentworth Junior Farmer

**Congregate Dining & Meals on Wheels**
o Flamborough Red Cross
o VON Hamilton-Wentworth Meals On Wheels, Meals to Wheels
o First Place Hamilton, dining program & daily lunch
o Glanbrook Home Support Programme Inc.
o Salvation Army: Golden Agers, congregate dining
o Ancaster Meals on Wheels (Administered by Ancaster Information Centre and Community Services)
o Dundas Meals On Wheels

**Grocery Shopping services**
o Grocer-Ease Inc.
o Dundas Community Services Grocery Shopping Program
o Shopping By Bus -Community Link
o Glanbrook Home Support Programme Inc. – Volunteer Assisted Transportation
o Flamborough Red Cross Volunteer-Assisted Transportation
o Volunteer Driving Program -Ancaster Community Services

**Community Kitchens:**
o North Hamilton Community Health Centre
o More in the community likely in the faith sector?
Examples of Nutritious Food Security Activities

**Nutritious food security initiatives typically strive to:**
- Meet the food needs of everyone, including people with low-incomes
- Promote good nutrition and health
- Revitalize local communities and build self-reliance
- Encourage community economic development and entrepreneurship
- Link farmers and consumers and support local and regional producers
- Support sustainable agricultural practices and family-scale farming
- Promote sustainable livelihoods and good working conditions for farmers and food system workers
- Honor and celebrate diverse cultures and traditions

**Examples of Food Security Initiatives**
- Community/school/rooftop gardens
- Collective kitchens
- Farmers’ markets
- Community Shared Agriculture (CSA)
- School lunches, breakfast and snack programs
- Farm to school projects
- Public education and awareness campaigns
- Food co-ops or buying clubs
- Food banks
- School food policies
- Growing your own food
- Buying local
- Cooking classes
- Actions to alleviate poverty
- Community Cupboards
- Municipal food policies
- Composting and recycling
- Community food security exists when we have an optimally nourished population supported by a healthy, sustainable food system.
- Coherent food policy, programs and services provide the context for a healthy sustainable food system.

What Does a Food & Nutrition Policy Look Like?
- locally produced foods in stands in neighborhoods
- roof top gardening at the hospital
- locally-produced food in the stores and in the hospitals, schools, and senior’s facilities
- Children’s food gardens in school yards
- Fruit trees and edible plants in parks
- Market gardens and farms as green space
- Comfortable places for mothers to breastfeed
- Minimum wage / fixed income earners making enough money to ensure basic needs are met
OPHA Examples of Community Food Security (CFS) Indicators

(a) Indicators of Morbidity and Mortality related to CFS
- Association between population income categories or behavioral trends and prevalence of population wide, food-related chronic diseases (e.g. heart disease, diabetes, some cancers), obesity, allergies, etc.
- Food sources and under- or over-nourishment (for specific nutrients) in sub-populations
- Morbidity/mortality related to chemical residues, pesticides, additives, pathogens & toxins in food or water

(b) Indicators of Systemic Factors related to CFS

ECONOMIC
- Population income distribution, employment trends, farm incomes
- Trends in housing cost and policies on affordable housing
- Trends in social assistance policy and programs
- Map of retail food stores and markets in city or region (food access)
- Map of local farms that sell directly to consumers
- Trends & policy re: agriculture/farming/land use
- Types of crops & agricultural commodities produced & processed in region
- Types and origin of foods available in a community (e.g. fast food outlets, percentage of imported vs. locally-grown food)
- Trends in corporate concentration in the food system
- Food policy as related to business/industry, biotechnology, global trade
- Food allowance adequacy for social assistance recipients
- Nutritious Food Basket data

SOCIOLOGICAL/ BEHAVIOURAL
Demographic trends related to:
- Population food intake data
- Measures of household food insecurity
- Trends in food bank & other emergency food provision and use
- Breastfeeding incidence in the community & related policies
- Food preparation skills in the population and related programs
- School food policies and food available in schools & colleges
- Measure of multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral participation

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
- Food safety indicators and trends
- Pesticide residue levels on food
- Watershed and water safety data
- Waste management, recycling, packaging policies and practice
- Composting policies, practice and information available
- Estimated fuel use and effect on air quality of imported food
- Extent of use of GE crops, pesticide use, and environmental farm plans, integrated pest management, organic farming techniques.