

January 29, 2007

To: Community Development and Recreation Committee

From: Board of Health

Subject: Cost of the Nutritious Food Basket – Toronto 2006

The Board of Health referred the following recommendations to City Council, through the Community Development and Recreation Committee, for endorsement:

- 1. the Board of Health request the Premier of Ontario to increase social assistance benefit rates so that the Basic Allowance includes a nutrition allowance which meets daily nutritional needs as determined annually by the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket, and that the remainder of the Basic Allowance be set to enable recipients to afford other basic needs including transportation, clothing, and personal care items;**
- 2. the Board of Health request the Premier of Ontario to publish annually the details of current social assistance rate components and how they are determined, including the nutrition allowance portion of the Basic Allowance; and**
- 3. the Board of Health recommend to the Government of Ontario that the minimum wage in Ontario be increased to \$10.00 per hour as a step towards ensuring that the Province's low wage earners are better able to afford nutritious food.**

Action taken by the Board:

The Board of Health:

- (A) adopted the recommendations in the report (January 15, 2007) from the Medical Officer of Health amended to read as follows:
1. the Board of Health request the Premier of Ontario to increase social assistance benefit rates so that the Basic Allowance includes a nutrition allowance which meets daily nutritional needs as determined annually by the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket, and that the remainder of the Basic Allowance be set to enable recipients to afford other basic needs including transportation, clothing, and personal care items;
 2. the Board of Health request the Premier of Ontario to publish annually the details of current social assistance rate components and how they are determined, including the nutrition allowance portion of the Basic Allowance;

3. the Board of Health recommend to the Government of Ontario that the minimum wage in Ontario be increased to \$10.00 per hour as a step towards ensuring that the Province's low wage earners are better able to afford nutritious food;
4. the Board of Health request the Minister of Health Promotion to update the Nutritious Food Basket costing tool, based on the revised Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating after its release in 2007;
5. the Board of Health forward this report to the Ontario Ministers of Community and Social Services, Children and Youth Services and Health Promotion, and to the Office of Nutrition Policy & Promotion at Health Canada for action;
6. the Board of Health forward this report to the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, the Ontario Public Health Association's Community Food Security Workgroup, all Ontario Boards of Health, the Association of Ontario Health Centres, the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health and Dietitians of Canada for action;
7. the Board of Health forward this report to the Federal Ministers of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs drawing their attention to the connection among Canada's cheap food policy, the decline in food farming and its threat to Canada's food security;
8. the Board of Health request Toronto Public Health to initiate a dialogue with key stakeholders, such as the Ontario Public Health Association and Association of Local Official Health Agencies, to develop a province-wide campaign highlighting the health impacts arising from the inaffordability of a nutritious food basket for low-income people in Ontario;
9. the Board of Health request the Medical Officer of Health to work with the General Manager, Social Services, to ensure that the nutritious food basket recommendations are integrated into the City's Action Plan for Social Assistance "Systems of Survival, Systems of Support" Implementation Strategy scheduled to report to the Community Development and Recreation Committee in the first quarter of 2007 and that a copy of that report also be submitted to the Board of Health.

Background:

The Board of Health on January 29, 2007, considered a report (January 15, 2007) from the Medical Officer of Health, providing information on the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket in Toronto for 2006, and recommending measures to improve health through increased access to nutritious food for low-income individuals and families.

Recommendations:

The Medical Officer of Health recommends that:

1. the Board of Health request the Premier of Ontario to increase social assistance benefit rates so that the Basic Allowance includes a nutrition allowance which meets daily nutritional needs as determined annually by the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket, and that the remainder of the Basic Allowance be set to enable recipients to afford other basic needs including transportation, clothing, and personal care items;
2. the Board of Health request the Premier of Ontario to publish annually the details of current social assistance rate components and how they are determined, including the nutrition allowance portion of the Basic Allowance;
3. the Board of Health request the Premier of Ontario to increase the provincial minimum wage to allow low income workers to purchase adequate nutritious food, as well as shelter and other basic needs;
4. the Board of Health request the Minister of Health Promotion to update the Nutritious Food Basket costing tool, based on the revised Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating after its release in 2007;
5. the Board of Health forward this report to the Ontario Ministers of Community and Social Services, Children and Youth Services and Health Promotion, and to the Office of Nutrition Policy & Promotion at Health Canada, as well as the City of Toronto's Community Development and Recreation Committee and Toronto City Council; and
6. the Board of Health forward this report to the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, the Ontario Public Health Association's Community Food Security Workgroup, all Ontario Boards of Health, the Association of Ontario Health Centres, the Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health and Dietitians of Canada.

The Medical Officer of Health gave a presentation and filed a copy of his presentation materials.

The following persons addressed the Board of Health:

- Nick Saul, Stop Community Food Centre;
- Rene Adams; and
- Janice Etter, Toronto Food Policy Council, and filed a written submission.

Secretary
Board of Health

C. Davidovits/jd
Item 3
attachment

c. Medical Officer of Health