

Planting *the* Seeds



Food and Hunger Action Committee

Phase 1 Report

May 2000

 TORONTO

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FoodShare volunteer Hugh Shankland and Laura Berman, FoodShare's Community Garden Program Coordinator, in a local community garden (photo by Seana Irvine).

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Introduction

Canada is a land of plenty, and Toronto sits in the middle of a fertile agricultural area. There are many vegetable gardens and even some farms inside the borders of the city. Toronto is also renowned for the variety and quality of its many restaurants.

Yet far too many Torontonians, both adults and children, go hungry each day. Tens of thousands rely on food banks as a source of food. Others depend on the meals served at emergency shelters and drop-in centres. Some people who can afford fresh food are unable, because of age, illness, or disability, to get to and from grocery stores. Many families live on expensive convenience foods because no one in the family knows how or has the time to prepare healthy meals. Many who are willing and able to grow food have no land that they can cultivate. Farmers are frustrated by traffic congestion, parking restrictions and a lack of space when they try to get their food to farmers' markets. Several Toronto neighbourhoods lack proper grocery stores.

The responses to these problems are many and varied. Most are small-scale community efforts. Breakfast and snack programs in schools are supported in part by the City, but mostly by the schoolchildren's families and community fundraising. Fresh food at reasonable prices is available through the Good Food Box program. Meals on Wheels volunteers take food to elderly or disabled people. Cooking programs bring people together to prepare and enjoy food in community centres. During the summer, thousands of Torontonians grow food in private and community gardens. These efforts are important and have improved the quality of life for many Torontonians. But hunger remains a problem for too many people.

The creation of the Food and Hunger Action

Committee is a response both to the problems related to food and hunger in the city and to the creativity and energy of many Torontonians in trying to solve those problems. In October 1999, the community coalition, Hunger Watch, partnered with the City to host a World Food Day conference. Participants at the conference recommended creating a commission to study food security in Toronto and find ways to reduce hunger and improve nutritional health among Torontonians. Toronto's Millennium Task Force endorsed this recommendation and forwarded it to City Council, which then created the Food and Hunger Action Committee in December 1999.

The Food and Hunger Action Committee has taken a collaborative approach to its work bringing together City Councillors, City staff, the staff of community-based agencies and coalitions, food program participants, volunteers, clergy, and interested members of the public. The community has been a driving force on food and hunger issues for many years and has been an important catalyst for change. Anti-hunger coalitions in Scarborough, East York, North York, Etobicoke and Toronto organized tours of local food programs across the city, and presentations from a diverse group of people representing all aspects of food production and distribution and food relief. The Committee released a summary of this community consultation process in May 2000 in "Food for Thought: A What We Heard Report."

This report completes Phase I of the Food and Hunger Action Committee's work. It contains a brief overview of Toronto's patchwork of food programs. The term "patchwork" is appropriate, because there is little overall consistency or coordination of the wide variety of programs throughout

the city. Some programs are the ad hoc response of volunteers and non-profit agencies to perceived needs in their local communities. Others are well-established, city-wide programs.

In preparing this report, the Food and Hunger Action Committee also assembled an inventory of City policies and programs related to food, nutrition and

hunger (see Appendix A). In Phase I, the Committee will review existing City policies and programs, and recommend actions that the City can take, not just to solve problems of hunger and access to nutritious food for all Torontonians, but also to capitalize on opportunities to make Toronto more self-sufficient and prosperous through initiatives related to food.

Food: A Basic Need

Food and shelter are basic human needs. And just as the housing market has not been able to ensure a fair distribution of adequate housing for all, the current food system does not provide enough affordable healthy food to all who need it. Although people can (and, regrettably, many do) live without a permanent shelter, no one can live without food.

Traditionally, the government has provided goods or services that are considered essential but which the private sector cannot distribute equally to all citizens. Governments also get involved in areas that require non-market regulation to ensure uniform standards and protect public safety. Finally, governments usually intervene in matters that touch other areas of public interest — such as the environment or community development.

Food qualifies on all three counts, yet in Canada, the role of all levels of government in ensuring that Canadians have access to food is not well-established. Canadians take it for granted that the government has a role to play in education, health care, transportation, culture, recreation and economic development, and to ensure the provision of income. However, the adequacy of the benefit levels of income support programs such as social assistance has come into question. As a

result, an informal food system has been created by community-based groups, charities and other non-profit organizations to try and ensure that people have, at a minimum, enough food to get by, and at best, healthy and nutritious food to thrive on. Some of these charitable food programs have a long history. A few Toronto soup kitchens have been in existence since the Depression. Meals on Wheels dates from the 1960s, food banks and FoodShare from the 1980s. During the 1990s, as poverty deepened and hunger and homelessness increased, the number of food programs expanded to include child nutrition programs, meal programs at emergency shelters and drop-ins, and other initiatives.

But why should Canadians have to rely on charity, donations, volunteer labour and corporate goodwill to supply the staff of life? Food is a necessity.

The involvement of the government in local food programs is both essential and appropriate. Food issues are closely bound up with public health, housing, income support, agriculture, planning and land use, economic development, education and community services — areas that the federal, provincial and municipal governments are responsible for.

An Opportunity for Leadership by the City of Toronto

Action by the City of Toronto relating to food and nutrition shall follow these guiding principles:

- *to develop the Corporation as a model promoter of healthy food choices;*
- *to ensure that City initiatives promote adequate access to food in the City;*
- *to take a preventive approach so that nutrition-related health problems are avoided;*
- *to coordinate action with other levels of government and other sectors.*

Excerpts from Toronto Declaration on Food and Nutrition, 1992

Although Canada signed the United Nations Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights in 1976, which includes “the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger,” it has no national food policy. Although Canada endorsed a World Declaration on Nutrition at the International Conference on Nutrition in Rome in 1992, and convened a committee to propose “an agenda for action,” the country has no national nutrition policy. Unlike the United States, Canada does not have a national student nutrition program.

The Ontario Ministry of Health’s Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines mandates Boards of Health in Ontario to address healthy eating as part of the chronic disease prevention program standard. However, there are no provincial food or nutrition policies. Moreover, by focusing on cutting the deficit and reducing taxes, the provincial government has made decisions that have negatively affected social programs in Ontario and deepened the poverty of its low-income individuals.

In the absence of federal and provincial leadership, the former City of Toronto made a commitment to preventing hunger and ensuring adequate nutrition for its residents. In 1991, the City set up the Toronto Food Policy Council, and in 1992 issued a “Declaration on Food and Nutrition” to address hunger and diet-related diseases and conditions, and to ensure the long-term sustainability and security of the city’s food supply.

The City of Toronto cannot act alone, however: all levels of government must take action. The causes of poverty and hunger include economic restructuring, changes to federal employment insurance provisions, and cuts to provincial social assistance benefits. The federal government also maintains policies that favour mass-production agriculture and long-distance transport of food over local, small-scale production. The loss or maintenance of agricultural land around Toronto depends on the policies of suburban regions and municipalities and the decisions of the Ontario Municipal Board. The quality of food and the techniques used to process it are subject to federal legislation. The availability and price of particular foods and the choices available to shoppers are in the hands of suppliers and retailers.

Nevertheless, the actions of the City of Toronto directly and indirectly affect the supply and distribution of food — directly through support to programs that provide food to individuals and families, and indirectly through policies that determine, for example, where retailers are located and what land within the city can be cultivated. In many cases, the programs that provide food are short-term responses to need, whereas the City’s policies affect people’s long-term access to food in the city. There is no question that the City can play an important role to help ensure that all Torontonians have enough food to eat and that the food they eat is nutritious and healthy.

Food Security and the Many Roles of Food in the Life of the City

The goal of those who believe that food is a basic human right is “food security.” This term has been defined differently by different groups. The Canadian Dietetic Association lists six elements in its definition of food security:

1. The availability of a variety of foods at a reasonable cost.
2. Ready access to quality grocery stores, food service operations, or alternate food sources.
3. Sufficient personal income to buy adequate foods for each household member each day.
4. The freedom to choose personally acceptable foods.
5. Legitimate confidence in the quality of the foods available.
6. Easy access to understandable, accurate information about food and nutrition.

A report by Toronto Food Policy Council adds a final component:

7. The assurance of a viable and sustainable food production system.

In our overview of Toronto’s programs, this report tries to assess the extent to which Toronto is a “food-secure” city.

At the same time, food is about more than the satisfaction of hunger. How we produce food affects the environment. How we distribute food affects the economy. How we consume food affects social relations. In this report, we will look at food in four ways:

- food for survival
- food for health
- food for social well-being and community building
- food as part of the local economy and environment.

First, however, we will look at the connection between food, hunger and income in the city, to understand why so many Torontonians go hungry every day.

Part One: Food, Hunger and Income

"Toronto's growing social problems, combined with under-investment in new infrastructure, is placing the region's quality of life and its competitive advantage in the global economy at risk."

Anne Golden,
President, United Way

Toronto is in the middle of an economic boom. The signs of prosperity are everywhere: cranes on the skyline, bustling shopping districts, new businesses being created. The unemployment rate is almost half what it was in 1995. Yet the boom has not affected all Torontonians equally. It has not brought back the industrial jobs that used to support thousands of Toronto families. It has not eradicated poverty; in fact it has widened the gap between rich and poor. Hundreds of people sleep on Toronto's streets or in emergency shelters. Thousands wake up hungry and go to bed hungry every day.

In 1998, the Mayor's Homelessness Action Task Force commissioned a report on poverty in Toronto. Its conclusions were stark. "Poverty is increasing at a time of economic prosperity...The poor are getting poorer...The incidence of poverty has increased dramatically for younger families...The largest group at risk of poverty is single families headed by women...Increasingly restrictive income security programs have exacerbated the problem of poverty."

The Poor are Getting Poorer

When we say that "the poor are getting poorer," we mean that the income of the people who are in the lowest income quintile has decreased in real terms over the course of the 1990s. At the same time, the cost of living in Toronto has increased, particularly the cost of housing.

The causes of deepening poverty have been well-documented and go back at least as far as the recession of the early 1990s. The recession and fed-

Since the report was written, things have changed — for the worse. On April 24, 2000, the Daily Bread and North York Harvest Food Banks released a report showing that compared to 1995, people using the food banks are in greater need. Whereas five years ago, only 5% of the users needed food from the banks more than once a month, today 28% need food more than once a month. About a third of the 40,000 children who depend on the food banks miss at least one meal a week. More seniors are turning to food banks: 11% of food bank users were over 60 in 2000, compared to only 6% in 1995.

Another recent study, carried out by the Canadian Council on Social Development, shows that poverty is concentrated in Toronto relative to the surrounding suburban municipalities. The study, "Urban Poverty in Canada," analyzed Statistics Canada data and found that 28% of Toronto's residents live below the Low Income Cut Off level, whereas the incidence of poverty is much lower in the surrounding municipalities (16% in Mississauga and Oshawa, 15% in Markham, 12% in Vaughan, for example).

eral cutbacks put fiscal pressure on the former Metro Toronto government. Part of its response was to reduce discretionary spending, including dental and bedding allowances to social assistance recipients. In 1995, the Province reduced social assistance benefits themselves by 21.6%. At about the same time, changes to federal employment insurance and Workers' Compensation payments made it harder for workers who had been laid off or injured to

Percentage of Toronto's lone-parent families living on less than \$20,000 a year: 45

recover from a setback. The provincial government stopped funding new social housing and eliminated rent control. Waiting lists for social housing swelled to tens of thousands. Affordable private-market housing became increasingly hard to find.

According to an April 2000 study by the Daily Bread and North York Harvest Food Banks, the people who come to the food banks have, on average, \$4.95 a day to spend on all their needs other than rent — food, transportation, utilities, laundry, household needs, personal toiletries, school supplies.

In 1995, the average amount was \$7.40. With so many demands on a shrinking budget, many people are going hungry.

The same study also pointed out that although unemployment rates in Toronto dropped from 9.5% in 1995 to 5.4% in 2000, the number of employed food bank users rose from 8% in 1995 to 12% in 2000. Even people with jobs are finding that their earnings have not kept pace with the cost of living and the increase in rents.

Percentage of Toronto's singles living on less than \$20,000 a year: **53**

Hunger, Housing, and Homelessness

The Tenant Protection Act has made it easier for landlords to evict low-income tenants when they fail to pay the rent on time. Some people continue to pay most of their income in rent and turn to food banks and meal programs to feed themselves. However, people who use rent money to buy food are at risk of being evicted.

People who are evicted may become homeless. According to the Daily Bread and North York Harvest Food Banks, 55% of food bank users who were evicted from rental housing became homeless, at least temporarily.

Some homeless people panhandle for money to buy food. Others depend on food programs at drops-ins, community kitchens or Out of the Cold programs. Despite the efforts of volunteers and staff in emergency food programs to provide nutritious food, many homeless people survive on diets that rely heavily on sugary and starchy foods.

When a family with children is evicted, parents and children may end up in Toronto's emergency shelter system, which includes converted motels on Kingston Road. Families in shelters receive a place to stay and money for food and necessities. Although these motels provide communal cooking facilities, many families with children find it easier to prepare meals on their own. In places such as the Kingston Road motels, they prepare meals in a bedroom, eat wherever they find space (most rooms do not have dining tables), and wash dishes in a bathroom sink. They may not have a refrigerator to store fresh food, and may find it difficult to get to and from shops that sell fresh food. Under these circumstances, creating healthy and nutritious meals is a daunting task.

These trends are not simply "downtown problems," they affect all parts of the city. Poor people are generally more visible in the central city, because that is where the majority of social services are located, but

Average monthly cost of a one-bedroom apartment in Toronto in 1998: **\$729**
Minimum monthly wage for a full-time worker in Ontario: **\$1,096**
Monthly shelter allowance for a single person on social assistance: **\$325**

poverty and hunger affect all the former municipalities of the City of Toronto. As a Scarborough resident pointed out during the Food and Hunger Action

Committee's tour of that area, "We have downtown problems without the downtown services and programs to solve them."

Anti-Hunger Advocacy Organizations

Throughout Toronto, many groups are working to bring attention to people who are poor and hungry and to find workable solutions to these problems. These organizations have contributed greatly to the work of the Food and Hunger Action Committee.

The Daily Bread and North York Harvest Food Banks collect and publish information on hunger in the city and act as advocates for people who benefit from food programs. These two main food banks are also part of a larger coalition known as HungerWatch, which also includes representation from FoodShare, Canadian Red Cross, Oxfam Canada and the St. Vincent de Paul Society. This group was formed in 1996 to discuss policy and to collaborate on lobbying efforts on behalf of low-income people.

Anti-hunger groups also work to bring attention to issues of hunger and poor nutrition in different

parts of the city. The Scarborough Hunger Coalition was formed in 1993 to provide overall direction for food security programs in Scarborough. Etobicoke has a Food for Kids coalition, founded in 1996, to promote child nutrition programs. The North York Basic Needs Action Network, also started in 1996, is a coalition of social service agencies that supports a variety of food-related programs.

These groups generally take the view that access to food is a basic human right and that the best way to ensure access is to work in collaboration with the community-based sector and all levels of government. The Food and Hunger Action Committee shares that opinion and we are grateful for the efforts of these advocacy groups in providing us with information and helping to organize the Committee's tours.

Part Two: Food for Survival

The largest and best-known suppliers of emergency food in Toronto are the food banks, chiefly the Daily Bread Food Bank and the North York Harvest Food Bank. Other services that provide food to alleviate hunger are food recovery programs such as Second Harvest, and the food programs offered by emergency services such as Out of the Cold and emergency shelters.

These programs are not designed to strike at the causes of poverty and hunger, but only to provide temporary relief for the poor and hungry. As social programs to prevent poverty are gradually reduced

or eliminated, the demand for these programs has grown. As a result, the programs have, of necessity, become larger and more institutionalized.

In February 2000, HungerWatch and the Toronto Food Policy Council conducted a study of virtually every program serving meals or providing groceries in the city of Toronto. They found that about 60,000 people a month use food banks in Toronto, where they receive enough food for roughly 600,000 meals. More than 650,000 charitable meals are served every month in drop-ins, hostels and similar meal programs.

Food Banks

Food banks were originally created to serve two main purposes. One was to provide emergency food supplies to people who could not afford to buy food. The other was to make use of surplus food from food suppliers and distributors that would otherwise be wasted.

The food bank system includes two large warehouses, the Daily Bread Food Bank and North York Harvest Food Bank, which collect, sort, store and distribute food on a city-wide scale. They provide food to a network of community food banks and small food pantries in churches, community centres and other locations throughout the city. In addition to this network, agencies, such as the Salvation Army and some church groups, run independent food banks that collect and distribute food.

FoodShare operates Foodlink, a phone line that provides information on food bank and meal program locations and hours of operation, and can direct callers to the nearest open food bank.

Community Information Toronto and its Street Helpline also receive thousands of calls a year from people who want information on food banks and meal programs. The Daily Bread and North York Harvest Food Banks also refer people to local food banks.

The Daily Bread Food Bank and North York Harvest Food Bank have been in existence for about 15 years. They receive almost no government funding, but rely on donations from corporations and individuals. About 80% of the food they handle is surplus from the food industry; the rest comes from individual donations and seasonal food drives. These large operations maintain and publish statistics on the people they serve and are an important source of information on the extent of and reasons for hunger in the city.

As well as supplying food to smaller food banks, the Daily Bread and North York Harvest Food Banks distribute food to shelters for women and youth, drop-ins and some community-based

*Number of calls each year to Foodlink Hotline: **5,000**
Number of calls each year to Community Information Toronto about food: **9,000**
Number of calls each year to Street Helpline about food: **4,000***

Number of people using food banks in Toronto in 1999: **90,000**
Number of children among food bank users: **40,000**
Percentage of food bank users who have no money for food at least once a week: **50**
Percentage of food bank users spending more than 50% of their income on rent: **66**

"Food banks have become the government's way of subsidizing housing."

Sue Cox, Daily Bread Food Bank

public health programs, such as perinatal programs.

The larger food banks, such as Stop 103, employ some paid employees; volunteers usually staff the smaller ones. Large food banks also operate five days a week, while small food pantries may be open only for a few hours a week. Some are too small to accommodate the ever-increasing demands they face, and occasionally run out of food.

People who come to food banks and food pantries are screened to ensure that they qualify for the service. The screening process measures need in terms of income, the number of family members, and the amount paid in rent. Most food bank users are given three days' worth of food once a month on average, although about a third of food bank users need to come more than once a month.

The demand for food bank food has increased steadily, and many workers feel that they see only the tip of the iceberg: for every person who can get to a food bank, another is probably going hungry, because of lack of transportation, or because they are not comfortable accepting charity. Some people avoid food banks because they cannot be sure that the food they receive will be culturally appropriate. For example, Jews and Muslims cannot eat products that contain pork, and Hindus cannot eat anything containing beef.

Food banks have tried to respond to the increasing demand and to the ethnic diversity of their users. They are constantly working to improve the quantity and quality of the food they handle. They work with many local producers to collect and distribute more fresh food, and encourage donors to provide food that will suit a variety of users with different dietary needs.

In the last 15 years food banks have become, in some ways, victims of their own success. Because they are such an entrenched part of the food supply system, they are taken for granted. At the same time, donations have decreased 25% since 1995. This may be in part because public interest tends to wane when problems continue with no solution in sight. However, a volunteer in Etobicoke suggested another reason for lower donations. She noticed that people in her neighbourhood sometimes took the food that the church had collected for a local agency, presumably because they were in need themselves. Hunger is a social climber. Some people who now need food banks were once food bank donors.

The role of food banks in the food system is controversial. If they succeed in relieving hunger, they are criticized for "letting the government off the hook," that is, allowing the government to perpetuate the situations that cause poverty and hunger. Because many of the smaller food pantries do not have refrigerated storage and can distribute only canned and packaged food, they are sometimes criticized, unfairly, for not promoting a balanced diet.

Historically, food banks have not sought government funding in an effort to avoid becoming institutionalized. However, the City of Toronto has an ambiguous relationship with food banks. Officially, the City does not fund food banks, and food banks do not seek public funding, but the North York Harvest Food Bank used to receive money from the former City of North York, and still receives a small amount of support from the new City. The Daily Bread Food Bank receives no municipal funding. Yet food banks have become an adjunct to city services. Social services, public health and

housing workers refer people to food banks, which are expected to make up for benefits that are no longer provided by the various levels of government.

Food banks that rent premises may not have secure tenure. Two small food banks have recently been evicted and forced to find new space, and the Daily Bread Food Bank may soon have to find a new location, since the space it occupies may be redeveloped.

Relations are also difficult with the TTC. The Daily Bread Food Bank spends about \$65,000 a year on TTC tokens to help clients take food home; the TTC does not offer any discount on these bulk purchases. Moreover, since low-income people generally rely on transit to get around, any increase in TTC fares may add to the need for people to supplement their food budgets with food bank food.

A report prepared for the Board of Health in October 1999 summed up many of the problems:

In many ways, food banks are operating beyond their capabilities. The need for their product far outweighs their stock and their financial and human resources are

over-taxed. The emergency food system is heavily dependent on volunteers, donations and good-will. Food banks try to meet public health standards applicable to their premises, despite the fact that their facilities are often inadequate. In order to apply stricter [food safety] regulations, more funding and staff would have to be allocated to both the agencies and to Toronto Public Health.

As food banks become increasingly institutionalized, it is time to rethink their structure and role in Toronto and their relationship to municipal government. The food banks have already helped to increase public awareness of the problems of poverty and hunger in Toronto. They are beginning to evolve into community development agencies. The City needs to work with its community partners to determine the most appropriate role for the municipality with respect to food banks and whether and what kind of support should be provided. This issue will be addressed in Phase I of the work of the Food and Hunger Action Committee.

Food Recovery Programs

Toronto's main food recovery agency is called Second Harvest. Some other groups occasionally carry out food recovery operations on a small scale, collecting food from local retailers or restaurants and taking it to social service agencies, but Second Harvest is the best-known and most highly organized operation.

Like the Daily Bread and North York Harvest Food Banks, Second Harvest was founded in the mid-1980s. It is a non-profit charitable organization that collects perishable food from hotels and restaurants, movie sets, hospitals and other institutions, as well as from food

producers and retailers, and delivers it by refrigerated truck to social service agencies. The program is staffed by some paid employees and many volunteers. All staff are trained in how to handle perishable food safely.

Food recovery programs, like food banks, have seen an increase in demand over the past few years. The agencies they supply with food are serving more youth, more seniors and more families. Because of this increase in demand, there is an increased need for training, to ensure that safety practices are maintained.

*Amount of food distributed by Second Harvest in 1998-99: **3.5 million lbs.***

*Number of social service agencies in Toronto using Second Harvest food: **110***

Number of Out of the Cold locations in Toronto: 41
Approximate number of people using Out of the Cold programs each week in winter: 1,000

Meal Programs for People Living on the Street

Most individuals and families who use food banks have a roof over their heads. Homeless people, however, are not in a position to store or prepare food and must rely on the meals available at emergency shelters and drop-ins. One of the best-known programs for people without permanent housing is the Out of the Cold program.

In this program, churches, synagogues and community groups offer dinner, breakfast and overnight accommodation to homeless people one night a week during the winter. The program began in 1988 with one church, and has since grown to more than 40 locations. Some churches and community groups also provide hot lunches for homeless and low-income people. Most programs shut down between April and October. Some continue to offer meals, but no overnight accommodation. For example, St. Andrew's Church in downtown Toronto, which offers dinner, overnight accommodation, and breakfast during the winter, provides only breakfast during the summer months. For some homeless people, spring, summer and early fall may actually be times of greater hardship than winter.

These programs are staffed entirely by volunteers and rely on donations of food and supplies from corporations, individuals and food banks. The quality of food varies from church to church, as do the facilities for cooking — not all churches have kitchens designed for large-scale catering.

Like the food banks, the Out of the Cold Program began as a charitable response to what was seen as a temporary emergency. Over the years, as demand

has grown, the programs have become permanent features of church work. Volunteer burn-out is a problem. Dealing with homeless people is demanding work — some guests have severe mental health problems, others have alcohol or drug addictions. At the same time, church congregations are aging. Many Out of the Cold volunteers are middle-aged or retired, and younger volunteers are in short supply. Yet every year the need grows, and more programs are added.

Out of the Cold programs also face similar criticisms to those levelled at food banks: by trying to alleviate the hardships of homelessness, they are letting the government off the hook for its actions in creating homelessness.

Food for survival on the street is also provided by street patrols, such as those run by Na-Me-Res and Anishnawbe Health. The street patrols provide a range of services, including distributing sandwiches, soup and coffee to people on the street. They also make referrals and offer transportation to health services and emergency shelters.

Some drop-in centres also provide food. People who are homeless, marginally housed or socially isolated turn to these programs for support, referrals, information and help to develop skills such as how to prepare a healthy, affordable meal. In some cases, drop-ins serve hot meals; in others they simply have food such as coffee, sandwiches, apples or muffins available for people who come in. As poverty deepens, more and more people rely on these kinds of programs to survive.

Meal Programs at Emergency Shelters

Homeless individuals, families and youth, and women fleeing abusive partners may live temporarily in emergency shelters, some of which are run by the City, others by community-based organizations. Emergency shelters provide meals as part of their services. Shelter operators recognize the importance of nutritious food, especially for homeless people who may already be undernourished or in poor health.

Emergency shelters use their budget to purchase food, but also may supplement their supplies with food from Second Harvest or food banks. For example, the Food and Hunger Action Committee visited Horizons for Youth in York, which offers emergency

shelter for up to 35 youth in crisis. This shelter uses donations from North York Harvest Food Bank, Second Harvest, Field to Table and Food for All Street Kids, as well as private donations, to supplement its food budget.

Many different people with diverse food and nutrition needs turn to emergency shelters. Some may have diabetes or food allergies. Some women may be pregnant and need extra food. Others may come from cultures in which the diet is very different from the usual North American diet. It is a constant challenge for shelters to accommodate many different dietary needs within limited food budgets.

Food Programs Funded through the Homeless Initiatives Fund

The City of Toronto Homeless Initiatives Fund combines municipal and provincial funds to provide grants to community groups for projects to prevent homelessness and help people move from the streets to permanent shelter. Currently the fund supports 17 food-related projects with grants ranging from \$8,000 to \$25,000. Priority is given to innovative projects that increase the capacity of homeless people and vulnerable tenants to acquire food, either to keep their food

costs down so that they will not miss rent payments or to improve their health by increasing their intake of nutritious foods. Projects include community kitchen programs, community meal preparation programs, food skills training and congregating dining. The complete list of these grants for the current year, including some creative responses to the need for increased food access for the most vulnerable people, can be found in the inventory attached to this report.

Food Access Grants

Between 1996 and 1998, the former City of Toronto provided \$2.4 million in Food Access Grants using a one-time source of surplus funds. The grants were intended to provide food for children, counter the effects of provincial and federal spending cuts, and target areas of the greatest need in the city. The

funds were used to buy equipment and improve the facilities used by food programs, as well as to support programs that employed low-income people. Many programs were able to use the grants to leverage additional funding from corporate or individual donors.

Emergency food and meal programs in Toronto (includes both City- and community-run programs):

- Central Toronto: **207**
- East York: **12**
- Etobicoke: **21**
- North York: **39**
- Scarborough: **41**
- York: **15**

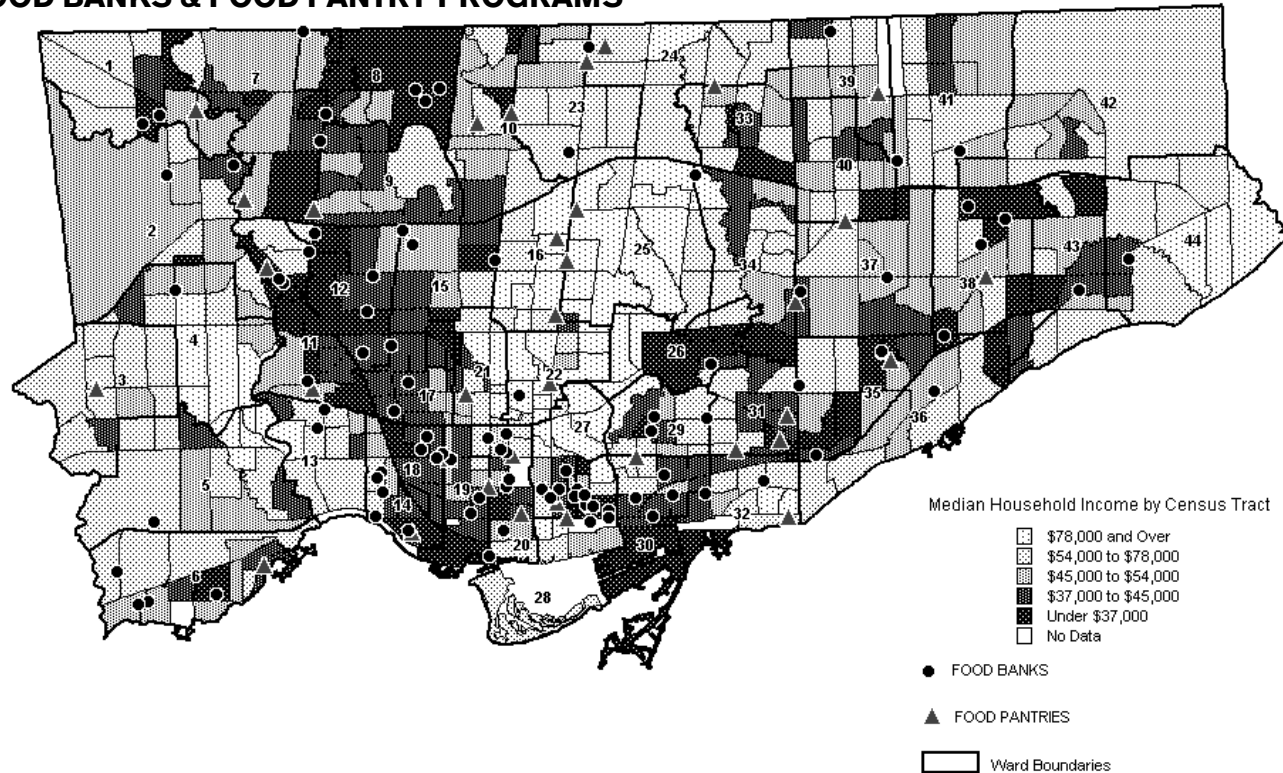
Urban Problems in Suburban Settings

The programs described in this section are not uniformly distributed throughout the city. The former City of Toronto has a larger number of programs and services than the former suburban municipalities. Yet the needs are as urgent in Etobicoke, York, North York, East York and Scarborough.

The map shows the distribution of food banks and food pantries throughout the city. There is no simple correspondence between areas of need and

areas that are served by emergency food programs. The determining factor is the willingness of volunteers to set up and staff a program, and the availability of space and facilities for a food bank or food pantry, hot meal or Out of the Cold program. As a result, some food programs have been set up in relatively affluent areas, and some areas of considerable poverty have no programs at all.

FOOD BANKS & FOOD PANTRY PROGRAMS



Source: FoodShare FoodLink Database (Feb. 2000)
 Prepared by Toronto Community & Neighbourhood Services, Social Development & Administration Division, May 2000
 Other data: Statistics Canada 1996 Census. Land Information Toronto

Food, Charity and Volunteer Labour

Many of the programs described in this section are funded entirely or in part by charitable donations from individuals and corporations. Many are staffed entirely or in part by volunteers. The Food and Hunger Action Committee would like to commend everyone who spends their money or time to ensure that less fortunate people have enough to eat.

However, the dependence upon the charitable sector is worrying. Volunteers are becoming overwhelmed by the demands on their services. Also, the trend in charitable giving towards “donor-directed gifts” rather than no-strings-attached donations may leave some programs underfunded. It is time to question this dependence and consider alternatives.

Part Three: Food for Health

Poor Nutrition in a Land of Plenty

Percentage of all meals provided by fast-food or take-out restaurants in the United States (1998 figures): 62
The figure is likely to be similar for Canada.

Getting adequate nutrition is a constant problem for people who are poor or homeless. However, it is not their exclusive problem. Many people who can afford nutritious food do not eat properly, for a variety of reasons.

For example, people in high-stress jobs that demand long hours may live on fast-food takeouts eaten at their desks, get little or no physical exercise, and rely heavily on alcohol to help them relax at the end of the day. Parents in demanding jobs may have little time to cook properly for their children or to eat with them: the children, left to their own devices, subsist on snack foods that require no preparation.

Healthy eating also requires some food preparation skills. Today, however, these skills are disappearing, and more and more people use prepared, packaged foods that need only be heated. Even a simple meal of macaroni and cheese is now available in a microwaveable, ready-to-serve form.

Some Torontonians live in areas that are poorly served by fresh food markets and by transit; fresh foods are seldom available in convenience stores, which may be the only nearby source of food.

It is understandable when children make unhealthy food choices. Because the food industry makes its main profits from processed food — much of which contains few nutrients and high levels of

fat, sugar, and salt — it promotes this type of food more heavily than unprocessed, fresh food. Despite the efforts of groups such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation to promote healthy eating, the message is easily drowned by the massive advertising campaigns of snack food companies and fast food franchises, most of it aimed deliberately at young people.

A recent report by the World Watch Institute has found that for every person in the world who is underweight and malnourished, another is overweight and malnourished. In other words, people may become overweight on “empty calories” — food that fills them without providing nourishment.

At the same time, fashion advertising and popular television offers the message that the ideal shape for a woman is that of an undernourished pre-adolescent. The pressure on girls and women to be thin may lead to eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia or yo-yo dieting, even in children under ten. Some parents even misguidedly underfeed their children, hoping to ensure that the children do not become overweight, not recognizing that fat is an essential part of the diet of small children.

Even people who are trying to eat a healthy diet can easily be misled by food labeling: many products that call themselves “healthy” or “cholesterol-free” may still be poor nutritional choices.

Elderly and Disabled People

Elderly or disabled people may have particular difficulty getting access to healthy food. Imagine you are an 80-year-old widow who suffers from heart problems and arthritis. You live in a small apartment on a restricted income. Your arthritis makes it hard for you to stand in the kitchen long enough to prepare meals or to do such things as peeling and chopping vegetables. Even opening cans is difficult. The only grocery store that offers fresh food is a \$10 taxi ride or a 15-minute walk and two buses away. How often are you going to go shopping? And

what are you going to buy when you get there?

While we can only imagine being in this situation, it is reality for many elderly Toronto residents. Disabled Torontonians may face similar barriers to getting adequate food. Although some seniors and disabled people can get help from family, friends or neighbours, others are isolated and without resources. Many do not know what programs are available, and staff and volunteers in agencies that might offer help do not always know when seniors in their communities are in need.

According to a survey of 432 seniors in Toronto done in 1994, about 60% were considered to be at nutritional risk.

"Many elderly people who cannot get out to shop more or less live on tea and toast."

*Mary Hansen,
Storefront Humber*

The Costs of Poor Nutrition

Good nutrition is, quite simply, a form of preventive health care. About 60 to 70% of chronic diseases — including anemia, cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension and stress-related disorders — are related to diet. Although the relationship between diet and health is complex, and other factors such as exercise, stress or living conditions must be taken into account, most health professionals agree that better nutrition for all is the most cost-effective way to forestall mounting health care costs.

According to a report by the Toronto Food Policy Council, "The Ontario health care budget

consumes over \$17 billion annually, approximately 20% of this total devoted to treating the major chronic diseases and conditions with significant diet-related risk factors." The report also quoted research from the United States that suggests that "diet is as significant a mortality factor as tobacco." It took the health system decades to recognize the dangers of cigarettes and to launch a campaign to discourage smoking. Let us hope that it does not take as long for the health system to acknowledge the costs of poor diet and unhealthy food choices.

"A good diet and adequate food supply are central for promoting health and well-being. The shortage of food and lack of variety cause malnutrition and deficiency diseases. Excess intake contributes to cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, obesity, and dental caries. Food poverty exists side by side with food plenty."

*World Health Organization,
Social Determinants of
Health, 1998*

Food Programs for Health

Nutritional programs are particularly important for children and infants. School food programs not only provide breakfast or nutritious snacks, but also help children learn how to make healthy food choices. Prenatal programs support pregnant women to have a healthy birth outcome and to provide babies with a healthy start. Another useful initiative designed to ensure good nutrition, particularly for low-income families, is FoodShare's Good Food Box program.

It is important to acknowledge the central role of Toronto Public Health, a division of Community and Neighbourhood Services, in many of these

initiatives. The division is responsible for disease prevention and health promotion for Toronto's 2.5 million residents and half million visitors each year. Changes to the health care system, social assistance, housing and environmental protection services have added to its burden of work. A February 2000 report to the Board of Health noted that "the health needs of Toronto's population exceed the capacity of Public Health to meet them." Nevertheless, the division does its best with limited resources to improve the nutritional health of Torontonians, especially the most vulnerable populations.



Child Nutrition Programs

More than 300 children's food programs currently operate throughout Toronto, mostly through schools, but also through community centres, such as the breakfast club at the Stonegate Community Health Centre in Etobicoke. The programs are locally run and designed to respond to the culture and specific needs of the children in a particular area. Some offer breakfast; others a mid-morning snack, a few offer lunch. Some programs are linked to nutrition education in the curriculum. The programs are offered to all children, not just to low-income children, although parents may choose to have their children opt out of a program. Since most programs are run through schools, they are generally not available in summer.

Most programs require a small donation from the parents. The City and the Province contribute roughly equal proportions of the costs of these programs. In 1998-99, the City paid 24% of

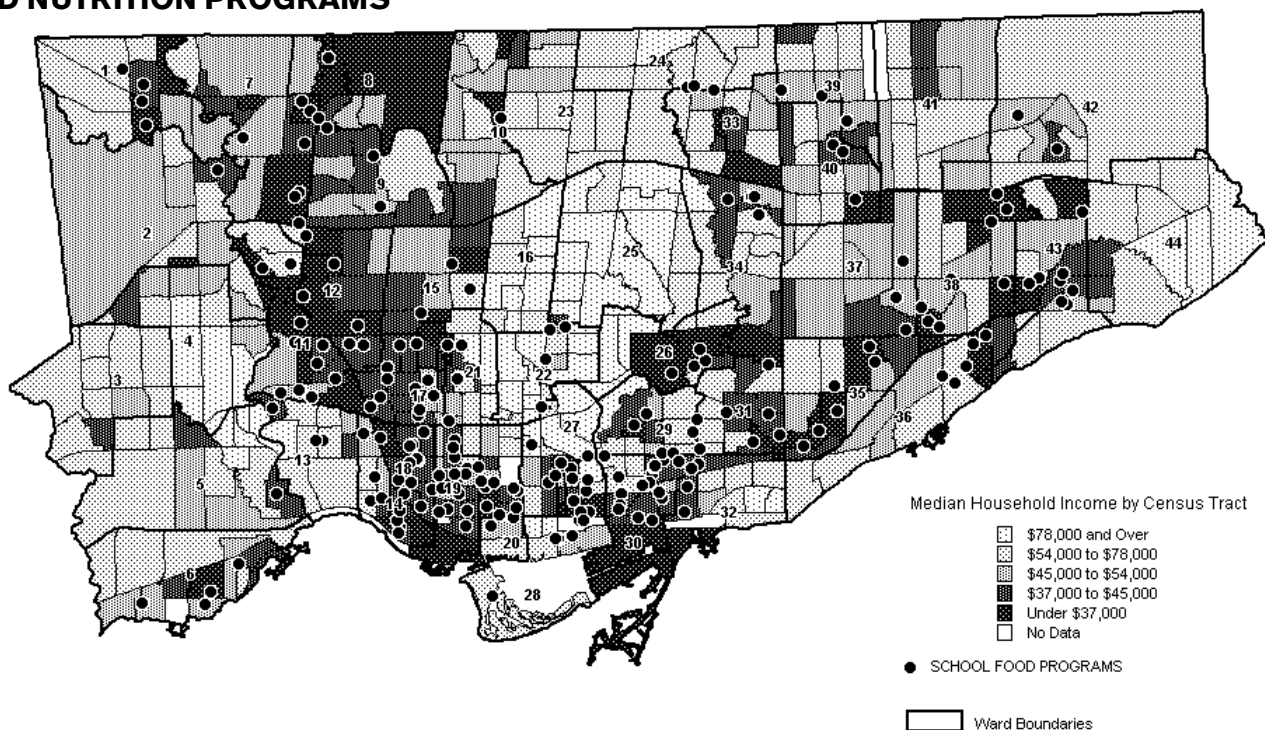
the costs of 210 programs. In 1999-2000, because the number expanded to 305 programs, the City's proportion of funding fell to 17%. In the 2000 budget, at the request of the Children and Youth Action Committee, the amount was restored to 24% of the existing programs. The rest of the money must come from parental contributions, donations and community fundraising efforts.

The money is spent, not only on the food itself, but also on staffing, packaging for individual servings, storage and clean-up. The programs are generally staffed by part-time workers and volunteers. The volunteers include parents who have children in the program. In some cases, the food is bought at retail prices, which adds to the cost of the program. In other cases, the food itself may be donated, which means that the staff have little control over what is served.

Teachers support the programs, because they

*Number of children aged
5 to 12 in Toronto: **235,000**
Number of meals and snacks
served to school children
each year: **53,000***

CHILD NUTRITION PROGRAMS



Source: FoodShare FoodLink Database (Feb. 2000)
 Prepared by Toronto Community & Neighbourhood Services, Social Development & Administration Division, May 2000
 Other data: Statistics Canada 1996 Census. Land Information Toronto

find that well-fed children behave better, have a longer attention span, and find it easier to remember what they have learned. One volunteer also told the Food and Hunger Action Committee that she had noticed that children who ate together also played together more cooperatively. Most parents support the programs as well, especially parents who, for one reason or another, find it difficult to ensure that their children eat a healthy breakfast

before school. And, of course, the children themselves appreciate the food.

Child nutrition programs are not identical throughout the city. Some emphasize nutrition and healthy food choices; others can offer only cereal bars and cookies to the children. Some programs also face increased problems in the 2000-01 academic year, when cutbacks to janitorial and lunchroom supervisory staff will come into effect in Toronto schools.

"When a child's stomach is empty, everything else is secondary. Before developing a thirst for knowledge and a hunger for learning, one must satisfy the body's thirst and hunger. This is the challenge faced by our society."

Romeo LeBlanc, former Governor General of Canada

"What happens to you in the first six years... basically sets your coping skills and competence for life."

Dr. Fraser Mustard

School food programs need reliable sources of funding. A March 1998 report to the Toronto Board of Health pointed out that "Nutritional standards... are often sacrificed to keep programs going in the face of inadequate funding. Donated and food bank food cannot serve as a basis for a quality nutrition

program." School programs are now entrenched to the point at which parents and children rely on them — if the programs cannot provide anything better than the cold cereal or cheap snacks children would otherwise eat, then they will merely perpetuate poor eating habits and defeat their original purpose.

➤ **Prenatal and Perinatal Programs**

Every year in Toronto, about 35,000 women become pregnant. And every year, about 2,000 low-birth-weight babies are born in the city.

There is a growing body of research that shows the importance of nutrition for pregnant women and for their babies to the later health and well-being of those children. Children who weigh very little at birth, if they survive their infancy, are at risk of health and behavioural problems when they grow up. They also create additional stress on an already overburdened health care system: low birth weight babies require much more expensive hospital care relative to healthy babies.

Many of the mothers of these low-birth-weight babies are poor or homeless. Some are teenagers. Others may have addictions to drugs or alcohol. Some are low-income women who already have children and who sacrifice their own nutritional needs to ensure that their children have enough to eat.

Prenatal nutrition and support programs can help low-income pregnant women improve their health and that of their unborn children.

At present, about 1,500 high-risk pregnant women are seen each year through Toronto Public Health's Healthiest Babies Possible program, which offers nutritional counselling and, in some cases, food. One program, called Healthiest Babies Possible, offers individual nutritional counselling, vitamin supplements and food vouchers to low-income, high-risk pregnant women. This program is fully funded by the City, although many community agencies contribute space where Public Health staff can meet with clients.

Toronto Public Health provides other prenatal programs in collaboration with many community agencies. Most of these programs receive some funding from Health Canada through the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program. These programs help women in at-risk circumstances (e.g., teens, women living in isolation, low-income families) to have healthy birth outcomes. The programs are generally co-facilitated by a multi-disciplinary team and address a number of issues such as nutrition, food skills, education and preparation for labour and delivery

and breastfeeding education. In addition, participants are referred to other community services as needed. The programs build in opportunities for participants to develop peer-supports and to plan and participate in the program development. Funding for prenatal programs was increased in the 2000 City budget for collaborative prenatal programs as recommended by the Children and Youth Action Committee.

The City also supports a special program called Young Parents with No Fixed Address, which helps pregnant homeless teenagers. Pregnant women on social assistance can also receive a monthly benefit of \$43 from the City for up to nine months to supplement their food budget.

Public Health staff also contact new mothers and offer a home visit. This program, known as Healthy Babies Healthy Children, receives support from the provincial government. Staff offer guidance on breastfeeding and infant nutrition,

parenting skills, and child health and safety. Breastfeeding is particularly important, because of its role in nourishing and protecting the health of newborns. It is also a less expensive alternative to infant formula, which can be important to a low-income family.

FoodShare also helps to support mothers and their infants through a baby-food-making program. Homemade baby food is a healthy alternative to commercial baby food, which is expensive and may contain added sugar and preservatives.

These programs are valuable, but like many other food programs, they suffer from limited funding. About 10,000 low-income women become pregnant each year in Toronto, which suggests that more women need prenatal support than are receiving it. Some prenatal programs use food bank food. There are not enough ongoing programs to support new mothers and their infants because of a lack of funding.



Peer Nutrition Program

Toronto Public Health is developing a new food and nutrition program for parents of children up to six years old. The program will reach non-English-speaking parents of Toronto's ethnically and culturally diverse communities to

provide effective nutrition education, using trained lay workers. This program was recently approved by City Council, following a recommendation by the Children and Youth Action Committee.

➤ **Meals on Wheels**
Meals on Wheels is not a single program provided by one agency, but a patchwork of programs delivered by 21 different groups in different parts of the city. It is a long-standing program serving mainly seniors who live alone, convalescing hospital patients, and people suffering from chronic illness or mental or physical disabilities. Recipients pay a small amount for each meal. In most areas, hot nutritious meals are delivered during the day on weekdays. Frozen meals that can be reheated are also available. Special meals for diabetics or people

on low-fat diets are available. Some programs cater to special groups, providing kosher meals for Jewish clients, for example.

The demands on Meals on Wheels may increase, especially with the trend towards shorter hospital stays and the deinstitutionalization of mental health patients. The service depends on volunteer drivers and is labour-intensive. In areas where there are not enough volunteers to meet the demand, the programs may deliver frozen meals every few days rather than hot meals each day.

Number of Good Food Boxes distributed each month: **4,000**
Retail value of each box: **\$23 – \$30**
Cost to customers of each box: **\$15**

➤ **The Good Food Box**
FoodShare is a non-profit, charitable organization that provides several programs designed to improve the consumption of healthy food among low-income or disabled people and seniors. One of its best-known programs is the Good Food Box, a program that started in 1992, with financial support from the City of Toronto.

recipients pay only for the food they receive and not for overhead. The boxes are packed and delivered to drop-off points around the city by volunteers. The program is available to anyone; recipients include both low-income and middle-income families.

The Good Food Box is essentially a bulk buying program for healthy food. Each box contains about 50 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables, many from local Ontario producers, offered to families at \$15 a box. FoodShare solicits donations from the public to help cover the cost of transportation, labour and administration, so that the

The program has been well-received, but its capacity to expand is related to fundraising and space limitations. It may also have to find a new location, since the warehouse on Eastern Avenue where the boxes are packed may be expropriated as part of the waterfront/Olympic makeover of the downtown area.

“Our programs are helping farmers too by setting up a new distribution system for food...everyone benefits from increased access to affordable food.”

Debbie Field, FoodShare

➤ **Food Safety**
The responsibilities of Toronto Public Health include monitoring the safety of Toronto’s food. Public Health inspectors visit restaurants and food-based businesses to ensure that conditions are sanitary and that staff are following food-handling regulations. It will also investigate

cases of food-borne pathogens that cause illness, such as the outbreak of cyclosporiasis in 1998. The recent crackdown on restaurants that fail to meet food safety standards, and emerging problems with imported food are stretching the limited resources of Public Health.



Education and Public Awareness Programs

Many different groups promote awareness of good nutrition. Toronto Public Health sponsors Eat Smart!, a restaurant awards program, and in partnership with the Toronto Food Policy Council, FoodShare and the Daily Bread and North York Harvest Food Banks, promotes World Food Day in October. Nutrition month is a collaboration of Toronto Public Health and the Canadian Dietetic Association. Non-governmental organizations such as the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Cancer Society carry out public awareness campaigns and publish cookbooks to promote healthy eating. The provincial government has developed curriculum materials for school nutrition classes in elementary schools. Toronto libraries often sponsor speakers on food and nutrition. Schools also may offer nutritional information in health and physical education classes. Some schools are also trying to promote healthy eating through the choices available in school cafeterias.

One important public awareness program is called the Nutritious Food Basket. In 1998, the Ontario Ministry of Health required all Boards of Health to estimate the cost of a basket of nutritious food each year, to monitor the cost of healthy eating. Toronto Public Health reported on the cost of 66 foods, priced in 12 different grocery stores, in May 1999. The information was used to estimate the weekly food costs for people in 23 different age groups. The study will be repeated in May or June every year. The information can be used to monitor food costs and compare them to income and housing costs in the city.

All these efforts to promote healthy eating, however, pale in comparison with the countervailing efforts of the fast food and processed

food industries to sell their products, especially to young people. Millions of dollars are spent promoting pop, snacks and fast food on television, on billboards, and through special promotions. Coke and Pepsi sign exclusive contracts with educational institutions to promote their soft drinks. Food companies offer teachers so-called “teaching materials” that promote their particular products in various ways. For example, pizza certificates may be offered as rewards for accomplishing school tasks, or food companies may provide lesson plans and teaching materials that use processed foods in activities designed to look like science experiments. In the commercialization of education, food companies have exploited many opportunities to get their message to a captive audience of young people in classrooms. Countering these messages with public health information is an enormous task.

As a 1997 report by the Toronto Food Policy Council pointed out, most health promotion campaigns related to food and nutrition focus on encouraging people to make healthy individual choices. However, there are more systemic reasons why people do not eat a healthy diet, even when they can well afford to do so, including increased dependence on convenience and highly processed food, and the lack of time available for cooking. Given the costs to the health system of poor nutrition, public awareness should go beyond merely encouraging people to reach for a carrot stick instead of a chocolate bar and consider the underlying reasons why it is so difficult for many people, especially young people, to do so. Only when the underlying causes of poor nutrition have been addressed will the costs of poor nutrition begin to decrease.

Monthly cost of a nutritious food basket for a woman aged 19 – 24 (May 1999):

\$110.44

For a man aged 19 – 24:

\$148.04

Part Four: Food for Social Well-being and Community Building

Moving Beyond Emergency Services

Part Two of this report looked at the patchwork of ad hoc food programs, many of which sprang up in the 1990s to deal with the problems caused by the dismantling of Ontario's social safety net. Yet food programs need not be merely stopgap responses to hunger. They can help make people more self-sufficient, and bring people together on common projects that help stabilize communities. In this way, food programs can help prevent problems, not just solve them.

Programs that bring people together to grow,

prepare, buy or eat food can also benefit from economies of scale. Bulk purchases are always cheaper than single servings. Sharing equipment lowers the cost of many activities. Best of all, these common efforts reduce people's isolation and build their skills and confidence.

The City supports these programs by providing space, staff or funding. Community groups would like to see the City expand its support for these important programs.

Food Programs for Social Well-being and Community Building

Some of the programs that fall into this category include cooking classes, community gardens and congregate dining programs.



Cooking Programs

Our grandparents used to say that something was “as easy as shelling peas” — yet today, some people have never shelled peas and would have no idea how to start. As manufacturers offer more and more processed, microwaveable foods, cooking is becoming a specialized skill, not something that most people can do as a matter of course. Schools have eliminated home economics or family studies classes, where students used to learn about cooking, food budgeting and nutrition. Many Toronto apartments and condominiums have tiny kitchens, presumably designed for people who eat take-out and convenience food only.

The ability to cook is not just a matter of personal satisfaction: it is also a money-saver. Cooking meals from scratch takes more time but less money than assembling and heating meals using packaged convenience foods. Meals created from scratch using fresh ingredients are also more nutritious than those assembled from processed foods.

Cooking programs, sometimes known as community kitchens, usually offered in community centres, can replace some of these lost skills and help people stretch their food dollars. The City already supports some of these programs through its Community Services Grants Program.

Toronto Public Health has also created a training program and manual called *Cooking Healthy Together*, which is used to train people to conduct cooking programs. About 130 leaders have been trained in the program.

The Food and Hunger Action Committee visited a cooking program in Scarborough, where a group of women of various ages were preparing lasagna, salad and a dessert. Childcare was provided for the women's children. The women not only gained cooking skills, but also enjoyed chatting, exchanging recipes, and working together as a group. Cooking programs can relieve the social isolation of seniors, new immigrants and housebound mothers with small children.

Because cooking together has such important social benefits, one program, at the Across Boundaries agency in York, brings together people with severe mental illness, using donations

from Second Harvest.

Cooking from scratch even has environmental benefits. When people learn to cook using fresh ingredients, their dependence on convenience foods that are heavily packaged decreases. Instead of ending up with packaging materials to throw away, people who cook are more likely to have scraps to compost.

At some programs, the participants simply cook a substantial meal and enjoy it together. At others, they cook large amounts of food that they can take home to their families. Unfortunately, most programs are offered only once or twice a month, and space in suitable kitchens is at a premium. Since the most effective programs are limited to fewer than 10 participants at a time, because kitchen facilities are limited, there is more demand for the programs than available spaces.

"If we subsidize over-packaging by carting away garbage for free, why not subsidize reduced packaging by helping people learn to cook from scratch?"

Wayne Roberts, Toronto Food Policy Council

► **Community Gardens**

There are about 100 community gardens in Toronto, and about 4,500 people use them to grow fruit, vegetables and flowers. Each plot produces about \$200 to \$300 worth of fresh produce, totalling about \$1 million a year. There are waiting lists for many areas and low turnover among participants. Most community garden coordinators say that if they had more space, they could fill it immediately.

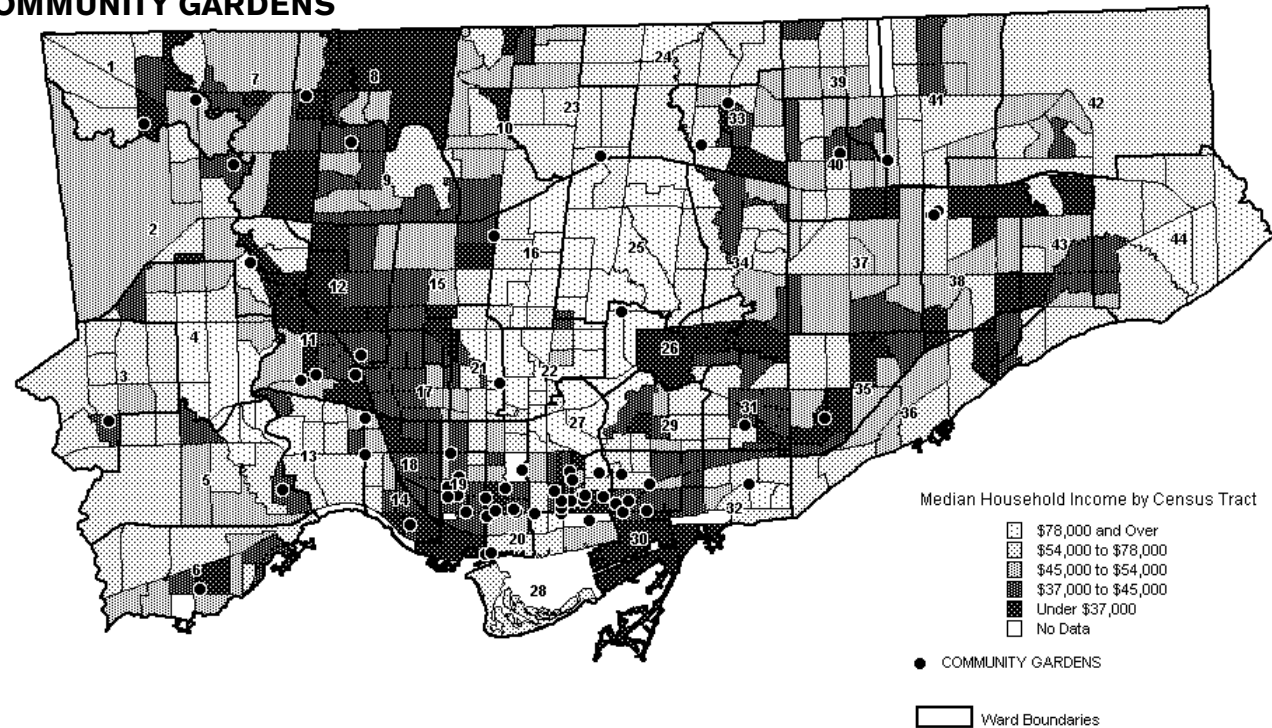
Community gardens make so much sense

that it is astonishing that there aren't more of them in Toronto. People who work in them gain a sense of accomplishment and self-esteem while learning new skills; their families, friends and neighbours benefit from everything they grow. They help "green" the urban environment and they bring people together in a common and enjoyable task. The food they grow is fresh, and they are encouraged to grow it organically, without pesticides or chemical fertilizers.

"Although I live well below the poverty line, I don't feel as poor being involved with the garden."

André Vaillancourt,
community gardener

COMMUNITY GARDENS



Source: FoodShare FoodLink Database (Feb. 2000)

Prepared by Toronto Community & Neighbourhood Services, Social Development & Administration Division, May 2000

Other data: Statistics Canada 1996 Census. Land Information Toronto

In 1999, Toronto City Council made a commitment to ensure that every ward in the city had at least one community garden by 2003. In the next three years, at least 11 new gardens must be created to achieve this goal. The City supports community gardens by providing space in city-owned open space and also staff support through the Department of Economic Development, Culture and Tourism. However, the City does not provide administrative

funding for community gardening, and many community groups have identified the need for this type of funding to support their garden programs.

People who remember the Second World War may remember “Digging for Victory,” as back gardens and public land were cultivated to aid in the war effort. In the war against poverty and hunger, we have a renewed reason to “Dig for Victory” on any available, arable parcel of land in the city.

➤ **Congregate Dining and Community Meal Programs**

“Commensality” is the social and cultural practice of sharing food. In every culture, coming together as a family or a community to share a meal has always been an important custom. Yet in modern North America, commensality is declining. More and more people eat alone, even people who live in families. Many children have little or no experience of eating a home-cooked meal with the entire family seated at the table.

Across Toronto, agencies such as the Red Cross or Parkdale Golden Age Foundation sponsor programs that bring together isolated or frail seniors for daily, weekly, bi-weekly or monthly lunches. The programs usually charge a nominal fee for the hot lunch (\$1.00 to \$6.00) and many offer transportation (known as Wheels to Meals).

Other agencies offer community meal programs for disabled people, families, children, mental health consumers and rooming house tenants. The City, through its Community Services Grants Program, funds these kinds of meal programs as part of its overall social programs to reduce the isolation of vulnerable Torontonians.

The Foodlink database lists 89 congregate dining programs, held in churches, seniors’ housing, public housing, community halls and Parks and Recreation facilities. Public Health nutritionists may advise on menus and City staff may help with the organization.

The programs are not only important in fulfilling the nutritional needs of seniors and others: they reduce the isolation of people who live alone or who have few social connections.

According to a survey of 432 seniors in Toronto done in 1994, 40% of all seniors eat alone.

➤ **Other Community Food Programs**

Many groups in Toronto come together to gather, prepare or enjoy food, from potluck suppers to pick-your-own expeditions. For example, in Dufferin Grove Park there is a community oven where different groups gather to prepare bread, pizza and other baked goods.

Several Toronto agencies, including North York Basic Needs Action Network and Scarborough Heart Health Network, sponsor gleaning trips, which give participants the opportunity to visit a farm at the end of the growing season and pick

any remaining produce. These programs are similar to food recovery programs in that they use food that would otherwise be wasted. However, because the people who will use the food are the ones who actually pick it as part of an enjoyable outing to the countryside, there is much more community involvement.

Although there are too many small-scale community programs to list in this report, it is clear that food brings people together in rewarding activities that contribute to the vitality of the city.

Part Five: Food as Part of the Local Economy and Environment

One in 10 Torontonians

When most people think of the Toronto economy, they think of financial services, cultural industries, retailing, tourism or high-tech. However, food is an important part of the Toronto economy. A 1999 study by the Toronto Food Policy Council found that the food sector employs one in 10 Torontonians and that food establishments make up 14% of the city's places of business. These include not only restaurants and food stores, but also large manufacturing companies such as Campbell's, Redpath Sugar, Nestle Canada, Maple Leaf Foods and Weston Bakeries. Food processing is the city's largest manufacturing sector. Warehousing and distribution also contribute to the

economy. For example, the Ontario Food Terminal, a wholesale depot for international and Ontario produce that supplies most local greengrocers, is one of the largest fresh produce markets in North America. It also features a wholesale farmer's market.

Understanding the importance of Toronto's food industry provides a context for thinking about the role of food in economic development. Food is more than an emergency response to hunger, a necessary element in individual health and nutrition, and a contributor to community social cohesion – food is also a source of wealth and jobs.

Moving Beyond Emergency Services

➤ Farmers' Markets

Toronto has 12 farmers' markets, including a year-round market on Saturdays in the St. Lawrence market, markets in the Junction district, Yorkdale, on Queen Street, and City-sponsored markets at Nathan Phillips Square, Etobicoke Civic Centre, Mel Lastman Square in North York and Albert Campbell Square in Scarborough.

Farmers' markets are popular with city dwellers and tourists, who appreciate buying locally-grown food directly from the producers. They are important for the farmers too, because they offer a sales outlet, and a chance to learn more about what customers prefer. However, farmers' markets are not treated as an integral part of the food retailing system in Toronto.

They are seen more as leisure attractions. Because of this perception, the City makes few concessions to the farmers who bring their produce into the congested downtown area.

Every Saturday, the farmers who come to the St. Lawrence North Market leave home long before dawn, hoping to get into the city before traffic gets too heavy and doubles their commuting time. Around the intersection of Front and Jarvis, there are few places to park their trucks, so they are forced to leave them on the surrounding streets. And every Saturday, Toronto parking patrols ticket the trucks. Most farmers accept the hassle as the price of doing business this way, but they are puzzled by the

City's attitude. Toronto celebrates the markets as part of what makes its downtown liveable, but does little to make life easier for the farmers.

Toronto does, however, offer farmers rent-free space at the civic centres in Etobicoke, North York and Scarborough, and in front of City Hall. Toronto could benefit from more farmers' markets

as a source of locally-grown fresh food, but the City needs to review its policies to ensure that the existing farmer's markets remain and expand. The City could take a long-term view towards ensuring that farmer's markets are affordable and accessible to all.

► Urban Agriculture

Ontario has some of the best agricultural land in Canada — 50% of Canada's Class 1 soils, to be exact — but the area under cultivation dwindles every year. Between 1976 and 1996, about 62,000 hectares of farmland were lost in the GTA alone.

In 1995, Agriculture Canada stated:

Food should be produced as close as possible to where it will be consumed...Producing the principal subsistence foods locally not only reduces household food costs but also supports local food traditions, and preserves indigenous seed varieties and sustainable food production methods.

At present, about 50 to 60% of all produce must be imported, mostly from Florida, California and Mexico. According to research carried out by the Toronto Food Policy Council, perhaps half that amount could be grown within or close to the city.

Urban agriculture includes community gardening, but operates on a larger, commercial scale. Its economic, environmental and social benefits are also felt on a larger scale. Urban agriculture can create jobs, spin off small

businesses, lower the economic and environmental costs of bringing in large amounts of food by truck, make use of underused spaces in the city (from rooftops to vacant lots), and improve the access of all Torontonians to nutritious food.

Other cities are showing the way. In Buffalo, New York, in an 18-acre greenhouse on a former industrial site, tomatoes and red peppers are grown hydroponically (that is, in water rather than soil). The project has created 100 full-time jobs and 35 part-time jobs. The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless operates four solar-heated greenhouses where clients grow vegetables organically year-round. Some of the produce is sold at stalls at Navy Pier, the city's festival market.

At present, a few farms in Toronto still produce grains, soybeans, fruits, vegetables or flowers or raise livestock. Although statistics vary, there may be as many as 40 farms, most of them smaller than 50 hectares and some as small as two hectares. There is at least one organic farm and several greenhouse operations. The opportunity to expand urban agriculture within the city is enormous.

Number of farms in Toronto according to 1996 census: **42**
Total gross farm receipts from Toronto farms in 1997:
\$6 million

The Toronto Food Policy Council has done considerable research into the economic and environmental benefits of urban agriculture. The Council's submission to the Food and Hunger Action Committee notes:

City farmers will reduce dependence on food imports...The purchase of imported food leads to the export of money earned in Toronto, and the loss to Toronto of the multiplier effect common to more self-sufficient economies — when local restaurants buy from local grocers who buy from local growers who hire local people who spend money at local restaurants, and around the circle goes. The longer a dollar stays in Toronto, the more jobs it creates.

The benefits of urban agriculture are not merely economic. Greater amounts of vegetation in the city mean lower levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Researchers in the

United States have found that an increase in green space in a city can lower summer temperatures (and therefore energy consumption) and decrease smog levels. Also, when food is produced locally, less energy is needed and less pollution is created in bringing it to the city. At present, much of Toronto food must travel thousands of kilometres from its origin. The more produce that can be grown in or near the city, the lower the need for long-distance trucking. Because of the many environmental benefits associated with urban agriculture, Toronto's Environment Plan, released in February 2000, recommends that the City promote local food production.

With support from the City, urban agriculture on an increased scale could contribute greatly to the quality of life and the quality of the environment in Toronto, and help address some of the city's problems of hunger and poverty.



Job Skills for the Food Industry

FoodShare runs a program called Focus on Food, with support from Youth Services Canada. In this program, at-risk young people are trained in life skills (including cooking) and job skills that can lead to employment in the food industry. Among other activities, the participants prepare Power Soups, nutritious one-pot meals that are delivered to emergency shelters and drop-ins. The program has already created a spin-off, the Field to Table

Catering Company, which employs some of the graduates of the training program. Focus on Food is also considering opening a Power Café for homeless people.

The City's Economic Development, Culture and Tourism Department also promotes food skills training in conjunction with Human Resources Development Canada and local community colleges.



Entrepreneurship, Incubators, and Start-ups

Every week in Toronto, new food businesses come into being — restaurants, catering businesses, importers of specialty food products, or small companies that make sushi or baklava or herb vinegar. Other than the restaurants, many are home-based businesses. The more successful ones soon outgrow their home bases and need larger premises, but may not yet have sufficient cash flow to rent industrial facilities. Companies in this situation benefit from food business incubators.

The Toronto Kitchen Incubator program is a springboard for start-up food-based businesses, located in the FoodShare warehouse where volunteers pack the Good Food Box. It was created in 1996 with funds from the City of Toronto's Food Access Grants program and is funded on a yearly basis by TEDCO (Toronto Economic Development Corporation.). Other funders have included Enbridge Consumers Gas, the Rotary

Club of Leaside and the United Way of Greater Toronto. The facility consists of an industrial-sized kitchen and cold storage facilities. Small businesses can rent the kitchen for a nominal hourly fee for cooking or catering businesses. Since 1996, 23 businesses have used the facility, and 11 of them have become successful enterprises and moved into their own space. At present, the incubator's future is in question, since the building it occupies may be expropriated as part of the City's waterfront redevelopment plans.

Food-based businesses create jobs and wealth. The current economic climate in Toronto is well-suited to small businesses that prepare or import food products for niche markets. Toronto's tourists, ethnic communities and restaurant-goers have created a demand for all kinds of specialized products. Incubator spaces can contribute to the creation and prosperity of new start-up food businesses.

“Moss Park has 25% of all Toronto residents on social assistance because of disability and illness. It can be difficult for the elderly to get one kilometre from Moss Park to the No Frills at Parliament and Gerrard.”

Toronto Food Policy Council report on Food Retail Access, 1996



Retailing and Siting of Food Stores

As part of the Food and Hunger Action Committee’s community consultation process, the Scarborough Hunger Coalition took the Committee on a bus tour through the Malvern area of Scarborough. People who were unfamiliar with the city’s east-end were appalled at the lack of food stores in some areas. Robyn DeRosier, who made a presentation to the committee, lives at Markham Road and Eglinton Avenue East:

In our community, you will find only one grocery store...one of the higher priced stores. To find a No Frills, you must travel along Eglinton Avenue to Kennedy Road. A \$10.00 taxi fare. I know this because every time I go shopping, it costs me \$10.00 to get my groceries home. That \$10.00 I spend on taxi fare would buy bread and milk for my family for almost a week.

Scarborough was developed in the postwar period largely as a “bedroom community,” a place of houses, apartments, schools, churches and parks, but few stores. It also has a high concentration of social housing units, and a high proportion of low-income families. Most of these families do not have cars, yet some parts of Scarborough are not well served by transit. Because of misguided planning in past decades, today thousands of residents in this part of the city do not have quick or easy access to food stores. It would be reassuring to think

*Average number of cars per Toronto resident: **0.4**
Average number of cars per dwelling unit in the downtown area: **0.69***

that planners had learned from this mistake, but the more recently developed Bathurst Quay area repeats the same pattern: acres of housing, including a high proportion of social housing, poor transit connections, no major food stores. For many people in Bathurst Quay, the closest source of food is the Daily Bread Food Bank.

The Committee also visited the Stonegate area of Etobicoke, an area of low-rise apartments, many of them occupied by seniors. The tiny Stonegate Mall has a small food store, where prices are relatively high. Only the most energetic of the seniors are able to walk the distance to a lower-priced store. Unlike Scarborough, Stonegate was not planned this way, but developed haphazardly and in isolation from surrounding areas. Nevertheless, the result is much the same: residents do not have easy access to low-priced healthy food.

These are not the only areas in Toronto where it is hard for seniors and low-income families to buy food at relatively low prices. Many neighbourhoods face similar problems. Regent Park, for example, is underserved by green grocers and supermarket chains, and residents must often rely on convenience stores, which sell a limited range of goods at higher prices.

The distribution of major supermarkets in the city is a combination of two main factors: zoning regulations, which determine where large food stores can go, and the decisions of a

handful of retail chains to locate in certain areas and not in others. Under current planning regulations, municipal officials cannot compel developers to include food stores in new developments, the way they can require parks and other community facilities.

At the same time, the trend in food retailing (as with other types of retailing) is moving away from “location, location, location” towards “destination shopping.” This means that where once a major store would look for a location in a well-populated, easily accessible site, now stores in central locations are closing and being replaced with big box stores in outlying areas or former

industrial sites. This is not a problem for shoppers with cars, but it is a huge problem for low-income people who depend on transit.

Solving this problem will require a variety of approaches. Initiatives like the Good Food Box, whereby food is delivered to subscribers, can help. Other bulk-buying and delivery projects might be considered. Shuttle services from underserved areas to large food stores could be arranged. More farmers’ markets might bring fresh food closer to people who need it. However, in the long term, the City needs to look for ways to assert more control over the siting of these essential facilities throughout Toronto.

Part Six: Is Toronto a “Food-Secure” City?

Canadians once talked of eradicating child poverty by the year 2000. Yet this morning, thousands of Torontonians will start the day on an empty stomach. Many of them are children living in poverty. Some are mothers who denied themselves food in order to feed their children. Some are homeless and living on the streets. Others are isolated elderly people in tiny apartments.

During the day, some of these hungry people will turn to a food bank or pantry or a meal program at a church, drop-in or community centre to assuage their hunger. Others will remain hungry because this is the day the local food pantry is closed, or because a food program they rely on does

not operate in summer, or because there are no food programs or inexpensive food stores in their area, and they do not have money for bus fare.

More fortunate Torontonians, however, will have the opportunity to eat a nutritious meal with others in a congregate dining or cooking program. Some will have fresh food from a Good Food Box. Some will have food that they grew themselves in a community garden or bought from a farmers’ market. Unfortunately, these opportunities do not exist for all who need them.

In the introduction to this report, we defined the term “food security.” Where does Toronto stand in relation to each component of food security?

➤ **The availability of a variety of foods at a reasonable cost**
In Toronto, the problem is not so much an absolute shortage of reasonably priced, good-quality food, as an unequal distribution of outlets where a wide variety of food can be bought at reasonable cost.

➤ **Ready access to quality grocery stores, food service operations or alternative food sources**
Many Torontonians do not have access to quality stores in their neighbourhoods. In many neighbourhoods, high-priced convenience stores are the main sources of food. Many areas of the city do not have supermarkets with good selection and low prices. The number of alternative food sources, such as farmers’ markets, is limited.

➤ **Sufficient personal income to buy adequate foods for each household member each day**
Poverty is the biggest barrier to food security in the city. Thousands of families do not have enough money to feed themselves adequately. Most of the money they have is spent on rent. Housing costs in Toronto are very high, and affordable housing is scarce. According to the Daily Bread and North York Harvest Food Banks, in April 2000, food bank users had, on average, only \$4.95 a day to spend on food, transportation and other necessities, after paying the rent. This is not an adequate income for healthy eating.

➤ **The freedom to choose personally acceptable foods**
“Personally acceptable foods” are those foods that are consistent with religious or ethnic norms, that do not contribute to health problems such as allergies or digestive problems, and that people will eat willingly. As we have seen, many low-income Torontonians have very little control over what they eat, other than the choice to take a hand-out or go hungry. Some ethnic and religious groups avoid food banks, because they cannot be sure that their food traditions will be respected. Despite efforts by the food banks to accommodate the different needs of food bank users, many people still have little control over what they get to eat.

➤ **Legitimate confidence in the quality of the foods available**
People who rely on the emergency food system have few guarantees of the quality of the food they receive. The emergency food programs do their best with limited resources to train their volunteer workers in safe food handling techniques and to ensure that all food is fit for consumption, but problems may occur. Since most of this sector is in the hands of unpaid labour and dependent upon donations and reclaimed or surplus food, it is difficult to set and maintain standards for quality.

➤ **Easy access to understandable, accurate information about food and nutrition**
Nutrition education is available through Toronto Public Health and the education system, although the demand for cooking and other nutrition programs far outstrips the supply of these programs. There are also many women who might benefit from perinatal support programs but do not access these programs.

➤ **The assurance of a viable and sustainable food production system**
Every year, as more agricultural land in southern Ontario becomes urbanized, Toronto must import more food from outside the province. Toronto could do much more to ensure the sustainability of its food supply, by supporting urban agriculture and by working with the surrounding regions to find alternatives to urban sprawl and preserve existing farmland in the GTA.

Despite the considerable efforts by the community-based sector and the City of Toronto to improve food security, it is clear that more needs to be done before we can declare Toronto a “food-secure” city. Specifically, to ensure that all Torontonians have access to safe, affordable, nutritious and appropriate food.

Part Seven: Conclusion and Next Steps

“Toronto Council should consider every decision it makes in light of the question, ‘If this decision is approved, will it increase or decrease hunger in the city?’”

Sue Cox, Daily Bread Food Bank

The Role of the City in Food Security

The inventory that accompanies this report shows the many different food programs that are supported in some way by the City of Toronto.

Toronto Public Health has the clearest and broadest mandate with respect to food, because of its involvement in administering the municipal funding for Child Nutrition Programs, collaborative prenatal programs, staffing community-based perinatal nutrition programs, and monitoring health and safety conditions in the city. The Toronto Food Policy Council is also a valuable source of information and expertise on food issues in Toronto.

In other areas, the role of the City is not as clear. For example, although the Community Services Grants Program of Community and Neighbourhood Services does not, strictly speaking, provide grants to food programs directly, it funds many agencies that run food programs. In the past, Community and Neighbourhood Services has given capital grants to food programs that have helped a number of community agencies upgrade kitchen and food storage facilities. It also provides funding through the City of Toronto Homelessness Initiatives Fund, and much of this funding is directly or indirectly used to provide food for homeless people.

In addition to actual food programs, the City’s policies and programs interact with questions of food security in many ways. For example:

- land use planning policies affect the access of Toronto residents to food stores, the provision of affordable housing, and opportunities for using urban land to grow food
- transit policies affect access to food stores and community food programs, while transit fares affect the food budgets of low-income families
- economic development policies affect the growth and viability of food-based businesses
- the policies of Toronto’s hostel services and efforts to combat homelessness affect the food available to people who are homeless
- parks and recreation policies affect the use of community facilities and parks for programs such as cooking programs or community gardens.

Despite its involvement in so many activities related to food, the City does not have a clear policy on food or hunger. The next phase of the Food and Hunger Action Committee’s work should be to develop a clear policy to coordinate its efforts, make the best use of its resources, and ensure consistency in its food-related programs.

Phase I

Phase I of the Food and Hunger Action Committee's work will involve a review of municipal policies and programs related to food and hunger. The Committee will also study innovative approaches to food and nutrition programs and models from elsewhere that Toronto might adopt. Many other cities have found effective ways to ensure that their residents have access to nutritious food and have boosted the local economy by encouraging urban agriculture and food-based businesses. Toronto can learn from these examples.

However, it is clear that many problems related to food and hunger, particular poverty, are not of the City's making, and can be solved only by provincial or federal action. In Phase I, the Food and Hunger Action Committee will also consider ways in which the City, in cooperation with community groups and

anti-hunger organizations, can act as an advocate with these governments to relieve hunger and improve food security for all Torontonians. The goal must be to prevent problems, rather than continuing to pour money into stopgap measures.

Phase I will proceed in two stages. First, the Food and Hunger Action Committee will draw up a set of principles to guide its work in reviewing programs and policies. These principles, which will form a Food Charter for the City, will draw on the World Declaration on Nutrition endorsed by the Canadian government. Second, the Committee will draw up an Action Plan with specific steps that the City can take to prevent hunger, promote good nutrition, and encourage food-based activities and businesses.

"Nutritional well-being for all people in a peaceful, just and environmentally safe world."

World Declaration on Nutrition, 1996

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the Food and Hunger Action Committee's Phase I report, it is recommended that the Committee continue to work in partnership with the community and City staff and further that Toronto City Council:

- (1) Endorse the principle that all people in Toronto should have an adequate supply of safe, nutritious, affordable, appropriate food;
- (2) Recognize that the City as a health promoter, has a role in advocating, coordinating and supporting systems, policies and programs to ensure food security in Toronto; and
- (3) Approve the following actions for Phase I of the Food and Hunger Action Committee's work:

- (a) Develop a Food Charter for the City of Toronto;
- (b) Develop a Food and Hunger Action Plan for the City of Toronto that proposes concrete strategies to improve food security and access to safe, affordable and nutritious food for all Torontonians, identifies policy and program changes required to improve the coordination and delivery of services related to food and hunger, and recommends appropriate roles for each level of government;
- (c) Report back to the new City Council with the Food Charter and the Food and Hunger Action Plan by February 2001; and
- (d) Identify priority initiatives for the 2001 budget process within the context of the Food and Hunger Action Plan.

Inventory of City of Toronto Food and Hunger Initiatives

Note: The following chart is a brief summary of the main food and hunger initiatives that the City of Toronto is involved in. Most involve partnerships with the community-based sector. Across Toronto, about 400 community groups and organizations run approximately 1,400 initiatives that provide a wide range of food-related services and supports aimed at improving food security for all Torontonians.

Initiative (Policy, Program, Activity)	Departments/ Division	Brief Description/Examples	Partnerships	Funding	Staff Roles	Outcomes/Impact
Food Access Networks, Coalitions and Partnerships	Community & Neighbourhood Services (CNS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto Public Health (TPH) • Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) 	TPH initiates, supports and participates in food access networks. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scarborough Hunger Coalition • North East Nutrition Workgroup (North York) • Basic Needs Action Network (North York) • Food Access Community Taskforce (East York) • Ontario Public Health Association Food Security Network • Hunger Watch 	Red Cross, food banks, community health centres, school boards, local faith groups, Food Share, intergenerational organizations and seniors groups, YMCA, ethno-specific agencies (e.g. South Asian Family Support Services, Canadian Tamil Women's Association), local Community Action Programs for Children, local residents, housing advocates, shelters, and other local community and neighbourhood agencies.	Network projects may receive funding from federal, provincial and/or private sources. TPH: 50/50 (municipal-provincial cost-share) TFPC: 100% municipal funding	Coordination, administration, needs assessment, education, advocacy Public Health Staff: 1.6 FTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scarborough Hunger Coalition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Food Insecurity in Scarborough" (1997) - 2-10 community kitchens, (1998-1999) - "The Always Growing Garden," with 47 plots providing fresh produce to over 150 people • Food Access Community Task Force (East York) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School and community agency surveys (1996) • Basic Needs Action Network (North York) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Making Connections" brings produce from York Region farms to high risk groups • North East Nutrition Workgroup (North York) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a school snack program, a community garden, summer camp food program, community breakfast club, youth cooking program, and nutrition resource tool kit for teachers (1998-1999)

Initiative (Policy, Program, Activity)	Departments/ Division	Brief Description/Examples	Partnerships	Funding	Staff Roles	Outcomes/Impact
Participation in Healthy Eating Coalitions and Networks	CNS: • TPH • TFPC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toronto Cancer Prevention Coalition (TCPC) Dietary Risk Factors Working Group • Cancer Care Ontario (CCO)- Collaborative Group on Diet and Cancer • Heart Health Networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCPC Dietary Risk Factors Group: Sunnybrook, CHC, Canadian Cancer Society, Ryerson School of Nutrition, Somali Family and Child Skill Development Services • CCO's group: universities, Centre for Health Promotion, the Public Health Branch of the Canadian Cancer Society, citizens • Heart Health: school boards, P&R, Ontario Physical and Health Education Assoc., Pharmacy Assoc., CHCs, day-care centres, community agencies 	TPH: 50/50 (municipal-provincial cost-share) Dietary Risk Factors Working Group: \$13,000 Heart Health: provincial grants to local networks, administered by TPH TFPC: 100% municipal funding	TPH staff: 0.1 FTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TCPC conducted environment scan, ethno-cultural project and 2-day policy symposium • Cancer Care Ontario – responses to Health Canada on policy recommendations • Heart Health – varies with local networks and their initiatives
Nutrition Curriculum Development and Support	CNS: • TPH	TPH develops and supports implementation of nutrition curriculum resources and promotes school environments supportive of healthy eating. Example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover Healthy Eating Nutrition resources for elementary grades 	Peel Health and York Region Health Services in the development and writing of nutrition curriculum resources. TPH also partners with both school boards to organize workshops and disseminate the nutrition resources.	TPH: 50/50 (municipal - provincial cost-share)	TPH Staff: 5.5 FTEs Staff produce resources, do workshops and provide follow-up support for teachers on wide range of food and health issues. Staff also work with schools to research, plan and promote activities and policies that create a supportive environment for healthy eating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A curriculum support resource for grades 1 – 6 was promoted and distributed in partnership with the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB). • A total of 170 schools received the resource and 90 teachers were instructed on use of the resource.

Initiative (Policy, Program, Activity)	Departments/ Division	Brief Description/Examples	Partnerships	Funding	Staff Roles	Outcomes/Impact
Peer Nutrition Worker Program (under development for 2000)	CNS: • TPH	New initiative to reach non-English-speaking parents of 0-6 year-olds to deliver nutrition education.	Partnerships being planned: CAP-C programs, parenting programs, ethnocultural agencies, community centres, etc.	TPH: 50/50 (municipal –provincial cost-share)	Planned: Public Health Dietitians: 4 FTEs Peer Nutrition Workers: 16 (9.6 FTEs)	• New program
Child Nutrition Programs	CNS: • TPH	TPH administers grants and supports, monitors and evaluates Child Nutrition Programs (CPNs). These programs operate with a community partnership model to foster participation of parents, teachers, local business and communities.	CNP partners include Toronto Public Health, the Province of Ontario, school boards, the private sector, local communities and parents. The Canadian Living Foundation allocates provincial grants to these programs.	Municipal funding: \$1,310,500 in grants administered by TPH. An additional \$481,300 in grants dedicated in 2000 to restore 24% funding levels. Provincial funding: Allocates amount equal to the municipal funding (i.e., provides 24%) Parental contributions and private sector provide the remaining funds. TPH staff support: 50/50 (municipal - provincial).	TPH lead role in program training and support, including: • Nurses in schools and communities help develop program proposals, community partnerships and local committees • Nutrition staff assist with menu choices • Nutrition staff and Inspectors offer educational workshops (e.g., safe food handling, healthy eating, etc.) • Nutrition staff and Inspectors conduct sites visits to all programs TPH: inspectors, nurses, nutrition staff: 5.7 FTEs	• 305 programs in schools and community sites • Over 53,000 meals /snacks are served daily to elementary school children • Over 127,000 volunteer hours by parents and others • Ongoing evaluation to assess fruit and vegetable intake of children in the program.
Healthiest Babies Possible Prenatal Nutrition Program	CNS: • TPH	Primary prevention program aimed at reducing the number of low birthweight babies in Toronto. It is targeted to low-income, high-risk pregnant women. Food insecurity is one of the risk factors for program entry.	Over 50 community agencies and/or sites provide in-kind support through donation of space for client visits. Sites include community centres, Community Health Centres, Family Resource Centres, churches, libraries, public agencies, and MTHA residences. Nine Public Health offices are also used.	100% municipal funding (\$1.1 million for 2000)	Public Health Dietitians: 13 FTEs Public Health Nurses: 4 FTEs Program Manager: 1 FTE	• In first 18 months of expanded program, approximately 1,500 women participated • Low birthweight outcomes are being analyzed for the first year of expanded operation • Evaluations done in the former City of Toronto showed that low birthweight rates were positively affected by program interventions.

Initiative (Policy, Program, Activity)	Departments/ Division	Brief Description/Examples	Partnerships	Funding	Staff Roles	Outcomes/Impact
Breastfeeding Initiatives	CNS: • TPH	Range of initiatives Examples: • Individual and Peer Support • Promotion • Toronto Workplace Policy (draft) • Prenatal classes • Education/Training • Coalitions & Networks	Breastfeeding Coalitions and Networks consist of health and social service partners – e.g., community health centres, hospitals, La Leche League, Lactation consultants, INFACT, other allied health professionals, parents, and physicians.	TPH: 50/50 (municipal-provincial cost-share)	Public Health Nurses: 36.55 FTEs Some consultation provided by TPH nutrition staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coalitions and networks exist throughout the city. • TPH data collected on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # phone calls to Intake # home visits # volunteers in Peer Support programs # group sessions # resources distributed
Collaborative prenatal programs	CNS: • TPH	These programs target “high risk” women (e.g., teens, new Canadians, low income, isolated) to prevent low birth weight (less than 2.5 kg) babies. Examples: • “Eating for Two” (Etobicoke) • “Having a Baby Drop-In” (York)	Local prenatal coalitions involve many community partners, such as community health centres, hospitals, food banks, CAP-C programs, etc.	Health Canada funds about half of operating costs through the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP): 2000/2001: \$1,087,075 2001/2002: \$1,220,567 2002/2003: \$1,220,567 Community agencies (not TPH) administer funding. TPH provides staffing and resources (50/50 municipal-provincial cost-share)	TPH nutrition staff co-facilitate programs, (emphasizing cooking skills), offer group education sessions and 1:1 nutrition counselling. TPH Nurses co-facilitate programs and offer prenatal and postnatal education and 1:1 counselling. Public Health Nutrition Staff: 1.4 FTEs Public Health Nurses: 11.4 FTEs 12.9 more FTEs (annualized) were approved by the City in 2000 to expand existing sites and add new ones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 programs with plans for at least 9 more in expansion • 21 CPNP sites served 2,140 high needs pregnant women (1998/99) • For CPNP funded programs, Health Canada conducted evaluations on birth outcomes, breastfeeding outcomes, food security, and social support and risk factor assessment at time of entry into program.

Initiative (Policy, Program, Activity)	Departments/ Division	Brief Description/Examples	Partnerships	Funding	Staff Roles	Outcomes/Impact
Food and Nutrition Policy Review and Advocacy	CNS: • TPH • TFPC	Various food and nutrition policy activities. Examples: • Monitor cost of healthy eating via the Nutritious Food Basket • Advocacy to increase social assistance pregnancy allowance.	Consultative partnerships with Ministry of Health's Public Health Branch, other health departments, Cancer Care Ontario and the Heart and Stroke Foundation.	TPH:50/50 (municipal-provincial cost-share) TFPC:100% municipal funding	Conduct and analyze pricing survey to set annual cost of Nutritious Food Basket in Toronto. Analyze provincial and federal policies. Public Health Staff: 0.9 FTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy reports to Board of Health • Annual report and fact sheet on the Nutritious Food Basket • TFPC membership in the Canadian Alliance for Food Label Reform • TFPC issue papers.
Special Diet Allowance for Pregnant Women	CNS: • Social Services	Under Ontario Works, pregnant women can be issued a Special Diet Allowance, to assist with the nutritional requirements of pre- and post-natal care.		80/20 (provincial-municipal cost-share)	Staff determine eligibility and administer the fund.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant women may receive the Special Diet Allowance of \$43.00 for a period of up to 9 months • A maximum of \$86.00 is granted in all cases of multiple births.
Ethno-cultural Nutrition Education and Training Program	CNS: • TPH Economic Development, Culture & Tourism (EDCT): • Parks & Recreation (P&R)	A community development approach is used to document food and eating behaviours through the lifecycle to help develop healthy eating modules for each cultural group.	Neighbourhood Centres, Parks and Recreation, Toronto Heart Health Partnership, School Boards and Ethno-cultural Agencies, Parkdale Public Library, Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants, Community Health Centres.	TPH: 50/50 (municipal-provincial cost-share)	Public health nutritionists, nurses, community health officers, inspectors, clerks and multicultural health consultant all contribute to this program. TPH Staff: 1.6 FTEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 99 people were trained in 1999. Total number reached by trained staff is over 500. • Over 13 ethno-cultural groups are included in the manual. Training 3-4 times per year to professionals and/or food service staff within public health and from community agencies on the healthy eating and food preparation practices of other cultures.

Initiative (Policy, Program, Activity)	Departments/ Division	Brief Description/Examples	Partnerships	Funding	Staff Roles	Outcomes/Impact
Consultation, Planning, Education and Training in Food-feeding Sites	CNS: • TPH	TPH provide consultation, training, menu planning and food budgeting sessions to group feeding sites and others. Examples: • Consult with food banks to develop family food hampers; special nutrition needs of infants, toddlers, pregnant and breastfeeding women • Food safety and storage education to food bank operators • Menu reviews and budgeting advice to daycare centres and lodging homes.	Food banks, day care centres, lodging homes, congregate dining programs.	TPH: 50/50 (municipal-provincial cost-share)	TPH staff: approx. 0.5 FTE nutrition/nursing staff plus consultation time from public health inspectors	• Documentation of number and type of consultations.
Development & Implementation of Healthy Eating Guidelines	CNS: • TPH	TPH develops and implements health eating guidelines for a variety of sites. Examples: • Participation in Eat Smart! Restaurant program • Congregate dining programs	Eat Smart! Partners: Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario, Canadian Cancer Society and the Toronto Heart Health Partnership.	TPH: 50/50 (municipal-provincial cost-share) Eat Smart! Funded by TPH and Ministry of Health, Health Promotion Branch.	Eat Smart-TPH staff: 1.2 FTE Inspectors 0.5 FTE Nutritionists 0.2 FTE Educators Other projects, TPH staff: 1.5 FTEs	• In 1999, 230 Toronto restaurants received the Eat Smart! Award. Over 40,000 dining guides distributed • In 2000, 212 restaurants and 40 cafeterias received the Eat Smart! Award in Toronto.

Initiative (Policy, Program, Activity)	Departments/ Division	Brief Description/Examples	Partnerships	Funding	Staff Roles	Outcomes/Impact
Food and Nutrition Awareness Raising Campaigns	CNS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPH • TFPC 	Campaign activities include development of resources, displays and educational materials. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Food Day • Nutrition Month • Heart Month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World Food Day – Toronto Food Policy Council, Food Share, food banks, community agencies and health centres • Nutrition Month – Dieticians of Canada • Heart Health – partners vary e.g., school boards, parks & recreation, Ontario Physical and Health Education Assoc., Pharmacy Assoc., community health centres, day care centres, etc. 	TPH: 50/50 (municipal–provincial cost-share) \$1,150 from Dieticians of Canada for 1999 and \$1500 for 2000 campaigns.	Coordination and participation in community events; development of resources, displays and educational materials for events/campaigns. Public Health Staff: 0.7 FTE TFPC staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collected on total number of events, people who attend events, calls and inquiries resulting from events and evaluation of the events.
Information & Resource Development & Distribution	CNS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPH 	TPH provides consultation, education, information development and distribution. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters (e.g., Munch Bunch newsletter for school-aged children) • Food and Nutrition presentations and displays • Distribute Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating and other Health Canada food guide materials. 		TPH: 50/50 (municipal–provincial cost-share) Health Canada funds Food Guide materials.	Public Health inspectors, nurses and nutrition staff TPH: 3.0 FTEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document number and type of consultations, presentations and total number of participants. • Distribution of Canada's Food Guides and Health Eating and other supplemental food guide materials throughout the city of Toronto.

Initiative (Policy, Program, Activity)	Departments/ Division	Brief Description/Examples	Partnerships	Funding	Staff Roles	Outcomes/Impact
In-Kind Database and Research Support	CNS: • Social Development & Administration	Participation in design and development of Food Share's Foodlink database of city-wide food programs.	Foodshare and Community Information Toronto.	In-kind support.	1 staff person. Occasional mapping requests from Foodshare, Community Information Toronto and other agencies, based on the Foodlink database.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce service maps with pertinent demographic data from our information systems.
Toronto Kitchen Incubator (TKI)	EDCT	The TKI is an outreach program of Field to Table, a project of FoodShare. It consists of a fully licensed commercial kitchen that can be rented by fledgling entrepreneurs to test ideas and begin food production for the marketplace.	TEDCO, Advisory Board members include representatives from Enbridge Consumers Gas, Toronto Public Health and the private sector.	TKI receives grants and donations from Enbridge Consumers Gas, the City of Toronto, the Rotary Club of Leaside and Food Share.	A six year commitment by TEDCO (the City's Economic Development Corporation) provides infrastructure and staff support. Staff from both TEDCO and the City's Economic Development Division, sit on the Advisory Committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 businesses used the TKI since Sept. 1996, 11 have graduated into full-fledged successful businesses. • Over the last few years, 75 peer leaders trained in Cooking Healthy Together, a joint program with Toronto Public Health and FoodShare. 40 youth gained kitchen skills through Focus on Food and 13,000 portions of Power Soups were served to the homeless.
Multifaceted Food Skills Programs	CNS: • TPH EDCT: • P&R	TPH programs include food skills training, food selection, preparation of low-cost, healthy meals. Examples: • Cooking Healthy Together • Making Baby Food • Skills for Food Shopping • Kids Cooking Club	University of Toronto, Family Services Association, Boards of Education, family resource agencies, community and neighbourhood centres, community health centres, parenting groups, ESL teachers, grocery stores, FoodShare, etc.	TPH: 50/50 (municipal-provincial cost-share) \$75,000 from Trillium Foundation for Cooking Healthy Together pilot project.	TPH facilitate training of community agency staff, other health professionals, group leaders, ESL teachers, parenting groups, and interested members of the public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 100 people from 80 agencies trained through Cooking Healthy Together. • 27 Community Food Workers trained to implement local programs under Trillium pilot project.

Initiative (Policy, Program, Activity)	Departments/ Division	Brief Description/Examples	Partnerships	Funding	Staff Roles	Outcomes/Impact
Feeding the City from the Back 40: A Commercial Food Production Strategy for Toronto	CNS: • TPH • TFPC	Urban Agriculture Policy Originated from Environmental Task Force, recommendations forwarded to Environmental Plan and City of Toronto Official Plan.	Operational partners with Seeds of our City Coalition, FoodShare and Toronto Atmospheric Fund (TAF) on R&D.	Seeds of Our City Coalition funded by Bronfman Grant.	TFPC authored the report. TFPC consultant maintains contact with planning process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-generation of hot water for greenhouse study underway at TIE due to Environmental Plan Quick Starts • compost-heated greenhouse pre-feasibility study completed • co-generation energy to greenhouse proposal under study by Toronto Hydro and Boralex/Cascade • Seeds of City community gardens production yield and seed recovery • Coalition activities: ongoing communications and research with City Works, Environmental Services and Community Partners on environmental impact of long distance food transport (Food Miles) and possible climate mitigation credits • TFPC sits on UA Caucus of the Community Food Security Coalition • TFPC initiated the recent 1st North American Urban Agriculture Conference in Philadelphia, March 2000. Very successful.
Food Secure City	CNS: • TFPC	TFPC submission to City of Toronto Official Plan		100% municipal funding	TFPC produced and submitted in February 2000. Discussions with Agricultural Land presentation stakeholder groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing tracking of recommendations involving social, environmental, economic healthy city policy development.

Initiative (Policy, Program, Activity)	Departments/ Division	Brief Description/Examples	Partnerships	Funding	Staff Roles	Outcomes/Impact
Community Gardening Program	EDCT: • P&R	This program provides assistance to community groups to develop and implement community gardens.	FoodShare, African Food Basket, Afuye Youth Group, Greenest City	100% municipal funding Provision of parkland and other City-owned land for gardening.	1 FTE Co-ordinator Public Health Staff: 1.6 FTEs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 100 community gardens and about 4500 gardeners have been recorded. • Gardeners saved between \$300-\$600 on food budget/year. • Over 70 youth have gone through the youth training program in horticulture and food production.
Toronto Community Garden Action Plan	EDCT: • P&R	A plan to grow community gardens in each ward in the city of Toronto.	P&R in partnership with Toronto Community Gardening Network.	100% municipal funding	1 FTE Co-ordinator, a resource/centre office at Riverdale Park, in-kind assistance (i.e., compost, advice)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal is to have at least one community garden in every ward by 2003.
Toronto Community Gardening Network	CNS: • TFPC EDCT: • P&R	A city-wide organization of community gardeners, chaired by FoodShare.	Broad-based coalition of organizations, specific garden leaders and environmentalists (individual and organizations), City divisions and agencies.	100% municipal funding	1 TFPC consultant and 2 additional city staff sit on the steering committee of the Toronto Community Gardening Network.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-year old transferred partnership with City to Community Gardens Co-ordinator and Children's Garden Coordinator. • Mailed out 2 newsletters • Maintains 150-member list-serve • won Gold Medal for Royal Winter Fair exhibit • Participated at American Gardening Assoc. 20th Annual Conference, Philadelphia • Hosted Seedy Saturday Seed Exchange in Feb. • Partnership with Composting Council of Canada on "Grow a Row" food access pilot project • Working with ROM on "multi-cultural community gardens" exhibit • Undertook 1st Annual C.G. bus tour.

Initiative (Policy, Program, Activity)	Departments/ Division	Brief Description/Examples	Partnerships	Funding	Staff Roles	Outcomes/Impact
Civic Centre Farmers' Markets Operation; Neighbourhood Farmers Market	EDTC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P&R • Special Events CNS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TPH • TFPC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDCT sponsors farmers' markets weekly at Nathan Phillips Square, Etobicoke and Scarborough Civic Centre's Albert Campbell Square • CNS/TPH sponsors farmers market at Mel Lastman Square (North York) • City offers land and provides space to groups and associations of farmers, or closes off street. 	Farmers groups and associations and two Business Improvement Associations.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDCT, CNS/TPH/TFPC staff coordinate and facilitate these weekly events • EDTC makes sure venue is available • TFPC is promoting harmonized administration expansion and increased food access for lower-income citizens to farmers' markets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All markets help get fresh produce into the city.
Community Services Grants Program	CNS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Development and Administration 	<p>Provides funding to community-based agencies.</p> <p>The only agency engaged principally in food-related activities funded under this program is FoodShare.</p>		100% municipal funding The CSGP assisted 309 agencies in 1999, one of which was FoodShare. Other funded agencies might use some monies for food related activities. For example: congregate dining and meals and wheels. However, as a rule, the CSGP does not directly fund food provision programs or strictly food-related activities.	Staff review and administer grants to community-based agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CSGP approved grants to various FoodShare programs to assist in the provision of food bank alternatives including: • Field to Table • Training and networking • Foodlink Hotline.

Initiative (Policy, Program, Activity)	Departments/ Division	Brief Description/Examples	Partnerships	Funding	Staff Roles	Outcomes/Impact
<p>City of Toronto Homeless Initiatives Fund (CT-HIF)</p>	<p>CNS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelter, Housing & Support • TPH 	<p>Provides grants to community groups for projects designed to prevent homelessness and help people move from the streets to some form of permanent shelter. Part of the funding is dedicated to hunger initiatives.</p>	<p>Ministry of Community and Social Services</p>	<p>Provincial funding: \$4.7 million</p> <p>Municipal funding: \$2.5 million</p> <p>Total CT-HIF for allocation is \$6.9 million for 2000.</p>	<p>Staff review and administer funds to community-based agencies.</p> <p>TPH staff also participate in review process.</p> <p>Staff: 2 FTEs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1999, about \$250,000 was allocated to 17 food related projects (grants from \$8000 to \$25000) • Intended to increase ability of vulnerable tenants to acquire food so that: (a) food costs don't result in rental arrears, and (b) health improves due to increased intake of nutritious food • Projects include: food access, community kitchens, cooking classes, community meals, food skills training and congregate dining.

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