

Monday April 4th, 2022

Re: Deputation In Support of Updating the Toronto Food Charter: Agenda Item-EC 28.15

Dear Members City Council,

My name is Kanaka Kulendran. I am the Manager of Community Development at North York Community House (NYCH). I'm writing in support of the motion to update the Toronto Food Charter, which is item EC28.15 on the agenda for the City Council meeting on April 6th.

City Council unanimously passed the current Food Charter over twenty years ago, but food insecurity is a crisis in our city. 1 in 5 households in Toronto are food insecure and that number is even higher for Black and Indigenous households. Food Insecurity has reached an all time high since the Pandemic began in 2020.

As an agency working across North York, we have worked with resident groups to provide immediate food security supports during this crisis. What we have heard and confirmed from residents and front-line staff engaged in the day to day work is that we need to address the root causes of food insecurity: poverty. These causes have been amplified by the Covid-19 crisis. Toronto's affordable housing crisis and expensive childcare costs combined with inadequate social assistance rates, low-wage and precarious jobs, systemic racism and xenophobia and a social safety net that our governments have cut with decades of austerity policies are responsible for manufacturing unacceptable levels of poverty in our city. Low-income, disabled, Black, Indigenous and other people of color, 2SLGBTQ+ folks, immigrants, refugees, and women who were more likely to be living in poverty before the pandemic have also been hit the hardest by the pandemic and its countless negative social, economic, psychological and health impacts. Those most impacted continue to be left out of decision-making processes despite being the ones on the front line of this crisis, doing the work.

We need an updated food charter that's written by the communities most impacted by food insecurity and poverty, and community groups that are working to defend the food rights of their communities. We would also like to see the City include a mechanism to ensure that it is accountable to its commitments under the new charter.

We strongly encourage and support City Council to take this key step in updating the Toronto Food Charter. Thank you to the Members of City Council for your consideration of our comments on this matter.

Sincerely,

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