

IE15.1 - Toronto Vegetarian Food Bank Recommendations

For the record

Dear Infrastructure & Environment Committee members,

Unfortunately, I will be away this Wednesday, and won't be able to attend committee to speak to Item IE15.1 on behalf of Toronto Vegetarian Food Bank,

but I want to make a couple small recommendations for you to consider, which I think complement the Executive Director's two IE15.1 recommendations:

1 - Our first recommendation is simply that a timeline be added to the Executive Director's Recommendation number 1.

2 - Our second (more important) suggestion is that an amendment be added to Recommendation number 2, that all future consumption-based emissions reports include a more comprehensive comparative analysis between the financial and environmental opportunity costs of animal and plant-based proteins (especially because updates on Toronto's Cool Food Pledge and C40 Good Food City commitments are now part of the annual TransformTO Net Zero Status Updates).

We are very happy that there is a new Intensity Analysis included in this report (comparing emissions, nutrition, and cost), as well as beef-replacement ratios, and that the report noted that "Plant-based protein sources, such as legumes and pulses, alongside soybeans and tofu, present numerous [practical emissions and cost] benefits compared to animal-based protein sources." Kudos to staff on that (and for a great report in general).

It would be great to be able to see this kind of Intensity Analysis in future emissions reports and TransformTO status updates, and to be able to see a slightly better dollar-for-dollar per-kilogram-of-protein comparison of replacing beef with the different approaches and proteins laid out in the Attachment A report that accompanies Item IE15.1

We are also happy to see in the Intensity Analysis that emissions from soy milk are more than four times lower than emissions from cow's milk. The City procures a lot of dairy, and there's an opportunity to greatly reduce emissions by having soy milk as the default, while keeping cow's milk as an option, to preserve choice.

Another idea:

While we wait for Managers to report back on what combination of climate-friendly meals are feasible to meet the dietary needs and food preferences of populations being served by the three City divisions, ***a possible opportunity for collaboration, is that Long-Term Care could have a similar one day plant-based culinary training with Veg Food Bank and Forward Food, as a way to get feedback from City staff and SSLTC residents on plant-based dishes.***

Given staff concerns about SSLTC residents getting enough protein with plant-based proteins, or finding that plant-based meals might not be well received, it seems that working with Veg Food Bank and Forward Food - given our collective nutritional and culinary expertise around plant foods - might be a good way to start working on this - mirroring what we did with the shelters.

Earlier this year - as you may have read in the report for this Item - Toronto Shelter & Support Services (TSSS), signed on to HSI Canada's Forward Food Pledge, and is now working to increase their plant-based meal offerings at City-run shelters.

This now puts TSSS well on its way to meeting its Cool Food Pledge commitments, and we are already working with shelter Food & Nutrition Service Managers, planning culinary trainings for shelter chefs later this year, and doing recipe development, to make sure the transition is done in a way that is sustainable, cost-effective, and appealing to the shelter clients.

In fact, we're currently working on plant-based African-inspired recipe development (with an African chef) for TSSS, to provide high quality nutrition and care to the recent influx of African refugees who are currently using Toronto's shelters.

Thank you for your time and attention - and I hope you find our recommendations helpful.

Thanks again to staff and the Committee for all your hard work making Toronto a leader on climate-friendly meals!

Sincerely,

Matt Noble
Executive Director
Toronto Vegetarian Food Bank