

## Delegation Concerning the Information Report on the Community Garden Coordinator Position BOH11001(a)

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and

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Hamilton's citizens are developing community gardens at an amazing rate (as noted in today's staff report), with the help and support of local social service organizations, volunteers, and city staff from Public Works and City Housing Hamilton.

As a researcher of food security and urban health, I can say with confidence that these community gardens support health. The evidence is clear – community gardens increase access to nutritious food, and provide opportunities for physical activity. They also create spaces and build relationships that help people feel included and involved, which has positive spinoff effects in the community.

The evidence also suggests that community gardens achieve their potential when their goals are supported by:

- a) training and mentoring opportunities;
- b) strong connections to the community and with other gardens; and,
- c) resources for garden improvement.

While many of these activities can be – and are – undertaken by the many volunteers who participate in community gardens, in practice the gardens thrive best when there is a paid garden coordinator to provide stability and support city-wide engagement and fundraising.

The City's creation of a community garden policy was a major step forward for community gardens in Hamilton. However, the policy does not provide the support for garden coordination that other municipalities have provided, and that gardens need to thrive.

Hamilton's civil society has worked very hard to fill this gap. Local individuals and organizations have not only devoted time and money to building and maintaining gardens, they also have come together

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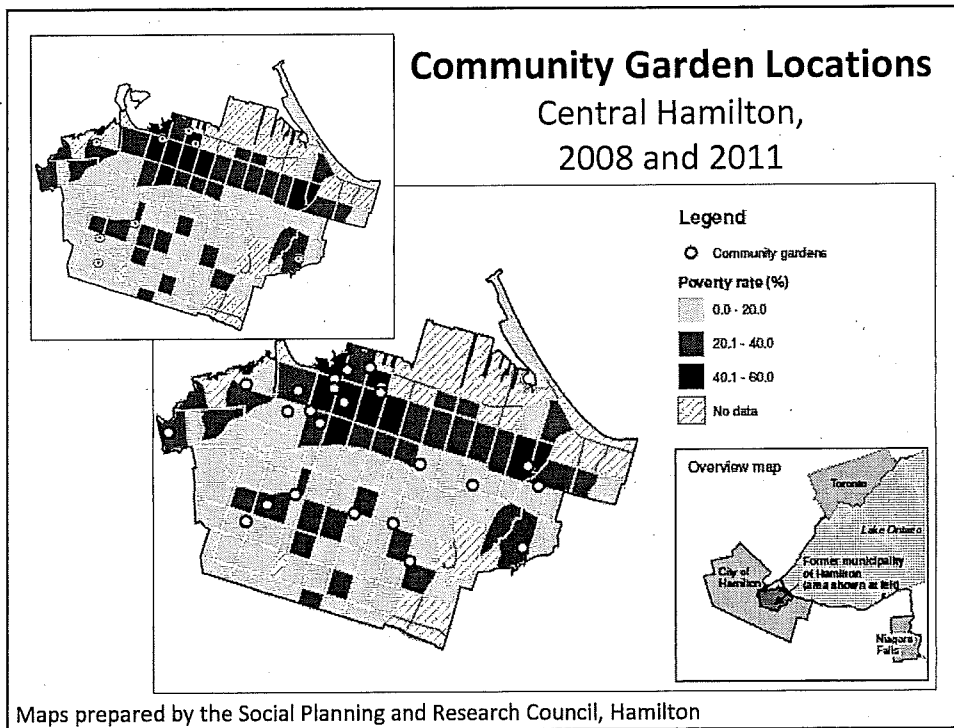
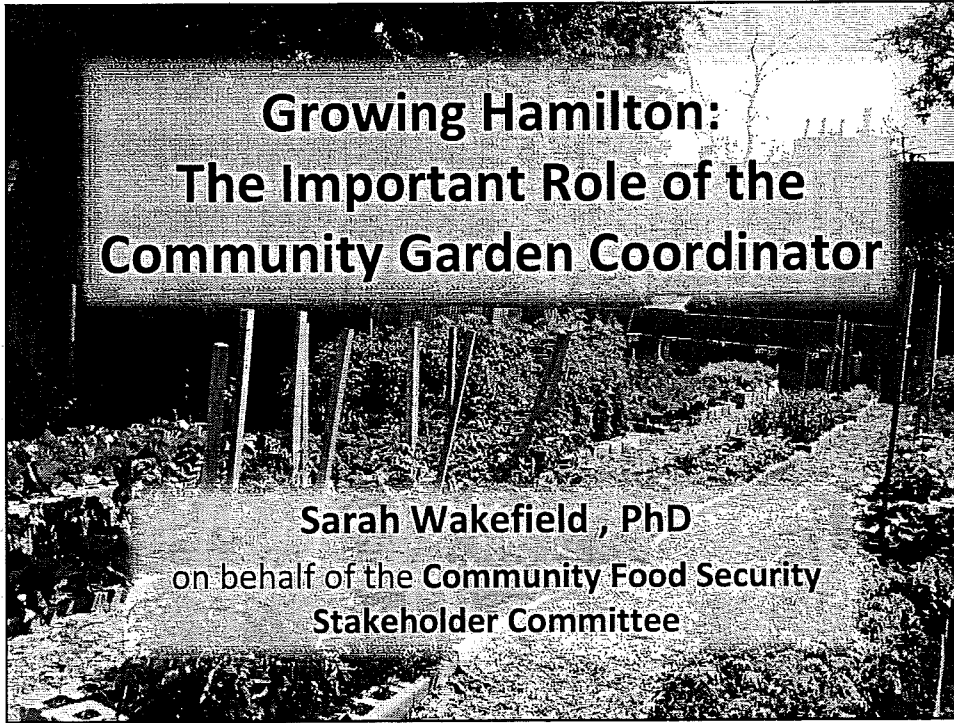
(through the Hamilton Community Garden Network) to successfully apply for funding to hire a Community Garden Coordinator. The Coordinator supports the gardeners to create, maintain, and improve community gardens, by connecting them with resources (such as tools, training, mentoring, and donations) and helping them out in moments of crisis (by providing conflict resolution etc.). The Coordinator has also played an important role in helping the city's allotment gardens (which were administered by Public Works staff) transition to self-management. Most importantly, the Coordinator is building the Network's capacity to provide this service in the future in a self-sustaining way. Her many efforts to support community gardens now and in the future are laid out in her detailed progress review (attached as an appendix to the Information Report).

The Community Garden Coordinator's *Network Review* also documents her efforts to secure future funding and stabilize the resources of the Network. In particular, the Coordinator has managed her existing resources (obtained from Trillium) extremely efficiently, and has actively sought additional funding and long-term sponsorship. These efforts are looking increasingly likely to bear significant fruit in the next funding cycle. However, despite these ongoing efforts, Trillium funding rules (which require the Coordinator's funds to be spent in one year, despite the initial two-year timeline of the grant proposal) will result in a 6-month (January to June) funding gap of just less than \$15,000.00.

The Coordinator position is likely to be lost unless some bridge funding is found to fill this gap. This jeopardises the continuity of the program, just as it is getting on its feet.

We are asking that the City step in and provide the bridge funding that is needed to support the network at this critical time. This would show that the City acknowledges and supports the efforts of local volunteers to create a healthier, more engaged, and more sustainable Hamilton. It would also help the City's community gardens, new and old, to thrive in the long term.

At the Community Food Security Stakeholder Committee, we see community garden development as one way that the City of Hamilton can support our mandate to "move Hamilton towards being a place where all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes self-reliance and social justice".

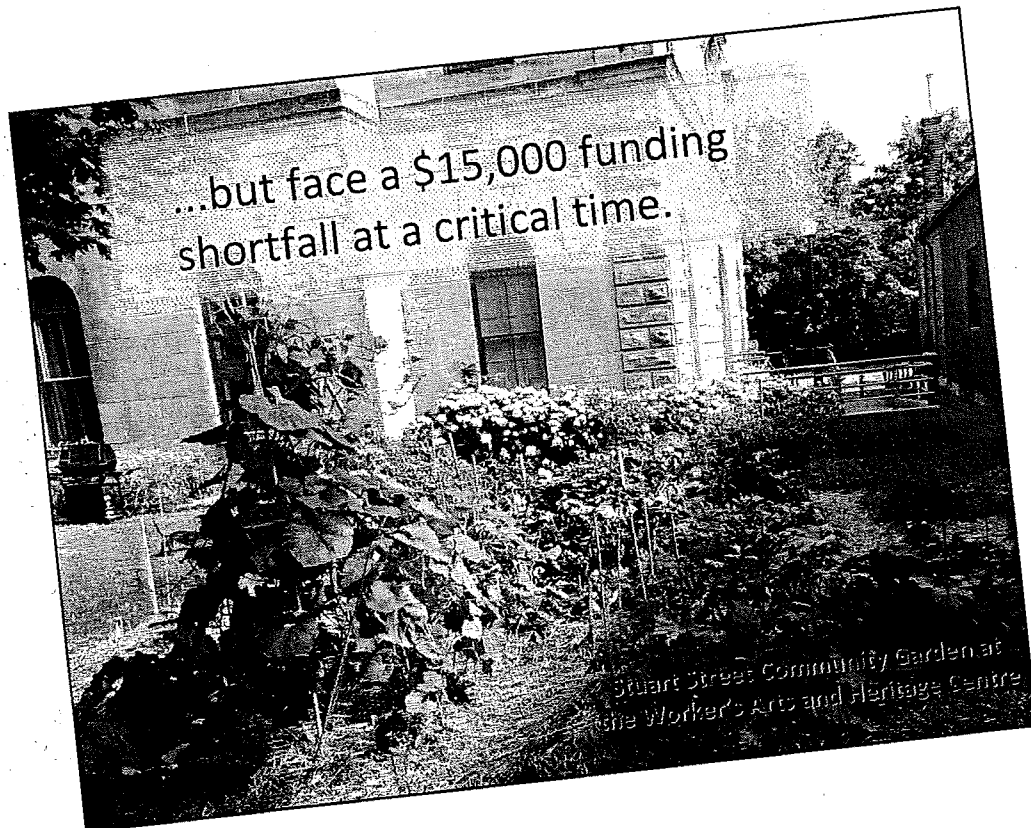






Community organizations and citizens have done a huge amount of organizing and fundraising to try and build the capacity to provide this support, and make it self-sustaining into the future...

Raised garden beds at the North Hamilton Community Health Centre



...but face a \$15,000 funding shortfall at a critical time.

Stuart Street Community Garden at the Worker's Arts and Heritage Centre



By providing bridge funding, the City will show it respects the hard work of their constituents, and the growing importance of community gardens.



This support will move Hamilton one step closer to being a food secure community.

Thank you for your  
time and attention!



