

INFORMATION REPORT

TO: Mayor and Members Board of Health	WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: May 7, 2012	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Options for Funding a Model Program for Nutritious Food (BOH12005/CS12015) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)	
SUBMITTED BY: Elizabeth Richardson, MD, MHSc, FRCPC Medical Officer of Health Public Health Services Department Joe-Anne Priel General Manager Community Services Department	PREPARED BY: Vicki Edwards (905) 546-2424 Ext. 3632 Kerry Lubrick (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4855 Dr. Ninh Tran (905) 546-2424 Ext. 7113
SIGNATURES:	

Council Direction:

The report, Feasibility of Implementing a Model Program for Nutritious Food (BOH11028/CS11082), proposed a pilot one year program that would provide \$20 gift certificates for shopping at a farmers' market to single individuals receiving Ontario Works. The estimated cost of the program was \$1.5 million, but could be less if redemption rates are less than 100%.

The Board of Health, at its meeting on November 28, 2011 approved the following: That staff be directed to report back on options for funding not limited to subsequent deliberations on the Social Service Initiative Fund at the Emergency and Community Services Committee.

Information:

Options for funding the proposed \$20 gift certificate program that are not limited to the Social Services Initiative fund were explored and have not been found.

Community Services Department, Employment and Income Support and Social Development and Early Childhood Services:

- Submitted a formal request for funding of this pilot to the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services that was denied (Appendix A to BOH12005/CS12015, Letter from Ministry of Community and Social Services).
- Requested funding opportunities through the Hamilton Funders' Network but no responses were received.
- Noted that the Model Program for Nutritious Food may not meet the criteria for funding from the Social Services Initiative Reserve (Account #112214).

Public Health Services:

- Contacted Bronwyn White, consultant with the Friends of the Greenbelt. Bronwyn commented that only a non-profit partner would be eligible to apply for a smaller sized grant from the Friends of the Greenbelt, and that the initiative would be limited to markets run by local farmers.
- Contacted Hamilton Community Foundation. The request was denied as the gift certificate program does not fit within their mandate.
- Explored the Canadian Subsidy Directory of Grants and Loans for potential opportunities but were unsuccessful in finding a funder since municipalities are not eligible for most grants or funding options.

There were concerns other than funding voiced by Councillors and community members when Report BOH11028/CS11082 was discussed at the November, 2011 Board of Health meeting. These included the fact that only two farmers' markets are open all year around and that some people would find access an issue. As well, a certificate for \$20 would only buy two weeks worth of vegetables. Additional concerns centred on the potential higher cost and the limited selection of food at a farmers' market compared to a grocery store. As well, the certificates would not be specific to fruits and vegetables as farmers' markets also sell various other products such as flowers and baked goods. Lack of potential sustainable funding for the proposed pilot was noted.

To address some of these concerns, the pilot program could be modified to:
(However, none of the options, on their own, addresses all of the concerns)

1) Reduce the cost.

Option 1: Offer the program from June to October only

Opportunity	Challenge
Lower cost of a five-month program compared to a one-year pilot (\$625,000 vs. \$1.5 million)	Time period might not be long enough for participants to acquire new habits of shopping for more vegetables and fruit
Seven markets are open during the season vs. two year all year around	Health impact might be limited as fresh produce would only be purchased for five months
The majority of single individuals receiving Ontario Works benefits live close to a farmers' market [Appendix B to BOH12005/CS12015, Single OW Recipients in Hamilton, by Forward Sortation Area (Postal Code)]	Shorter time frame for the evaluation might not be able to accurately reflect outcomes
Revenue spent at farmers' markets stays in the local economy	Sustainability for the program not secured

2. Enhance access to food markets for those who do not live close to the two farmers' markets that are open all year around.

Option 2a: Program could involve having a fresh food box, primarily from local farms, delivered to pick-up locations around the city

Opportunity	Challenge
Access is universal across the city	Cost of the program would be \$1.5 million, as boxes must be paid for, regardless of pick-up rates
Fresh produce (vegetables and fruit) in the box ensures the goal of the program is met	No personal choice of what's in the box.
Encourages people to try unfamiliar, but healthy food	Recipients may need education to use the produce.
There is capacity within Hamilton to supply over 6250 fresh food boxes a month	Limits benefits in local economy to only those farmers and farm businesses who can supply and deliver the boxes
Fresh food box program could run during months outside of the limited growing season when farmers' markets are open	Recipients may have difficulty transporting a heavy box home from the distribution site once a month

Option 2b: Provision of bus tickets from November to May to those who live further than 1.5 km from the downtown Hamilton Farmers' Market or the Ottawa Street Farmers' Market

Opportunity	Challenge
Bus tickets would improve access to one of the two farmers' markets open all year around and increase the number of participants shopping at the markets	Cost of the pilot program would increase by \$28/year for each person who lives outside of the downtown or east end core for an estimated total cost of \$1.584 million. (\$4 for two tickets x 7 months for up to 3000 participants = \$84,000)

Option 2c: Provide \$20 grocery store gift cards (instead of farmers' market gift certificates)

Opportunity	Challenge
Gift cards could be purchased and redeemed at any of the three major grocery chains	Would be difficult to distribute cards to the store of preference for each person
	Recipients might receive cards to stores that are not close to their living space
	Cost of the program would be \$1.5 million, as cards must be paid for, regardless of redemption rates
Allows participants a choice to purchase any item for sale in the grocery store	Might not improve vegetable or fruit intake or health
	Tracking redemption rates and evaluating the health benefits of the program would be difficult
	Less benefit to the local agricultural economy

This gift certificate program has the potential to help single individuals receiving Ontario Works assistance to boost their vegetable and fruit intake. Vegetables and fruit are particularly important in a healthy eating pattern and are often lacking in the diets of those with low incomes.

However, funding and sustainability continue to be challenges. No additional non-municipal sources of funding were identified for either the pilot or any future programs. The decision to use municipal funding for this pilot program needs to also consider recent additional funding pressures such as the provincial cap on discretionary benefits as well as other initiatives (e.g. school nutrition program).

Ministry of Community and Social
Services

Ministère des Services sociaux et
communautaires

Ministry of Children and Youth
Services

Ministère des Services à l'enfance
et à la jeunesse



Hamilton/Niagara Region

Région de Hamilton/Niagara

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February 28, 2012

Kerry Lubrick, Director
Employment & Income Support Division
Community Services Department
City of Hamilton
181 Main Street West, 3rd floor
Hamilton, ON L8P 4S2

Dear Ms. Lubrick:

Kerry

Re: Farmer's Market Food Voucher Pilot

It was a pleasure to talk to you recently and to receive your follow up email regarding the City of Hamilton's efforts to support individual's receiving Ontario Works. I have had an opportunity to review the materials you provided on the Farmer's Market Food Voucher Pilot project and have shared them with my regional Municipal and First Nations team.

This initiative would have many benefits to individuals who received OW as well as the local business community. Unfortunately, the ministry is not able to approve your request for \$1.5 million at this time (either through 100% funding or cost sharing). Your request will be kept on file should funds become available in the future. At that time, the request will be considered along with other proposals and ministry priorities.

In the meantime, please continue to inform our office of new initiatives and if you are able to obtain funding for this pilot project through another source.

Regards,

Sandra Datars Bere
Regional Director
Hamilton/Niagara Region

Single OW Recipients in Hamilton, by Forward Sortation Area (Postal Code)

