

**Fresh & Healthy Food for All:  
The Easy Food Box & OW**

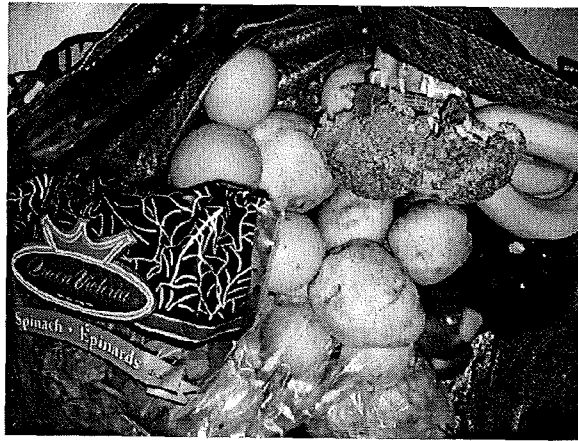
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**+ Introduction**



- This proposal addresses the monthly income shortfall of \$144 faced by single Hamiltonians who receive Ontario Works benefits
- This income shortfall creates a huge barrier to having a healthy diet and keeps these individuals from acquiring fresh fruits and vegetables in an affordable, dignified manner on a consistent basis
- Our proposal recommends that the City of Hamilton adopt a special new kind of food program, one targeted to serving the urgent needs of Hamilton's 6,000+ single individuals who receive Ontario Works (OW) benefits
- This proposal is inspired by Hamilton's existing Good Food Box programs and is, at least for now, being called "The Easy Food Box" Program

## + What is a GOOD FOOD BOX and what is an EASY FOOD BOX?



## + Pickup Sites in Hamilton



## + How do people benefit from “Good Food” programs?

- A set of questions was developed by “Food Share, Toronto”, and used in their 2011 evaluation of a Farmers’ Market voucher program -- another “good food” initiative.
- Their report, *Sharing the Harvest*, showed that recipients were able to eat differently using the vouchers. Of all participant survey respondents:
  - 65% were able to buy healthy, fresh, and local foods
  - 42% were able to buy foods they couldn’t otherwise afford;
  - 35% tried new foods;
  - and, 29% were able to buy foods not otherwise available in their neighbourhood.

## + Community involvement: the main ingredient!



## + Why is the “Easy Food Box” program for OW Singles needed in Hamilton?

- It is largely based on one of the options suggested by Public Health Services in *May, 2012: Options for funding a model program for nutritious food*
- This proposal is also a response to a community need and supports Objective 1.5 of the City of Hamilton 2012-2015 Strategic Business Plan
- It is in support of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction's Action Plan
- It fills a gap in the City's food Vision 2020 and will help the City achieve the Social Vision as described in the Caledon document: *A Social Vision for the New City of Hamilton*: the income shortfall experienced by OW Singles makes it is very difficult to acquire fresh fruit and vegetables, something necessary for building a healthier, stronger population

## + Suitability of the Easy Food Box for Single OW Recipients

- The program is non-stigmatizing and embedded in communities
- The need for nutritious food is acute for this demographic group, according to widely read studies undertaken by Hamilton's Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC).



## + Eligibility and Protocol at Community Distribution Sites

- All 6,000+ Single OW Recipients will be eligible to take part if the pilot succeeds and the ongoing program is allowed to grow
- We will begin with up to 500 participants on a "first come, first served" basis in the first year
- Ideally participants will acquire some new cooking skills, an enhanced sense of community wherever they live and a taste for the Good Food Box... And perhaps one day become paying customers?

### ■ Protocols:

Registration will be coordinated with the help of Ontario Works staff

Participants can choose their most accessible community pick up site; coordinators would have access to the list of names for their site

Participants will present ID to pick up

No-shows: Repeated failure to pick up could mean removal from the program to make way for the next person on the waiting list

## + Growing forward: "The Easy Box" for Hamilton's OW Singles

### ■ Capacity of the Good Food Box

The Good Food Box Network began in February, 2011 with 4 sites receiving 18 GFBs; we now distributes produce to more than 23 sites across Hamilton; a satellite packing site at Perkins Centre joined us last spring.

Snapshot today: Our October 2012 Good Food Boxes will be packed and shipped this Wednesday with the number now reaching 370 GFBs that will be enjoyed by both families, friends and individuals in our network

### ■ Growing the new "Easy Box"

We would like to start with a small pilot of 100 recipients and if possible, to gradually scale up to serve 500 recipients by the end of the pilot program

Potential growth will be accommodated through: continuing to expand our distribution points, growing the volunteer base and obtaining additional supports for our enterprise



## + Logistics: Sourcing and Delivering Food

### ■ Sourcing:

Currently we obtain our food through a produce wholesaler who purchases the food from the Ontario Food Terminal and increasingly directly through local producers

We will continue to work with Market Fresh Produce while we begin to purchase food ourselves to build our own local food distribution network

### ■ Distributing

Our Good Food Box Network is made up of 23 sites that we coordinate as well as the handful of "sister" Good Food Box programs that operate in specific parts of Hamilton

Our own distribution network is city-wide and growing

A variety of entities take part: community centers, City housing sites and places of worship are among them

## + Other considerations...

### ■ Estimated uptake and expansion:

Only a minority of the 6,000+ OW Singles who will be eligible for the program are likely to apply

We will work with communities, organizations and funders to overcome barriers to participation in the program

## + Food Costs

### ■ Pilot Program

The cost of an Easy Food Box (EFB) @ \$10 per month for 500 recipients for one year would be \$60,000.

Starting with a smaller number (100 recipients) and building the program gradually would reduce this expenditure, of course.

### ■ Ongoing Program

If the program's evaluation shows that the program is worth continuing, the cost of food for an estimated 3,000 recipients for the following year would be \$360,000.

This will leave \$380,000 in the designated fund to continue the program, if it is successful.

## + Development & Administration

■ Cost to the Good Food Box Network to develop the Easy Food Box on a pilot basis is estimated at \$5,000 in the first year; some time will need to be contributed by Ontario Works staff in making and maintaining lists of eligible participants and their preferred pick up locations

■ Administrative costs in subsequent years can be covered through a variety of means:

- Direct (traditional) funding
- Social Enterprise
- Cash & In-kind donations

■ Ongoing program: The cost to the City of administering the ongoing program for one year is estimated at about \$30,000.

This estimate is based on a report to the Board of Health in November 2011, referring to the plan to provide \$20 vouchers for OW recipients to use at farmers' markets.

■ The "Easy Box" program should require considerably less hands-on management of vouchers/gift cards, monitoring and record-keeping. Much of the administration would be in the hands of volunteer coordinators.

## + Funding

- It is estimated that the funds from the **Social Services Initiative Reserve (SSIR)** that were to be “considered” for a food supplement for single OW recipients would cover the cost of a one-year pilot project, and the first year of an ongoing program. As of October 2012, there is \$800,000 in the SSIR.

## + New possibilities through new partnerships and approaches

- The Halton Fresh Food Box



- Food Share Toronto
- Social Enterprise & Economic Development Hamilton
- The Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation
- Trillium
- Healthy Communities Fund
- The United Way
- The Hamilton Community Foundation
- Volunteer Hamilton... many others



## + Evaluation

- The Nutritious Food Plan Committee is seeking funding from the **Hamilton Community Foundation** to evaluate the pilot project. Beyond the questions above, we plan to seek information about those who do not participate in the program, and those who drop out – we need to know their reasons and concerns. The cost of the evaluation, including the services of a Consultant, is estimate to be about \$10,000

## + Benefits to our Agriculture sector:

- Our work is also consistent with the goals of the City's Agricultural Action Plan, which is referenced in the Strategic Plan, too, specifically: **City of Hamilton Agricultural Action Plan, 2007**
- Agriculture is a significant component of the City of Hamilton economy. In the **Agriculture Economic Impact and Development Study**, completed in August of 2003, it was determined that agriculture generated approximately \$813 million in economic activity in the City's economy in 2001.
- All of the City's policies acknowledge the important contribution agriculture makes to the City's economy and the quality of life for its residents, and support activities that will promote the industry.

## + Supporting Hamilton's long-term Food Security

### ■ Section 2 Hamilton's Agricultural Action Plan

(This section outlines all of the elements that should be included in a comprehensive, long term action plan to support agriculture in Hamilton)

#### 2.1 Economic Development

Develop a rural economic development program which encompasses a local food strategy.

Components of the program should include: Ongoing support for the newly created Farm Fresh\* project to promote consumption of local products and **opportunities for farmers to connect directly with the local consumers** at farm markets, the farm gate and through direct linkages between restaurants, retailers and producers.

## + Conclusions...

### ■ This proposal is a good fit for Hamilton in several ways:

- It outlines a way for the BOH to follow up their initiative, begun in September 2010, to provide a food supplement to single OW recipients, in recognition of the gross inadequacy of their social assistance incomes.
- It fits with the City of Hamilton 2012-2015 Strategic Business Plan with respect to Objective 1.5, *Strategic action (vii): In support of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction's action plan, develop a program to improve access to healthy food for those in greatest need.*
- It is based on one of the options put forth by Public Health Services in their report to the Board of Health meeting, May 7, 2012: Options for funding a model program for nutritious food.
- It fills a gap in the City's food strategy: apart from a few GFB programs who subsidize some or all of their low income participants, it is very difficult for single OW recipients to access fresh fruit and vegetables.

