



## Appendix "B" to BOH Report 18-002

### Student Nutrition Programs

Hamilton's student nutrition collaborative (TasteBuds) is a partnership of community agencies and community members that support and facilitate local student nutrition programs for children and youth. The inclusive program engages students in enjoying meals and snacks in a welcoming setting to improve student success, support healthy growth, development, and lifelong eating habits. Priority is given to ensuring that programs are in place in vulnerable neighbourhoods, although the services are universal and open to all students. In 2016 in Hamilton, there were 172 Student Nutrition Programs at 120 sites. On average in 2014 - 2015, Tastebuds volunteers served healthy snacks to 30,082 students per day.

### Charitable Food Programs

Not all Hamiltonians have enough income to purchase sufficient amounts of food for themselves or their families. Hamilton Food Share collaborates with local emergency food providers to make food accessible to residents who lack the income to access food in the mainstream food retail system. Hamilton's emergency food system operate food banks, free meal services, soup kitchens and pantries, with Hamilton Food Share co-ordinating the delivery of bulk quantities of food to 10 local organizations.

The majority of food that Hamilton Food Share distributes to emergency food providers is donated by the food industry, with a smaller percentage either purchased or obtained by community food drives. While food banks try to encourage donations of healthier options the food, unfortunately, donated food can include unhealthy options.

Improved incomes, through adequate social assistance rates, living wages, and other policies and programs that enhance household financial resources, along with increased access to affordable housing are the most important responses to household food insecurity. Addressing these issues must be foremost in advocacy efforts toward ensuring nutritious food is economically accessible to Hamilton's most vulnerable residents.

## Poverty and Household Food Insecurity

Because food insecurity results from a household's inability to access adequate food due to limited incomes, poverty is closely linked to food insecurity. In 2013, 79,450 Hamiltonians, or 15.7% of Hamilton's population, were living in poverty. A 2011 - 2012 survey showed that 11.6% of households in Hamilton, or more than 1 in 9, experienced some degree of food insecurity. Food insecurity is categorized on three levels: worrying about running out of food (marginal food insecurity); compromising quantity or quality of food consumed (moderate food insecurity); or reducing food intake and disrupting eating patterns due to lack of food (severe food insecurity). For 8.2% of households in Hamilton, the degree of food insecurity was moderate or severe.

The annual Nutritious Food Basket (NFB) survey provides Hamilton data on the cost of nutritious food. In 2015, the estimated average cost for a family of four to buy basic nutritious food in Hamilton was \$191 per week or \$827 per month.

The cost of living can have a major impact on the amount of money available for purchasing food among lower-income households. NFB 2015 data combined with average market rate rental housing costs in Hamilton shows that households with minimum wage employment or receiving social assistance (Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program) are likely to have incomes that are insufficient for basic living. For many living in poverty, certain fixed costs, such as paying for rent and utilities come before paying for food, which can lead to some degree of household food insecurity.

Charitable food programs and community food programs with a more dignified approach (for example, community gardens, collective kitchens, and Good Food Box programs) may offer some short-term relief. However, these programs do not reduce the prevalence of household food insecurity over the long-term because they do not address poverty.

The most effective way to ensure all Hamiltonians are food secure is through everyone having an adequate income. This approach is the most likely to reduce and eventually eliminate the charity food model because everyone would have the income to access food through other means.