



# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members Board of Health
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	July 10, 2019
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Food Strategy Priority Actions 2 (Food Skills & Employability) and 3 (Neighbourhood Food Infrastructure) (BOH13001(i)) (City Wide) ( <b>Outstanding Business List Item</b> )
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
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<b>SUBMITTED BY and SIGNATURE:</b>	Kevin McDonald Director, Healthy Environments Division Public Health Services

## COUNCIL DIRECTION

The Board of Health at its meeting of August 11, 2016 approved the Food Strategy (BOH13001(d)) Recommendation Report, including:

- (b) That the Board of Health direct the Interdepartmental Food Strategy Steering Team, in collaboration with appropriate staff, to initiate the five Food Strategy Priority Actions, including:
  - (iii) Update the Board of Health regarding the progress on the feasibility of implementing Priority Actions 2 (Food Skills and Employability Program) and 3 (Community and Neighbourhood Infrastructure).

## INFORMATION

In August 2012, the Board of Health requested that a comprehensive Food Strategy be developed. In 2013, the Interdepartmental Food Strategy Steering Team formed, with representation from Public Health Services, Planning and Economic Development, Community and Emergency Services, and Public Works. After an extensive review of

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existing practices and evidence, a formal food strategy community engagement process was conducted in 2015 with over 2,700 citizens providing input. In August 2016, the Board of Health received the Food Strategy Recommendation Report BOH13001(d) and endorsed the Hamilton Food Strategy: Healthy, Sustainable, and Just Food for All.

From the Food Strategy's 46 Actions, five Food Strategy Priority Actions were identified as the focus for the first two to three years. Priority Action 1 (Funding Criteria and Process) was completed and endorsed by the Board of Health in June, 2017. Priority Actions 4 (Food Literacy Network) and 5 (Local Food Promotion) have been successfully implemented and staff continue to explore opportunities to expand these food initiatives. The following provides an update on the progress achieved on the two remaining Food Strategy Priority Actions.

**Food Strategy Priority Action 2 — Food Skills and Employability:**

Offer a food skills and employability program, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Since early 2018, Public Health has been working with various partners to plan a Food Skills and Employability Program to achieve the Food Strategy's Priority Action 2. Led by Indwell, a local non-profit housing organization, in partnership with Employment Services and Public Health Services' staff, as well as Brescia University College and Hamilton Health Sciences' Collaborative Dietetic Education Practical Training program — the Culinary Academy pilot program will be implemented in September 2019.

Students for the pilot will be Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients, giving these students the opportunity to gain pre-apprentice skills to enter the food sector workforce. Public Health Services will provide in-kind Safe Food Handling training, and in collaboration with dietetic interns, will provide four in-kind healthy eating and nutrition education sessions.

Indwell's Culinary Academy is a free and unique 12-week job training program for people living in poverty and those looking to enter or re-enter the workforce in the culinary arts. The program will be situated within one of Indwell's affordable housing complexes in one of Hamilton's economically challenged neighbourhoods. Graduates from this program will be equipped with the knowledge and skills to enter the food service sector prepared for paid employment. Currently, Hamilton does not offer this kind of tuition-free comprehensive food skills training that would meet the needs of vulnerable populations. Existing local chef training programs have either high tuition fees and/or lengthy programs that present barriers for some people.

Food skills training opportunities help build a strong local food economy and ensure the local food sector thrives and meets the increased demand for skilled workers. Similar food skills and employability programs, such as Fresh Starts Culinary Academy in

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Marin, California and Toronto Public Health's Community Food Works Program address barriers for low income communities to access job training within the food sector. Both of these programs have proven track records, with the majority of students completing the courses and moving on to employment within the food sector, further education, and/or volunteer work within their communities.

While much of the costs to implement this pilot program are covered, funding gaps present a challenge to fully implement this intensive hands-on training program beyond the pilot phase. Hamilton is fortunate to have innovative non-profits such as Indwell that have access to a commercial kitchen, staff, and community partners to operate the Culinary Academy; however, the biggest challenge to any food skills and employability program is obtaining ongoing sustainable funding. Like other non-profit community programs, the lack of sustainable funding impacts running these programs long-term.

**Food Strategy Priority Action 3 — Neighbourhood and Community Infrastructure:** Build, retro-fit, or repurpose infrastructure to support food initiatives, such as community kitchens, food markets, community gardens, etc.

Since 2016, Public Health Services' Registered Dietitians have engaged in the following actions to support Priority Action 3:

- Completed a kitchen scan assessing the availability of community facilities with kitchens that may be used by groups to run food skills programs. Results indicate there are limited community spaces with kitchen availability for food literacy programming by community groups, especially at no cost;
- Provided consultation for the Riverdale/Domenic Agostino Recreation Centre renovation to include a commercial teaching kitchen to enhance access to food literacy programs;
- Collaborating with Recreation staff to develop and implement a Healthy Food and Beverage Action Plan to increase healthy food choices within City Recreation centres;
- Initiated collaboration with Recreation staff to develop and implement comprehensive food literacy programming, utilizing the commercial kitchen at the new Bernie Morelli Centre;
- Advised and supported the installation of hydration stations within City facilities;
- Provided input into development plans to encourage access to healthy food via community gardens and food retail, while discouraging access to unhealthy food;
- Provided input on land-use planning documents highlighting the need to preserve agricultural land for growing nutritious food and improving access to local, healthy food;

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- Initiated the evaluation of the benefits, barriers, and opportunities for expanding community gardening within Hamilton’s public and private infrastructure realm;
- Worked with St. Jean de Brébeuf Catholic Secondary School to obtain a grant to install a salad bar within the cafeteria and renovate the school’s greenhouse; and,
- Worked with the McMaster University’s DeGroote School of Business — MBA Health Care and Marketing class (Winter 2019), focusing on a “healthy corner store” initiative in the McQuesten neighbourhood to increase healthy food options within a local convenience store.

Creating food friendly neighbourhoods increases Hamiltonians’ physical access to healthy food and food literacy programs. Several challenges exist to build, retro-fit or repurpose infrastructure to support food friendly neighbourhoods. For example, the recent loss of some neighbourhood grocery stores decreases physical access to healthy food for those with limited mobility and/or lack of easy transportation options. The City and community stakeholders can encourage the private sector to implement and create infrastructure for healthy food access; however, within current policies and regulations, there is no requirement that food retailers must offer healthy food within their establishments. For the non-profit sector, ongoing challenges include limited resources and sustainable funding to build, retro-fit or repurpose infrastructure that supports food initiatives. An opportunity to address gaps is the continued inclusion of commercial teaching kitchens and community gardening within new builds and renovations of recreation centres and other City facilities to enhance community access to food initiatives.

**Next Steps for Priority Actions 2 & 3**

Public Health Services’ Registered Dietitians will continue to provide healthy eating and nutrition education sessions beyond the pilot phase to Indwell’s Culinary Academy Program.

Public Health Services’ Registered Dietitians will continue to work with City staff and community partners to support and grow neighbourhood and community infrastructure to enhance access to nutritious food and food literacy initiatives.

**APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Not Applicable.