

INFORMATION REPORT

TO: Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee	WARD(S) AFFECTED: CITY WIDE
COMMITTEE DATE: March 25, 2013	
SUBJECT/REPORT NO: Update on the Emergency Food System - Strategic Directions (CS13015) (City Wide)	
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Council Direction: Not Applicable

Information:

Emergency food services are a critical lifeline for many Hamiltonians experiencing a financial crisis or living on a low income.

On November 2, 2009, the Emergency and Community Services Committee approved and endorsed the implementation of a plan titled "No One Goes Hungry: Strategic Directions for Hamilton's Emergency Food System 2010-2012 (CS09072). Since approval of the plan, an Emergency Food Strategic Planning Committee (EFSPC) comprised of local food banks, hot meal programs, the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, Public Health Services, and Housing Services Division staff has made considerable progress in successfully implementing the strategic directions outlined in the plan. The purpose of this staff report is to provide the Emergency and Community Services Committee with an update regarding the accomplishments of EFSPC.

Prior to 2009, the administrators of local community food banks and hot meal programs communicated very little with one another. Today, the administrators communicate on a monthly basis and informally interact with each other about service delivery, food shortages/needs, data gathering and nutritional standards. Member agencies now

actively share resources such as surplus perishable food items and capital assets such as refrigeration units.

The complete list of members of the committee is attached as Appendix A to Report CS13015 - Hamilton's Emergency Food Strategic Planning Committee Members.

Background:

History

The idea of developing a plan for Hamilton's emergency food system dates back to 2005 when the City of Hamilton funded a needs assessment of food banks and hot meal programs in Hamilton. The development of a plan within the emergency food sector became part of the City of Hamilton's strategic plan to address homelessness, Everyone Has a Home, which was approved by Council in March of 2007 (Report ECS07020).

In 2007, Council approved a staff recommendation to provide financial support to the Christmas Hamper Program administered by Hamilton Food Share and its member agencies (ECS07101(a)). That report also indicated that support for future requests would be contingent upon the development of a strategic plan for the emergency food sector. On November 2, 2009 the Emergency and Community Services Committee approved and endorsed the implementation of the plan titled "No One Goes Hungry: Strategic Directions for Hamilton's Emergency Food System 2010-2012 (CS09072).

On October 6, 2010 Hamilton City Council received an update on "No One Goes Hungry: Strategic Directors for Hamilton's Emergency Food System Plan 2010-2012 (CS09072(a)). Accomplishments to date included securing federal funding for a Project Manager to implement the strategic directions, developing a Project Charter and conducting a survey of emergency food services to identify service gaps.

Strategic Plan Components

The main components of the strategic plan can be summarized into five strategic directions:

Financial Stability - Focuses on the pursuit of financial resources to provide an annual, stable source(s) of funds for emergency food services. Food banks and hot meal programs are largely funded through individual and corporate donations of money and food. These resources are unstable and affect the quantity and quality of service.

Standards - Focuses on improving formal standards across the emergency food services system in order to improve the quality and quantity of food provision, service standards, nutrition standards, and the overall capacity of the system.

Education - Focuses on education about food security, nutrition and how financial contributions may be leveraged to provide the maximum amount of food.

Advocacy - Focuses on collective advocacy efforts that will capitalize on the unified voice of emergency food providers and the people they serve. This includes advocating for a realistic living wage, for enhanced social assistance benefits, for action at all levels of government, for better nutrition in schools, for a Healthy Food Supplement, and for allocation of funds from targeted sources.

Integration and Coordination - Focuses on efforts to integrate the work of emergency food providers so that resources may be effectively used and ultimately improve service delivery.

These strategic directions were developed through a commitment to strengthen the community's response to hunger by the food providers and members of the EFSPC. The strategic plan represents a new level of cooperation and commitment by the emergency food providers and the City of Hamilton.

Accomplishments

The EFSPC's accomplishments for 2010 - 2012 include:

Financial Stability

On May 19, 2010 (CS10048) the Emergency and Community Services Committee approved one-time funding for Hamilton Food Share and its member agencies for 2010, in the amount of \$350,000. This was to be funded through the Social Service Initiative Reserve for summer shortages and the Christmas hamper program. This funding is in addition to an annual budgeted amount of \$135,730 under the emergency food assistance program.

In December 2011, Council approved \$350,000 per year for a three-year period to Hamilton Food Share until December 31, 2013 (CS11095). The total amount represents \$100,000 for the Christmas Hamper Program and \$250,000 to address the summer shortfall in volunteers and donations. While this assistance helped alleviate some seasonal pressures, financial instability continues to exist as food banks are funded primarily through charitable donations and are staffed largely by volunteers.

Data Collection

Food banks have been collecting data through the federal Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). This system was originally designed for emergency shelters across Canada. The Housing Services Division oversees the HIFIS system in Hamilton. A review in 2012 critically analyzed the suitability of HIFIS as a

reporting tool for Hamilton's Emergency Food System. The review identified issues with user-friendliness, functionality and administrative challenges. The EFSPC is working with City Staff to enhance evidence-based data collection practices.

Hamilton's Emergency Food System Standards

The EFSPC developed standards for the Emergency Food System. Standards are the benchmark to which operations and practices of emergency food providers aim to improve the quality and quantity of food provision, service standards, and nutritional standards and the overall capacity and communication of the system. Implementation of the standards has increased the quality of food. Members of the EFSPC understand the importance of responsible and accountable membership practices and agree to voluntarily work together towards these common goals and standards.

Accomplishments to date:

- Developed and submitted Membership Forms that provide details about each agency's operations. The information was used to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the Emergency Food System in Hamilton;
- Endorsed a client bill of rights that specifies certain levels of guaranteed service standards. Implemented in March 2012, these system-wide principles provide a guide for client service provision to promote uniform practices across each member agency A copy of the Client's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities is attached as Appendix B to Report CS13015;
- Posted "hours of operation" signage at each member food bank and hot meal program;
- Implemented a system-wide complaints procedure for clients. Agencies are responsible for addressing their own complaints and outcomes are reviewed by the EFSPC;
- Endorsed a common policy regarding food allergies; and,
- Committed to making Canada's Food Guide available to clients.

Education and Advocacy - "Advocation"

The EFSPC amalgamated the two strategic directions to reflect the relation between education and advocacy. The amalgamation is now one strategic direction called "Advocation".

Accomplishments to date:

- Developed an inventory map of Emergency Food providers which includes a corresponding explanatory report. This document identifies all free and emergency food providers in the City of Hamilton. Agencies have provided this information to clients who experience food insecurity;
- Assisted in the distribution of the City of Hamilton Food Access Guide. The Guide is a comprehensive listing of places in the City of Hamilton where free or low cost food or meals are available;
- Implemented training standards for front line staff/volunteers;
- Developed a “speakers package” which is used during public discussions;
- Sponsored a variety of media ads that provided information about emergency food services and solicited donations during seasonal supply shortages;
- Completed advocacy letters to local MP’s and MPP’s;
- Met with the Commissioners of the Social Assistance Review;
- Created an internal communications strategy in order to better leverage resources and exchange information during food shortages; and,
- Worked with and engaged Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Supports Program and Public Health in cross-education for front line workers and volunteers;

The EFSPC is currently in the process of creating a branding and marketing platform that will educate the community about food insecurity issues and be used as a tool to solicit donations.

Integration and Coordination

The EFSPC has developed a Terms of Reference and a governance model which has governed its operations since its inception.

Accomplishments to date:

- Worked with other agencies and community groups to assist the EFSPC in moving forward with its strategic directions. Some of these organizations include the Food and Shelter Advisory Committee, the Social Planning and Research Council and McMaster University;

- Developed a food raising communications strategy to coordinate system resources in the event of unexpected inventory shortages. This initiative is to be implemented March 1, 2013; and,
- Completed a data gathering endeavour to learn more about how low-income clients access the Emergency Food System. The purpose of this exercise was to determine the scope of client's transportation needs and challenges in accessing emergency food. Information was collected from over 550 clients across 3 agencies. The data showed that approximately 25% of clients access the emergency food system by public transit.

Next Steps

The EFSPC remains committed to working together as an integrated and coordinated emergency food system beyond the term of the strategic plan which ended in 2012. The EFSPC has confirmed that the strategic directions continue to be relevant and the group plans to endorse a new governance model that will affirm their commitment beyond 2012.

Key next steps include:

- Develop a new comprehensive outcome based data collection system that will function as a reporting tool for Hamilton's Emergency Food System;
- Implement the next phase of system-wide standards;
- Develop and launch a community awareness and education campaign;
- Continue to work towards financial stability, pursue resources to ensure adequate and sustainable service levels for people in need of emergency food assistance; and,
- Continue to co-operate with community partners, including Public Health services in the development of the City of Hamilton's Food Strategy.

Hamilton's Emergency Food Strategic Planning Committee Members

Member Agency/Organization	Contact	Title
Good Shepherd Centre	Carmen Saliccioli	Director Men's Services; (Co-Chair)
Good Shepherd Centre	Christina Ferguson	Program Manager, Food Bank and Clothing
Hamilton Food Share	Joanne Santucci	Executive Director
Living Rock Ministries	Randy Neudorf	Food Services Manager
Mission Services	Victor Cyr	Community Services Director
Neighbour to Neighbour	Denise Arkell	Executive Director
Salvation Army - Dundas Community & Family Services	Shirley Molloy	Director
Salvation Army -Hamilton Community & Family Services	Major Bill King	Executive Director
St. Matthew's House (Two Locations)	Jeremy Young	Manager of Social Services
Welcome Inn	Carly Gaylor	Executive Director
Wesley Urban Ministries	Dean Waterfield	Director of Housing and Homelessness

Emergency Food Strategic Planning Committee Members	Contact	Title
City of Hamilton - Housing Services Division	Amanda DiFalco	Manger, Homelessness Policy & Programs; (Co-Chair)
City of Hamilton – Housing Services Division	Greg Witt	Social Policy Analyst
City of Hamilton – Housing Services Division	Michele Attard	Program Secretary
City of Hamilton – Housing Services Division	John Filice	Program Analyst
Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction	Tom Cooper	Director
City of Hamilton - Ontario Works	Sue Mastracci	Manager, Ontario Works
City of Hamilton - Public Health	Donna Weldon	Health Promotion Specialist
Ancaster Community Services	Karen Thomson	Executive Director

Client Bill of Rights and Responsibilities

As an accredited member of Hamilton's Emergency Food System, we are committed to making sure your rights are respected and promoted in accordance with the Emergency Food System Standards.

These rights are to be respected by all staff and volunteers within the agencies listed below.

All clients have the right to:

- 1) Receive food free of charge (i.e.: clients do not have to give money, or work or attend religious services to receive food).
- 2) Receive food that is safe, healthy and when available, culturally appropriate.
- 3) Request and/or refuse any food items that do or do not meet dietary and/or religious standards.
- 4) Be free from discrimination and harassment.
- 5) Be treated in a courteous, non-judgmental and respectful manner.
- 6) Be served on their first visit because of lack of identification, referral, or documentation of need.
- 7) Receive clear information about the services being provided, eligibility to receive the service and a referral to another agency, if appropriate.
- 8) A clear and consistent complaint and appeal process without fear of punishment.
- 9) Be informed about the usage and storage of and the procedure for requesting personal information.
- 10) Be involved in decisions that affect you, including decisions about the emergency food system programs and policies.

All clients have a responsibility to:

Respect the operations, rules and guidelines of each individual agency

If you have any questions about your rights or responsibilities please talk to the Manager

Agencies

Good Shepherd Centres

Living Rock Ministries

Mission Services

Neighbour to Neighbour Centre

Salvation Army-Hamilton

Salvation Army-Dundas

St. Matthew's House

Welcome Inn Community Centre

Wesley Urban Ministries

Hamilton Food Share