



City of  
**Peterborough**

---

**TO: Members of the Joint Services Steering Committee**

**FROM: Ken Doherty, Director of Community Services**

**MEETING DATE: March 8, 2012**

**SUBJECT: Report CSSSJSSC12-001  
Food Security Programs**

---

## **PURPOSE**

A report to inform the Joint Services Steering Committee of the status of Food Security Programs and Planning in Peterborough.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That the Joint Services Steering Committee endorse the recommendation outlined in Report CSSSJSSC12-001 dated March 8, 2012 of the Director of Community Service, as follows:

- a) That the report be received for information; and
- b) That the presentation on Food Security issues from the Social Services Division and Peterborough City County Health Unit (PCCHU) be received.

## **BUDGET AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct budget or financial implications arising from this report. The contribution of \$35,000 to be paid to the PCCHU from the Social Services budget for food security programming has been approved by administrative staff. It is within the 2012 operating budget.

## BACKGROUND

The Peterborough County-City Health Unit (PCCHU) has a long history of local and provincial involvement with community food programs dating back to the early 1990's. Part of the PCCHU mandate relates to ensuring that community members have access to nutritious, safe, personally and culturally acceptable foods. The Health Unit's Nutritious Food Basket research tell us that people living on low incomes cannot afford to choose healthy foods, after paying for housing. Over the past two years food costs have increased locally by 7.5% while lower incomes have not kept up with these costs.

In the 1990's, the PCCHU was involved in the creation of Kawartha Food Share – a system for emergency food delivery for the most vulnerable in our community. In addition, a community partnership led by the PCCHU, Food for Kids Peterborough was formed to ensure nourishing breakfast and snack programs were available in local schools. Innovative community food programs followed soon after with a focus on improved access to healthy foods and opportunities for skill development. As a result, Peterborough City and County residents annually benefit from initiatives, such as fresh produce boxes, community gardens, community meal programs, cooking classes, and collective kitchens.

Over the years, collaboration and coordination of these initiatives has been a key to their success, ensuring that duplication does not occur. Most recently, the Community Food Network of the Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network provides opportunities for continued coordination through a monthly meeting, Food in Peterborough website and email listserve. Dr. Rosana Pellizzari, Medical Officer of Health is the Chair of the Community Food Network and Social Services Program Managers participate in the Food Network.

The CFN membership activities move the community towards system change while continuing to provide supports and build capacity. The annual work plan for the CFN is based on ensuring programming through all aspects of a food security continuum:

- Short Term Relief - addressing the immediate problem of hunger. An example is the City of Peterborough Social Services Monthly Community Meal Calendar which lists local free meals and food banks.
- Building Capacity – programs where individuals develop skills to grow, produce, or prepare their own food. These programs bring people together in community gardens, community kitchens and food buying programs. This request will support two of these initiatives - PCCHU's Come Cook with Us and the YWCA's JustFood Box (JFB).

- System Change – changes to policies that result in improved food security. The City of Peterborough Community Garden policy and recent Official Plan review are examples of local policy initiatives.

For a more complete listing of some of the ongoing food security programs and networks under the collaboration of the Community Food Network see Appendix A. The City of Peterborough Social Services Division Food Calendar for emergency or immediate access to food is updated monthly and a recent example of a calendar is provided as Appendix B.

### **Request for Funding**

The Health Unit has had a history of financial accountability in managing community food program funding and is acknowledged by the community as having a leadership role in the planning of activities related to Food Security issues. PCCHU has requested Social Services provide one time funding for food programs. \$35,000.00 of the Social Services budget, Social Assistance Reinvestment fund has been approved by Senior Administration. The money is being provided to the PCCHU to assist in funding the key Food Security priorities determined by the PCCHU. The funds requested will enable a continuation of service into 2012-2013 for the YWCA JustFood Box program. In 2010, the PCCHU and YWCA were successful in receiving \$100,000 over two years through an Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs grant. This funding ended in September 2011.

While this is a request for one time funding, future consideration of extending this funding during the next few years' budget may be requested unless a provincial funding source is determined or local costs are reduced by new partnerships. The money is being provided from the Social Assistance Reinvestment Program within the Social Services budget. Through this budget the Social Services Division has provided support to various initiatives over the past 3 years including funding of some of the Meals on Wheels and Come Cook with us programs, Kawartha Food Share, Emergency financial assistance to families for rent, hydro costs and a the Community Counselling and Resource Centre's Housing Social Worker programs. Each year the priorities for spending in this program area are reviewed by the Division. Given the reduction of funding for Food Programs from other sources the Social Services Divisions supports this as a priority to support low income families in the City and County of Peterborough during 2012.

### **YWCA JustFood Box Program Description and Evaluation**

From 2006 to 2009, through funding provided by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care the PCCHU provided some annual financial support to the YWCA JustFood Box program The YWCA JustFood Box program provides subsidized staples and fresh produce food boxes to people living on low incomes. For an affordable investment of \$10, people can enjoy a wide variety of fruits and vegetables that would cost \$25 to \$30 at a local grocery store. In 2011 of the 5,703 JustFood boxes sold 97% were subsidized

to an affordable level for someone living below the poverty line. The program does not undertake a means test. People pay according to their capacity. The YWCA promotes its program primarily among low-income neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces. With limited resources to do outreach, the focus has been to select areas of the City and the County where people would most likely benefit from the program.

A 2006 Fleming Data Research telephone survey with JFB participants found a high degree of satisfaction with the quality, price and quantity of food in the JustFood Boxes as follows:

Eighty-six percent of people surveyed (N=105) found that they are making healthier choices since purchasing the JustFood Boxes. Of the participants who made healthier food choices, 99% feel that their family/children are eating healthier because of the food box. The food box program helped participants purchase healthy foods at the grocery store with the money saved. Many people also mentioned that they can prepare a greater variety of foods as a result of the food box. (Fleming Data Research, "Food Box Participant Telephone Survey", 2006.)

The YWCA and PCCHU are involved in the Provincial Good Food Box Action Group currently planning a provincial evaluation of food box programs in order to make the case for future sustainable funding for these initiatives. In addition the YWCA is investigating the development of a garden where food grown would be added to the JustFood boxes to decrease costs.

The PCCHU offers a series of food skills classes called Come Cook with Us. In 2011 Come Cook with us Classes had a total attendance of 1850. Through enhanced funding in 2012 class numbers are projected to reach a total of attendance of 2900 at Come Cook with Us classes. This program is one of the Board of Health's cost-shared programs. The YWCA JustFood Box program and the PCCHU cooking programs together provide comprehensive strategy to address food security, allowing people living in our community to be able to afford to choose healthy food.

### **Program Benefits**

a) **Affordability and Variety:**

Many participants indicated that they could not afford to pay \$20 for a large box of fresh produce. Now customers in low-income neighbourhoods are purchasing fresh produce boxes as well and in some cases, instead of staples boxes. The boxes often provide them with ingredients that they have never tried before and would never have experimented with had the ingredient not been present in their box. The boxes stretch their palate by introducing new items such as kale, kohlrabi, or celery root by ensuring a wide range of produce every month. Eating on a limited income does not leave much room for experimentation. The presence of the subsidies, however, enable participants to be open to trying new items without feeling that this could be a waste of their money.

Customers are also given the tools to integrate these ingredients. The boxes come with a newsletter which highlights those 'unusual' items, giving information about how to store and provides easy-to-follow recipes which use these ingredients.

b) Community Connectivity:

Individuals and families living on low income not only make up the core of the customers in the program, they are also involved as volunteers and contacts, in the City and in the County. They come to play a significant role in shaping and delivering the program in all its various facets. This model of service delivery ensures closer connections between the program and its main clientele. Volunteer contacts throughout the City and County promote the boxes in their neighbourhood, at their worksite or school. They take orders, collect money, keep monthly statistics and oversee the distribution of the boxes, usually out of their homes. Contacts gain a great deal of self-esteem and strength through their involvement. The program also relies heavily on volunteers to pack and to deliver boxes. Many packers are marginalized because of their income, their limited knowledge of the community or because they live with a disability. Packing is a gratifying activity. The activities involved are diverse enough that they allow inclusion within a wide range of capacities and abilities.

c) Accessibility:

Having their boxes delivered to their neighbourhood or community building is particularly appreciated by people who don't have access to transportation or who, for various reasons, are limited in their capacity to shop around and carry heavy bags of produce. In 2011, the PCCHU completed an asset mapping project on community food programs. Community food programs, local grocery stores and farmers markets were mapped onto a City map with income designations. The JFB program was found in the majority of low income areas of the city - an indicator that it is truly reaching the priority population.

**Overall Benefits**

Peterborough community food programs are well known province wide, as indicated by the recent commendation by Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health in her 2011 Annual Report. YWCA of Peterborough's JustFood Box program ensures that community members have access to nourishing food. Recent research indicates that less than half of Peterborough teens and adults eat enough vegetables and fruit daily. The JustFood Box offers an opportunity to change this pattern. Food Security and access to food is an item that has also come up frequently as part of the Sustainable Peterborough plan. An investment in the YWCA JustFood Box is an investment in the health of our community.

## SUMMARY

The Community Food Network(CFN)chaired by the PCCHU is taking a three pronged approach to food security issues; short term relief for people requiring food, building capacity including developing individual skills related to healthy cooking and broader community engagement, and system reform.

The Social Services Division is supportive of the work of the CFN and participates in the working group. PCCHU is leading the planning and development related to food security issues in this community and therefore the Social Services Division feels that decisions related to the funding priorities in the area of food security should be made by PCCHU given their lead role with the CFN.

An investment of \$35,000 from the Social Assistance Reinvestment Program has been recommended by the Social Services Division and approved by Senior Administration. The health and social benefits of Food Issues will continue to be of importance for the community and further planning and collaboration in this area will continue through the Coordination of the Community Food Network.

Submitted by,

Ken Doherty  
Director Community Services

Linda Mitchelson  
Social Services Division Manager

Contact Name:

Linda Mitchelson

Phone: 705-748-8830 Ext. 3770

Fax: 705-742-0542

E-Mail: [lmitchelson@peterborough.ca](mailto:lmitchelson@peterborough.ca)

Attachments:

Appendix A – Community Food Security Programs Affiliated with the PCCHU

Appendix B- Sample Monthly Food Calendar produced by Social Services