

Building a Community Where Everyone has Access to Healthy Food



STARTING THE CONVERSATION

Community Engagement Summary Report

**Community Voices Consulting Group
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1. Executive Summary

In response to continued food security concerns and the recommendations of the 2011 *Report to the Community Food Network on Strategies for Political Engagement in a Food Security Policy Action*, the Community Food Network, the Peterborough County-City Health Unit and the Peterborough Partners for Wellness embarked on an outreach initiative to hear the thoughts and ideas of rural community residents on how to build a community where everyone has access to affordable and healthy food.

Finding a way to engage rural and First Nations communities surrounding the City of Peterborough was identified as being important in encouraging awareness and inclusion in the process of policy development of food security.¹

The follow up *Building a Community Where Everyone Has Access to Healthy Food* Initiative carried with it two primary goals:

- 1) to raise awareness of food security issues in the region with a focus on those of particular relevance to rural communities surrounding the City of Peterborough and
- 2) to ensure that community members from rural and First Nations communities had an opportunity to participate in sharing successes, challenges and ideas for action with regards to food security in their communities.

Background information covering key food security and levels of engagement was developed and circulated in unison with advertising for “Community Conversations” (consultation meetings) to promote awareness. Five *Community Conversations* were held in five rural communities in Peterborough County to gather community member’s perspectives on the issues, identify challenges to accessing healthy food and outline potential solutions to address those challenges. An online survey, voice mail feedback box and feedback from a former consultation were included to further inform the report.

Participant input highlighted the ways in which communities were presently addressing food security challenges.

Barriers to accessing healthy food were identified including,

- low incomes, particularly in connection to the higher costs of healthy foods and transportation,
- awareness of programs, services, food initiatives and, food skills,
- stigma towards those accessing food assistance,
- accessibility of fresh product and of programs/initiatives related to food, and

¹ http://www.pcchu.ca/NP/NP-images/food-microsite/844_Food+Policy+CFN+Report+March+2011.pdf

- concern that beneficial programs and services that promote food security will not be funded limiting continuity and growth.

Potential solutions were generated to address barriers as identified. They included,

- actions to increase accessibility to emergency food,
- actions to build the capacity of individuals and communities to address the food security needs of their residents and
- actions in support of long term “system level” change requiring a shift in our present food culture,
- expanding our food literacy,
- reconciling the capacity needs in our communities with options for supporting communities to help themselves and their residents and,
- recognition of the impact of resource options such that we support upstream opportunities to impact downstream outcomes.

Conversations revealed that generating solutions to these “big picture” issues can feel overwhelming and it can be hard to know where to start, however participants felt that having the opportunity to talk about issues and options was a beginning place that, if continued, could lead to change. Some next steps towards change that may follow from these early conversations are presented recognizing that only by combining the knowledge, skills, and resources of a broad array of people and organizations can communities understand the underlying nature of food insecurity and develop effective and locally feasible solutions to address it.

2. BACKGROUND

Healthy and nutritious foods are fundamental to good health and community vitality.

The Recipes for Change: Healthy Food in Every Community report suggests that the food system—from agricultural production and processing to transportation and marketing to grocery store sales—influences our ability to buy healthy foods and affects our society in profound ways. The availability of healthy foods—in grocery stores and restaurants, in schools and workplaces—is the hallmark of a thriving community that supports the health of its residents.² Certainly such availability strongly affects households as well. Yet access to healthy foods is marked by inequities. In many communities, it can be difficult to find fresh, high quality fruits and vegetables and other nutritious foods. When they are available, the quality is often poor and the price is often high.³ This is frequently true of rural and remote communities where distance and low population densities impact what foods are available and at what prices.

Access issues are compounded further for those with lower incomes who often lack the resources to buy higher priced product in their home communities or to travel to larger communities where food costs may be lower. Locally, a higher number of people experience food insecurity than the provincial average. Six thousand people used a food bank in March 2011, or 4.3% of the population of Peterborough City and County, compared to 3% of the provincial population for the same timeframe.⁴ When access is compromised, community members are not able to maintain food security.

Food security has been an area of considerable focus within planning efforts in Peterborough. The definition of food security used by the Peterborough Community Food Network is:

A community enjoys food security when: all people, at all times, have physical & economic access to nutritious, safe, personally and culturally appropriate foods; food is produced in ways that are environmentally sound, socially just, and promote community self-reliance; food is provided in a manner that promotes human dignity. (OPHA 2002)

In addition to that definition, the goal of the Sustainable Peterborough Plan offers:

We will feed ourselves sustainably with local, healthy foods and provide strategic directions to support achievement of this goal including, maintain adequate farmland availability to support our sustainable agricultural needs

² Mikkelsen, L, Chehimi, S. Shak, L. ©2010 The Convergence Partnership Fund of the Tides Foundation All rights reserved. at www.convergencepartnership.org

³ Mikkelsen, L, Chehimi, S. Shak, L. ©2010 The Convergence Partnership Fund of the Tides Foundation All rights reserved. at www.convergencepartnership.org

⁴ 2011 Poverty Report Card. Found at <http://www.pcchu.ca/Plans/2011%20Report%20Card.pdf>

*and facilitate the production, storage, processing, distribution, and marketing of local, healthy food.*⁵

The plan speaks of the environmental and economic benefits of local healthy food.

And finally, the 2011 *Report to the Community Food Network on Strategies for Political Engagement in a Food Security Policy Action Plan* (hereafter referred to as *Report on Strategies*) reports that:

*“access to nutritious and affordable food remains a major health concern for our area.”*⁶

The *Report on Strategies* identifies the engagement of rural and First Nations communities surrounding the City of Peterborough to be important in encouraging awareness and inclusion in the process of policy development of food security.⁷

In response to food security concerns and the recommendations of these local reports, the Community Food Network, the Peterborough County-City Health Unit and the Peterborough Partners for Wellness embarked on an outreach initiative to hear the thoughts and ideas of rural community residents on how to build a community where everyone has access to affordable and healthy food.

Engaging community members in identifying solutions to issues that affect them is one of the fundamental principles of public health. The most effective way to achieve public health goals, especially the elimination of disparities in health status, is to actively engage those experiencing the problems in every aspect of addressing them. Community engagement means involving community members in all activities, from identifying the relevant issues and making decisions about how to address them, to evaluating and sharing the results with the community.⁸

Key community development strategies recommended in the *Report on Strategies* to guide engagement activities included:

- *Educate about food security*; towards improving awareness of food security among municipalities and Bands.
- *Make successes visible to build momentum*: to bring forward and celebrate what policy and programs have achieved to date to build momentum, elicit commitment and empower people who are already passionate to engage their Councillors in support of food security policy proposals.
- *Hold public and key informant consultations*: to learn what should inform any policy and for identifying key people in the community who will support policy before Council

⁵ see - <http://sustainablepeterborough.ca/the-process/7-final-sustainability-plan/>

⁶ http://www.pcchu.ca/NP/NP-images/food-microsite/844_Food+Policy+CFN+Report+March+2011.pdf

⁷ http://www.pcchu.ca/NP/NP-images/food-microsite/844_Food+Policy+CFN+Report+March+2011.pdf

⁸ <http://www.health.state.mn.us/communityeng/>

- *Use interactive, visual, graphic means for education and consultation*
- *Understand and include the different values and viewpoints of rural and urban communities: to honour, reflect and ensure the inclusion of such differences.*

Funding was sought and secured through the Ontario government’s Healthy Communities Fund, Partnership Stream to enable outreach and engagement of rural community members in consultations. In developing the outreach and engagement process for this project, the strategies as identified above were incorporated within the limits imposed by timelines and resources.

Engagement was informed by content on food security and by information on policy development and how it may be influenced. Background information on food security and barriers to access, specifically highlighting income as the most significant barrier identified⁹ impacting people’s ability to access healthy food provided the context upon which to build public awareness and initiate dialogue and feedback from community residents.

This engagement project drew on tools developed and presented in the *Thought About Food? A Workbook on Food Security & Influencing Policy*¹⁰ and the work of the Community Food Network resulting in the food security continuum concept (illustrated below). Background information and presentation material for consultations included content on different approaches (strategies) for addressing food insecurity.



Material used stated that strategies could be considered along a continuum from short-term strategies that address immediate needs (Need Food), through to approaches that move beyond emergency food to enable individual and community capacity building (Get Involved), to system change strategies that aim to increase food security into the future (Create Change).^{11, 12} Levels of policy impact and scopes of responsibility were also considered.

⁹ http://www.pcchu.ca/NP/NP-images/food-microsite/844_Food+Policy+CFN+Report+March+2011.pdf

¹⁰ <http://foodthoughtful.ca>

¹¹ *Thought About Food? A Workbook on Food Security & Influencing Policy* The Food Security Projects of the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council and Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre, Dalhousie University, © 2005.

¹² http://www.pcchu.ca/NP/NP-images/food-microsite/844_Food+Policy+CFN+Report+March+2011.pdf

3. PURPOSE AND GOALS OF PROJECT

The purpose of this engagement project was, in its simplest form, to begin the conversation about food security in rural communities surrounding the City of Peterborough.

The initiative carried with it two primary goals:

- 1) to raise awareness of food security issues in the region with a focus on those of particular relevance to rural communities surrounding the City of Peterborough and
- 2) to ensure that community members from rural and First Nations communities had an opportunity to participate in sharing successes, challenges and ideas for action with regards to food security in their communities.

4. METHODS

4.1 Who was involved?

An inclusive process was developed and undertaken by staff of the Peterborough County-City Health Unit and representatives of the Community Food Network working in conjunction with Community Voices Consulting Group to plan and implement the engagement project.

4.2 What did the process look like?

Key community development strategies as recommended in the *Report on Strategies* were incorporated into the development of the engagement process. The process included a series of concurrent activities to foster awareness, promote engagement and illicit input including:

- ❖ Developing and promoting key messages in consultation with PCCHU staff and CFN representatives on food security and levels of policy impact through:
 - the inclusion of background information on the *Food in Peterborough website* at <http://www.pcchu.ca/NP/NP-images/food-microsite/create-change.html>,
 - a backgrounder (see Appendix 1) that was distributed in hard and e-copy explaining food security, what policy is, and outlining the food security continuum covering the levels of involvement for policy and action on food security and,
 - presentation of key messages at Community Conversation meetings.

- ❖ Providing background on the purpose and work of the Community Food Network (CFN)
 - CFN representatives and PCCHU staff attended Community Conversations to present on background and provide opportunities for attendees to provide contact information for further communications and/or participation on the CFN.
- ❖ Gathering community feedback through:
 - five *Community Conversation* (facilitated and interactive community consultation) meetings in the communities of Lakefield, Norwood, Millbrook, Apsley and Hiawatha First Nations,
 - an online questionnaire and a message box for feedback,
 - invitation to participate through print and audio media releases and promotions as well as email outreach through existing networks,
 - including feedback as provided through a community consultation within a previous process in Warsaw in January, 2012 to improve inclusion of feedback from the agricultural sector,
 - Community Conversations Meetings that sought to gather input specific to supporting food security including,
 - successes in their community
 - issues and challenges to accessing healthy/nutritious and affordable food for people in their communities
 - potential solutions to the issues/challenges identified
- ❖ Making use of the local media to report information presented and generated during the Community Conversations.

5. LIMITATIONS

As a result of funding guidelines, the timeline for this project was tight, and community engagement options were appreciably constrained by time and season of year. Although considerable promotion and outreach was utilized to encourage attendance, participation rates were lower than anticipated for the Community Conversations with attendance ranging from two participants at the Hiawatha First Nation Community Conversation and to as high as eight to nine at the Millbrook and Norwood meetings. Participation rates were also low in terms of feedback provided on the online questionnaire and in the voice message box.

Another limitation was that participation did not include a diversity of sector representation. Although local politicians and service providers had a presence, farmers and those with lived experience of food insecurity were notably underrepresented. It is not believed that any persons living on low income were in attendance at any of the Community Conversations. Themes from a meeting

targeting the agriculture sector held earlier this year have been incorporated to better inform the issues and solutions content of this report.

With participation that was limited due to timing and not fully representative of the diversity of the communities intended to be engaged, emerging themes can be considered as platforms upon which to build continued dialogue.

6. WHAT WE HEARD

With excellent media coverage, the following was reported: “even though the Peterborough area has an abundance of food, not everyone has easy access to it. Some people simply do not have enough income to purchase healthy foods in adequate quantity. For others, grocery stores or farmers’ markets are not within easy reach by walking, cycling or public transit. Some do not have the knowledge to choose, cook and preserve healthy foods.”

Through the Community Conversations involving close to 30 participants and the feedback gathered from an additional 17 respondents through outreach tools and a previous community consultation, key themes were identified both in terms of what sorts of activities to support food security are presently taking place in rural communities and what issues and challenges remain that promote food insecurity. Conversation focussed first on the programs, services and initiatives within communities that contribute to the food security of that community’s residents. Key themes arose with frequency and consistency across Community Conversations and within the feedback tools. Themes are outlined below.

6.1 Successes in Your Communities

Community member feedback identified a number of programs, services and initiatives that contribute to food security in their communities.

- All communities visited reported having programs, services or activities related to food access and food skills available in their communities although rates of utilization varied. Examples include: Kawartha Food Share member agency food banks many of which provide fresh produce when available. They also try to provide choice for program patrons.
- Community meals/dinners, meal programs for seniors, school based breakfast programs, food skills development in the schools, community kitchens, community gardens and the JustFood Box are available.
- Local businesses, churches and Legions contribute resources and/or funding to support programs.
- Area farms contribute and local residents donate surplus goods to area food programs.

Local food was identified as an area that is increasingly becoming part of the food security dialogue.

- Local food is grown in and around many of the communities, although growing can be challenging due to poor soil and the rocky and swampy terrain of the northern regions of the area.
- Farmers markets are available in many communities in Peterborough County although availability in each rural community was described as occasional and largely seasonal.
- There are programs in support of small farms in the area providing resources and internships. (e.g. Collaborative Regional Alliance of Farmer Training (C.R.A.F.T). There is also a Sustainable Agriculture Program that promotes local food systems available at Fleming College.
- The potential to develop community food places throughout the area was identified as an important opportunity to improve access to local, healthy food through community-based food programming.

Discussion identified the health benefits of programs that feed community members, but participants also recognized the further benefits to health and well being that social inclusion and participation in programs provided for patrons.

6.2 Issues and Challenges

Income was indicated most frequently and most consistently as being the greatest issue impacting food security in terms of individuals and families living on low incomes not being able to afford to buy nutritious foods. Essentially, if an individual or family has a low income, by the time life necessities such as rent and utilities are covered, the remaining available moneys are quite limited. Stretching limited money across an individual or family's food needs may mean that,

- people need to use food banks to assist with feeding themselves and their families – and food banks are limited in the volume of nutritious or healthier foods that they have available.
- people will purchase processed foods or less healthy foods – but that fills stomachs (i.e. Kraft Dinner) - over fresh produce because these food choices typically cost less than fresh produce and many or healthier foods highlighted in Canada's Food Guide.

These issues are compounded by accessibility based cost considerations in that,

- grocery stores in the rural communities tend to be more expensive than foods in the urban centres (Hiawatha local store is the exception in that there is a mark up cap in place in that store ⁱⁱ).

- transportation to urban centres where costs are lower than in the rural communities is not available or too expensive to enable many rural residents to take advantage of lower prices.
 - where transportation services are available, it is usually for medical appointments but not for grocery shopping.
- if occasional shopping trips are made to stock up on food supplies, the foods purchase tend to be “storage foods” such as canned goods, processed foods and packaged foods that may be less healthy (higher in fat, sodium and sugar and lower in fibre).

Awareness was identified along a number of inter-related lines including program and services awareness, nutrition education understanding of our local food system and food skills.

Participants suggested that many community members:

- are not aware of what programs and services are available to them in their communities and,
- if they are aware, they do not know how to connect to available programs and service (e.g., hours of operation, criteria for participation).

Some rural residents are isolated in terms of distance and social connection which further compounds these challenges.

There was considerable discussion on the culture of food that we live in. Participants discussed,

- the increasing prevalence of fast and processed food due to busy schedules, the “addictive quality” of high sugar, high sodium processed foods and a loss of attachment to where our food comes from.
- concerns that we, as eaters and consumers, have become
 - less aware of the nutritional values of the foods they eat (or lack thereof).
 - much less aware of the importance of healthy foods in our diets (eating for comfort, artificially enhanced flavours, “sugar rushes” rather than eating for nutritional value).
 - do not connect to the health implications of our food habits (i.e. on chronic disease prevention) and,
 - are not aware of the larger positive nutritional, environmental and economic impacts of our food choices when we are not participating in eating local food.

Food awareness/skills development were also identified in that participants suggested that many people

- do not know how to properly store and preserve foods to promote product longevity and use of foods out of season.
- lack cooking skills in general but also knowledge focussed on how to cook from scratch and how to utilize foods that may be less familiar to us (i.e kale).

Stigma was identified frequently as a barrier to food security.

Participants spoke of pride and fear of public perception in small rural communities - *where everybody knows everybody's business* – as being a significant hurdle for those who need food assistance, specifically noting:

- embarrassment that people feel when needing assistance.
- the expressed tendency of community members to label low income persons with negative attribute, such as “lazy” and as “(mis)using the system”.

The impacts in access imposed by personal pride and negative public perception may be compounded by the visibility of some food bank programs. For example:

- in one community the food bank is in a community space in the centre of the town. Other programs do not run in the space so if persons are going to this space, other community members are aware of their use of the food bank.
- in one community although efforts are made to enable patrons to select their own food, the system of waiting to be called may be inhibiting.

Accessibility in terms of the amount and quality of fresh foods and features of the programs and services available was raised.

In some of the communities, along with higher costs, the availability and the quality of the produce that is available at local stores was identified as a concern.

- Fresh produce may not be available or it may be of poorer quality in some stores in compared to others in the City of Peterborough.
- Availability and quality were represented as poorest in the winter months when cottage populations who will purchase at the higher prices are not in residence.

Accessibility overlaps with other areas identified such as

- the lack of awareness of where programs and services,
- transportation challenges and
- stigma.

These factors clearly impact the ease with which food and food security programs can be attained.

Program features such as time of day may create barriers to attending programs, i.e. programs available only in the afternoon when evening may be the preferred time.

Program continuity and expansion concerns were raised in that the availability and/or accessibility of existing programs may be in jeopardy or are unable to expand to meet actual need due to funding.

This was discussed most specifically in relation to

- the sustainability and accessibility of programs.
 - For example, people are concerned about losing the subsidy for the JustFood Boxes they are now receiving.
- the potential loss of Health Unit based community cooking and skills based programs.

High levels of regulation (e.g., public health “commercial kitchen” standards) was identified as a significant challenge to

- the continuity of existing programs,
- the potential of developing other programs in rural communities that rely upon church halls and older community spaces to run programming and community meals.
- a barrier to personal choice for people interested in consuming ungraded eggs and raw milk.

6.3 Potential Solutions

Building a community where everyone has access to healthy food becomes possible when issues and challenges are identified and addressed. Participants shared ideas on how to build a community where everyone has access to healthy food. The main ideas are presented below along within the food security continuum outlined by the Community Food Network. This continuum is organized around three core concepts: *Need Food?, Get Involved, Create Change!*. Many of the potential solutions discussed have impacts at varied places concurrently.

Need Food?

“Sometimes the goal is simply making sure that people have enough food to fill their stomachs”

Participant, Norwood Community Conversation

Recognizing that for some individuals and families, the most **immediate** and pressing food security need is simply being fed, solutions identified included sustaining and stabilizing emergency food in the short term.



NEED FOOD

Possible solutions shared to increase accessibility to emergency food programs included:

Actions to **reducing stigma** through,

- Renaming the food bank to move away from existing associations with the label (the name “Family Food” was specifically suggested)
- Reducing the visibility of food banks through,
 - changing food bank locations if the location is uncomfortably visible in a community (with caution not to inhibit access by moving to a hard to reach location)
 - offering programs (perhaps complimentary such as food skills workshops) in food bank spaces to blur reasons for use while offering additional opportunities for patrons
 - offering additional or satellite food bank access points (for example connecting a food cupboard to family resource centres or other community centres in Peterborough County)
 - introducing food voucher/food gift cards to enable choice and eliminate need for food banks (work with local grocery stores on collaborative program)
 - providing or expanding existing church and community meals – where everyone feels welcomed to foster community along with food access

Actions to **increase ability to physically get to emergency food**

- Transportation supports – put low cost/subsidized transportation in place targeting need for food. This could include a volunteer driver program or , expanding current transportation programs

Actions to **increase awareness**

- Help Centres in the County - develop information centres and online directories that promote the availability and details of emergency food programs
- Ongoing use of media to promote/Inform on available emergency food programs

Actions to **increase nutrition value of emergency food**

- Develop a system to redistribute local farmer’s market surplus to people who need it and are unlikely to purchase it.
- Connect to resources (perhaps through the Ontario Trillium Foundation) to support more nutritious food options for Food Banks

Get Involved.

How do we move beyond providing emergency food to creating conditions where people don't need to rely on it?

Participant, Millbrook Community Conversation

GET INVOLVED

This question framed much of the dialogue at many of the Community Conversations and moves us to actions that develop individual and community capacity and create changes at the policy level.

Actions that **address multiple accessibility issues**

- Creating community places for food, “community food centres” or “hubs” in communities that bring food related programs and services together beyond emergency food only (including food storage, distribution, and facilities for programs and skills development, i.e. commercial kitchen).
- Establishing transportation options (such as a low cost bus from rural Peterborough County to the City of Peterborough to enable community members to shop for groceries).
- Establishing a supported “food issues” volunteer program that trains and supports volunteers working across food programs.

Actions that **increase the availability of fresh produce** (quality and cost considered)

- Expanding the JustFood Box Program through
 - establishing ongoing funding support for operating/coordination,
 - advocating for ongoing public health and funder support (reduce dependence on volunteers alone),
 - developing new partnerships,
 - continuity/expansion of subsidy for those with low incomes,
 - support for volunteer participation in the program – additional host sites, transportation expenses support and
 - increased promotion of universal availability through local papers and outreach into schools and community centres.
- Initiating or expanding community gardens programs (including back yard, roof top, balcony and school yard gardens), municipal and community agency or group collaboration to establish resources - space, tools, seeds, and program coordination.
- Coordinating of surplus food distribution through an independent program or connection to an existing program.

Actions that **increase food program awareness**

Developing a column in local media, particularly in the rural based papers

that county based residents are more likely to receive (“what’s good for you”, “food guide refresher”, “where to find food and food programs”).

Actions that increase food awareness and food skills

- Increase or establish collective/community kitchens initiatives.
- Establish or expand the reach of existing teaching programs associated with gardens program.
- Establish cooking, food handling, storage/preserving programs in all schools. Offer programs in community centres with focus on healthy foods.
- Plan and hold a “Nutrition Expo” (promoting whole foods).
- Educate with school programs and municipal events informing on healthier food choices to offer (i.e. avoiding high fat granola bars, incorporating yogurts and fruit).

Further outreach to **increase inclusion of community members** in developing the processes and practices that support food security in their communities include:

- Collaborating with local agencies, churches, schools to outreach to their populations to further identify food based needs – emergency supports, skills needs, interests, to establish the best times for programs and services and to enable service development to match expressed community need.
- Working with people who grow food to identify options for sharing surplus produce while being mindful of farmer income/resource needs.

Create Change!

“There needs to be a fundamental shift in the culture we have created around food. We have forgotten in a very short time what centuries of history has told us about the importance of food for ourselves and for our community”

Participant, Community Conversations

Discussions identified that long term change requires a shift in our present food culture that eases access to healthy foods and that clearly establishes the benefits of a healthy diet in the psyche of our residents. This requires expanding our food literacy to develop a more fulsome understanding of our nutrition needs and deficits. It involves reconciling the capacity needs in our communities with options for supporting communities to help themselves and their residents. It calls for recognition of the impact of resource options such that we support upstream opportunities to impact downstream outcomes. Conversations revealed that generating solutions to these “big picture” issues can feel overwhelming and it can be hard to know where to start,

GET INVOLVED



CREATE CHANGE

however participants felt that having the opportunity to talk about issues and options is a beginning place that, if continued, can lead to change.

Some key areas that participants felt could be pursued to create change include:

Actions that **improve awareness**

- Creating local universal/mandatory nutrition programs and healthy eating policy in schools to encourage healthy choices.
- Incorporating food/local food education into the main stream education curriculum.
- Reducing stigma by making the realities of food need and income inequalities part of the common conversation in schools, churches, service organizations and governance tables.

Actions that **increase program and service availability**

- Advocate for increased government funding/resources for community programs (local governments for municipal lands, staff support, resources to contribute to programs and services, upper levels of government for ongoing funding in support of food box programs as a “health” service).

Actions that **support local food**

- Further, support of our local food system is required to improve economic, environmental and health benefits for Peterborough County residents.
- Work to develop and support the Peterborough County local food system with linkages (farmers to schools/long term care facilities/ grocery stores).
- Further incorporation of food in the Community Social Plan ensuring that income assistance supports opportunities to access nutritious foods.
- Promote government awareness of food issues and rural communities (perhaps through linking with organizations such as Sustain Ontario).
- Review current regulations to ensure population has access to healthy local food.

Actions that **increase accessibility** to healthy food

- Sustain subsidies for JustFood Box program for lower income participants.
- Advocate for increases to social assistance rates.

“Our food comes from all over the world, but we know nothing about how it is produced. Our food should be local food.”

Call in respondent

7. Where To From Here

This project provided an opportunity to initiate conversations with members in rural communities with regards to food security. It was identified in the *Report on Strategies, 2011* that food security was not considered a priority in the rural communities. Despite awareness building, many residents still may not have a good understanding of food security/insecurity and the resulting impacts for themselves, their families and their communities. They, consequently, may not be engaged in the dialogue. Participants in this initiative had much to share and certainly informed one another through the conversations. Some of the ideas identified thus far are easy to implement (quick wins) and can build momentum in terms of accessibility and awareness in the immediate term. As discussed in the Community Conversations, addressing food security in the community begins by finding immediate practical solutions followed by more long term solutions involving education and the support of community members, organizations, municipalities and upper tiers of government.

7.1 Recommendations - Immediate

The media attention and the enthusiasm that was evident indicates that there is an appetite for continued dialogue and that with more time and the inclusion of additional methods of engagement, further conversation and resulting actions are possible.

It will be critical to keep food security in the consciousness of community residents, organizations, institutions and municipal councils if rural communities are to become increasingly more aware of and active in building food security for all. The media were effective participants in this project to help promote awareness. Given their interest, continuing the conversations through media articles seems quite possible.

Other options include awareness based outreach attached to existing community events and activities to continue to gather perspectives and, ideally, to encourage community residents to find areas within which they themselves can become involved and create change.

- 1) Work with local media to develop articles/columns specific to food security issues.**
- 2) Investigate opportunities and develop an outreach action plan in terms of,**
 - i. targeting attendance at existing community activities and events that bring rural residents together where**
 - a) food security messaging can be carried,**
 - b) continued conversations about food security issues, impacts and solutions can be held.**
 - ii. awareness building with rural health care providers where**
 - a) food security messaging can be carried,**

b) conversations about food security issues, impacts and solutions can be facilitated by practitioners.

As discussed, this engagement initiative did not include all the needed perspectives to fully inform required actions therefore it will be important to outreach further to ensure a more inclusive scope of perspectives is achieved. Community organization representatives in attendance at the Community Conversations suggested that the input of persons using and/or in need of community food programs and services could be gathered through involving the staff and perhaps volunteers of their and other organizations in engagement activities. This could include activities such as informal interviews, to better understand their client needs and how best to address them. As feedback suggests that community organizations may be quite willing to partner in outreach, this collaborative method would be a useful means for gathering input as well getting accurate nutrition information out to those who may be harder to reach. Tools and trainings would be beneficial if collaborative outreach is pursued to ensure that those within organizations have a clear and accurate understanding of the key food security messages and the parameters for gathering information.

- 3) Investigate opportunities for additional engagement in terms of**
 - i. working with local organizations, service clubs and congregations to outreach to members, clients, program participants for further information gathering towards continued action planning.**
- 4) Develop a training initiative, including outreach tools (i.e. fact sheets, guidance questions, possible engagement processes/activities).**

7.2 Recommendations – Long Term

As further information is gathered, continued planning to build on priority issues as identified will be required. This involves considering the additional information that is collected, establishing priorities, identifying resources available and potential to support activities and establishing an implementation plan. The opportunity to successfully link the planning for food security to other plans for Peterborough County such as the Sustainable Peterborough Plan and the Community Social Plan will foster the strength of all local plans.

- 1) Establish a workplan within nine months building on the information generated through the present “*Starting the Conversation*” process that collates information that has been collected, establishes priorities and generates implementation action items to address final priorities.**
 - a. Identify collaborative stakeholders to support action moving forward (include organizations and municipal staff and politicians) and ensure inclusion in implementation action planning.**
 - b. Identify existing and potential resources to support action.**

7.3 Conclusion

Food security for everyone becomes possible when communities address the income challenge and include food access in planning at organizational, community and upper tier government levels. Education on awareness of the importance of food security is key. Community engagement literature suggests that when communities understand what is at stake and what actions are possible, they will support political leaders who want to use public policy as a means of addressing fundamental public interests. As long as there is not a clear link made by everyone – including health care professionals – that health and food are intimately connected we will be limited in the progress that can be made.

There are compelling reasons to promote broad community participation in addressing community health problems. At a practical level, many of the problems that affect the health and well-being of people in communities, including access to nutritious food - cannot be solved by any person, organization, or sector working alone.¹³ These problems are complex and interrelated, defying easy answers. They affect diverse populations and occur in many different kinds of local contexts. The local context, in turn, is dependent on decisions made at upper levels of Government. Only by combining the knowledge, skills, and resources of a broad array of people and organizations can communities understand the underlying nature of food insecurity and develop effective and locally feasible solutions to address it. Peterborough County seems to be well on its way to getting the mix right.

¹³ Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine Vol. 80, No. 1, March 2003 The New York Academy of Medicine

APPENDICES

Building Food Security in Our Community

Food Security versus Food Insecurity



Food Security

A community enjoys food security when:

- all people, at all times, have physical & economic access to nutritious, safe, personally and culturally appropriate foods,
- food is produced in ways that are environmentally sound, socially just, and promote community self reliance, and
- food is provided in a manner that promotes human dignity.

Food Insecurity

- Is when people can't access the food they need to be healthy
- Is not having sufficient and safe food for future generations
- Is feeling stressed about whether there will be enough food for future generations
- Is feeling stressed about whether you have enough food or about where your next meal will come from
- Is worrying about the safety of your food and about what is in it

Does Income Matter?

- Income is the most significant issue in food security
- Income is the major barrier to food
- Low income households (including seniors and children) are at greatest risk when food is insecure
- Almost 1 in 10 people in Peterborough City and County live in poverty

Other Impacts

- The level of support for local production, processing, distribution and eating of local food
- Awareness of food skills and the connection between nutritious foods and good health

We will be sharing your thoughts and ideas from the Community Conversations with municipal governments. For a summary of the Community Conversations visit www.pcchu.ca/food and click on Create Change

For more information about the Community Food Network please call 705-743-1000, ext. 224 or visit www.pcchu.ca/food

Food Security Continuum

There are different approaches (strategies) for addressing food insecurity. They can be considered along a continuum from short-term strategies that address immediate needs to system change strategies that aim to food security into the future

Need Food	Get Involved	Create Change
Short-term Relief Strategies	Individual and Community Capacity Building Strategies	System Change Strategies
Food Insecurity		Food Security
Food banks, soup kitchens and other emergency food assistance programs	Move beyond emergency food, focus on capacity building e.g. community kitchens, gardens and buying clubs, etc.	Structural change to food, social, and economic systems through food policy and social justice networks, coalitions and councils: participatory food costing

You can make a difference...

by promoting and influencing the areas that guide our choices and directions (policy)

What is Policy?

Policies can be guidelines, rules, regulations, laws, principles, or directions.

They say: *What is to be done? Who is to do it? How it is to be done?*

Policy can happen at different levels and points of interaction:

Personal Policy - is your own guidelines for actions based on your personal standards, beliefs and values

Organizational Policy - guides how organizations and businesses operate.

Public Policy - guides how federal, provincial and municipal governments operate and address specific issues or problems

Municipal Policy - shapes what happens specifically in your community

Making your voice heard

How can you influence policy?

- Know the issues
- Connect with others who want to influence change
- Share your thoughts and ideas

With information modified from Thought About Food (2005), Toronto Food Policy Council (1996), Houghton (1998), Kalima (2001), and the Report to the Community Food Network on Strategies for Political Engagement on Food Security Policy Development (March 2011).

Food in Peterborough

[Reports/Research](#)
[Advocacy](#)
[Organizations](#)
[Home](#)


Building a Community Where Everyone Has Access to Healthy Food

Access to nutritious and affordable food remains a major health concern for our area so the Peterborough County-City Health Unit and the Community Food Network wants to hear the thoughts and ideas of community residents on how to build a community where everyone has access to affordable and healthy food.

Building a Community Where Everyone Has Access to Healthy Food

Join us for a
Community Conversation OR
Take our 5 minute survey!



Join us for a Community Conversation to discuss what needs to happen in your community to improve access to nutritious and affordable food for everyone.

Monday, March 5, 2012 from 6-8 pm

Lakefield Marshland Centre, 65 Hague Ave, Lakefield

Tuesday, March 6, 2012 from 6-8 pm

St. Thomas Anglican Church Hall, 16 Centre Street, Millbrook

Tuesday, March 20, 2012 from 6-8 pm

Norwood Town Hall, 2357 County Road 45, Norwood

Wednesday March 21, 2012 from 6-8 pm

Elders Room, Life Centre, 431 Hiawatha Line, Hiawatha First Nations

Wednesday, March 28, 2012 from 6-8 pm

Royal Canadian Legion, Burleigh St, Apsley

A light meal will be provided at all meetings. Child minding is available by booking in advance at 705-743-1000 ext. 316.

Can't attend a meeting?

Share your ideas about ways to build a community where everyone has access to healthy food with us by

- Answering our short questionnaire at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Food-Security>
OR
- Leaving your thoughts on our voice mail box at 705-743-1003 ext. 369

Together we can build a food secure community.

Outreach Methods (to promote engagement process and attendance)

Media Outreach

- Two news releases - sent from PCCHU to local media
- Two radio interviews conducted
- Radio ads on Country 105 inviting local residents to attend meetings (42 paid, 42 PSA's matched by radio station) from week of Feb 27 to March 26.

Media Response

- Media attendance at consultations resulting in news article in The Peterborough Examiner, CHEX TV, Millbrook Times
- Additional coverage of story in Campbellford Times (interviewing Reeve Ron Gerow and Deputy-Reeve Andy Sharpe) and Peterborough This Week

Agency and Other Outreach

- Direct email to the Community Food Network membership asking them to forward the message to other partners
- Direct emails to past participants in the Sustainable Peterborough process (via Sustainable Peterborough), and Kawartha Choice
- A Hot Topic on both www.pcchu.ca and the CFN website (www.pcchu.ca/food)
- Posters in each community (distribution coordinated by City of Peterborough-Social Plan staff)
- Inclusion of consultation information in Hiawatha First Nations newsletter
- Information about consultation in March JustFood boxes distributed in county
- Tent cards promoting on-line survey and telephone consultation distributed to 17 library branches throughout Peterborough County
- Email from Medical Officer of Health to those consulted during the development of the *2010 CFN Report on Strategies for Political Engagement in a Food Security Policy Action Plan*
- Initial news release included in correspondence to County Council members
- Posting of upcoming meetings on township websites
- Consultations mentioned during "A Day in the Life of Public Health Nutritionist" at March PCCHU Board of Health meeting
- Inclusion of Apsley Community Conversation in Food Boxes

END NOTES

ⁱ The **Thought About Food?** A Workbook on Food Security & Influencing Policy *Developed by the* Food Security Projects of the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council and the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre, Dalhousie University, June 2005 suggests that many of the issues faced by communities or populations can be most effectively addressed through supportive healthy public policy. Strategies focused on system change aim to make improvements to policy that will build food security.

ⁱⁱ Given that a cap on the mark up of product for sale limits the possible income from sales, it is possible that this may limit the types of product the store may be willing to carry – i.e. product with a short shelf life that may be lost to spoilage may not be carried as the economic loss may not be as easily absorbed. Therefore processed and canned foods may be preferred stock given their long shelf life and lessened spoilage potential.