

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

MAY 2013

USING EMERGENCY FOOD SERVICES IN
GUELPH-WELLINGTON

A Vision for Emergency Food Services in Guelph-Wellington

 **POVERTY**
GUELPH & WELLINGTON TASK FORCE FOR
ELIMINATION

Recommendation Report

A VISION FOR EMERGENCY FOOD SERVICES IN GUELPH-WELLINGTON

INTRODUCTION

In April 2010, the Food Access Working Group requested the support of the Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination to address the increasingly challenging issues experienced by providers and clients with the local emergency food system. Over the past three years, the Poverty Task Force (PTF) and the Food Access Working Group have worked with emergency food providers, clients and key community stakeholders to develop and implement short-term improvements. Meanwhile, long-term and permanent solutions were researched and explored with the support of the Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship/Research Shop.

Although the local emergency food system has experienced some positive progress over the past three years, significant barriers continue to exist for those accessing and providing emergency food assistance. While the Emergency Food Services Ad-Hoc Committee has included short-term recommendations in this report, they are intentionally limited in order to direct energy and resources at a **permanent and sustainable solution**.

THE EMERGENCY FOOD SERVICES AD-HOC COMMITTEE

The Poverty Task Force first convened the Emergency Food Services Ad-Hoc Committee (hereinafter referred to as the Committee) in February 2012 to review and analyze the report *Emergency Food Services in Guelph-Wellington* (2011), and to identify concrete recommendations. The PTF re-convened the Committee in February 2013 in a similar capacity, requesting they review, analyze, and develop recommendations based on a new report, *Using Emergency Food Services in Guelph-Wellington* (2013).

Members of the Committee include:

- Andrew Seagram, Upper Grand District School Board / Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination (Co-Chair)
- Brendan Johnson, Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition
- Erin Nelson, Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship
- Jacinta Gillen, Women in Crisis
- Karen Kawakami, City of Guelph
- Kate Vsetula, Guelph Community Health Centre
- Lisa Needham, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health / Food Access Working Group (Chair)
- Ryan Pettipiere, County of Wellington

Randalin Ellery, PTF Coordinator, provided facilitation and planning support.

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee identified a number of short-term recommendations as measures that can be implemented within one year by specific stakeholders to improve the current emergency food system in Guelph-Wellington. The recommendations largely reflect the main areas that people feel need improvement as described in the report, *Using Emergency Food Services in Guelph-Wellington* (2013), including stigma, consistency and transparency of eligibility criteria, accessibility, and food quality. In addition, the Committee acknowledges that there is a lack of accountability in the governance structure of the provincial and local emergency food system, and consequently includes a recommendation in an attempt to address the issue in the short-term.

1 / ACCOUNTABILITY

1.1 THAT the Poverty Task Force and the Food Access Working Group acknowledge and support local emergency food providers that have taken active steps to improve their service by implementing the Guiding Principles for Eligibility Criteria.

1.2 THAT emergency food service providers include current or past emergency food service clients on their Board of Directors to provide clients an opportunity to have their experiences heard and be part of making decisions about a system they are directly impacted by.

2 / ACCESSIBILITY

2.1 THAT emergency food providers strongly consider moving to a choice-based system that would enable clients to:

- Access the service when necessary (i.e. more than once a month)
- Take what they choose and are able to transport

2.2 THAT the Transit Advisory Committee makes efforts to ensure that Guelph Transit stops at or near emergency food providers to make it easier (and in some cases, possible) for clients to transport food.

2.3 THAT emergency food providers, with the support of the Food Access Working Group, examine the hours of operation of emergency food services across the City and County and consider changing and/or expanding service hours to fill gaps.

2.4 THAT the County of Wellington continue to fund and support Wellington Transportation Services to assist clients in the County that need transportation support to access emergency food assistance.

2.5 THAT the Poverty Task Force and the Food Access Working Group increase awareness of services, supports and resources by including the following in updates to the Wellington Dufferin Guelph Food Access Guide:

- An “hours grid” that clearly outlines the hours of operation for local emergency food services on one, easily accessible page.
- *Emergency Food: Expiration & Best Before Dates* (Poverty Task Force, 2012).
- Information about Wellington Transportation Services (with the permission of the Community Resource Centre).

3 / FOOD QUALITY

3.1 THAT local community stakeholders, including (but not limited to) the Guelph-Wellington Food Round Table, the Poverty Task Force, the Institute for Community Engaged Scholarship, and the University of Guelph School of Computer Science, continue to actively support the development and implementation of the Farm to Fork initiative to increase the quality and quantity of fresh food donated to local emergency food providers.

3.2 THAT the City of Guelph, provide sustainable funding to the Garden Fresh Box program in order to provide subsidized boxes to low-income community members and emergency food pantries.

3.3 THAT the Garden Fresh Box program expand the number of partnerships they have with local emergency food providers in order to increase the quality and quantity of fresh food available for their clients.

3.4 THAT the resource, *Emergency Food: Expiration & Best Before Dates* (Poverty Task Force, 2012), is actively promoted by emergency food providers among clients, staff and volunteers to increase understanding of what can and cannot be provided to clients.

4 CONSISTENCY AND TRANSPARENCY OF ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

4.1 THAT the Poverty Task Force and the Food Access Working Group continue to support the animation and implementation of the Guiding Principles for Eligibility Criteria to improve the consistency and transparency of eligibility requirements.

4.2 THAT the Poverty Task Force, with the support of the Food Access Working Group and PTF Research & Policy Working Group, conduct an evaluation of the impact of the Guiding Principles for Eligibility Criteria, that includes input from clients accessing local emergency food services.

5 / STIGMA

5.1 THAT, in the event of a provincial election, community stakeholders, such as the Poverty Task Force and the Guelph-Wellington Food Round Table, partner to host a 'Do the Math' campaign to raise public awareness of local food insecurity and to advocate for social assistance reform that would provide clients with enough income to afford a healthy diet.

5.2 THAT the Poverty Task Force, along with community stakeholders, continue to bring awareness to the root causes of poverty in an effort to shift attitudes and change outlooks and understandings of poverty.

LONG-TERM VISION & RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT a hub-and-spoke model replace the current emergency food system in Guelph-Wellington.

THAT, **initially**, the hub should:

- Provide central storage and distribution of emergency food for emergency food providers in Guelph and Wellington County (unless the provider is a member of the Food Bank of Waterloo Region and chooses to retain that membership).
- Partner with other community stakeholders on advocacy and public awareness campaigns aimed at addressing the root causes of poverty and reducing stigma.
- Place a strong emphasis on fundraising in an effort to improve the quality and quantity of food available to emergency food providers and clients.
- Be a community-driven initiative that includes those accessing emergency food services as key decision makers.
- Build intentional linkages with local farmers and food retailers.
- Establish eligibility criteria based on the Guiding Principles (Poverty Task Force, 2012).
- Address transportation barriers, particularly in the County, by exploring creative models to increase the availability of quality and fresh food to clients, such as a mobile market.
- Develop a system for transporting food from the hub to the spokes.
- May offer direct service, if needed.

THAT the spokes should:

- Be neighbourhood-based emergency food providers that receive food directly from the food hub and provide direct service to clients.
- Be required to use the same eligibility criteria as established by the hub
- Operate on a points-based model

THAT the following steps are taken to develop and establish the hub-and-spoke model:

- The Poverty Task Force support an ad-hoc working group of community champions, including past or current emergency food clients and members of the Committee, to:
 - Develop and submit a collaborative application to the Ontario Trillium Fund (OTF) in June 2013 to hire a Coordinator to provide support and leadership.

- If the OTF application is not successful, explore and apply for other funding opportunities.
- Explore and apply to become a partner site of Community Food Centres Canada (CFCC) in 2014.

THAT after the hub-and-spoke model is established, the hub “should eventually address issues surrounding food, health and poverty in a more holistic way, with a wide range of programming that could include community gardens, kitchens, nutrition (and other) education, and more” (Nelson, et al., p.22).