

For Information

DATE: February 15, 2011

REPORT TITLE: **FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN PEEL**

FROM: Janet Menard, Commissioner of Human Services

OBJECTIVE

To provide an update to Regional Council on the progress made by the Food Distribution Network to find a collective solution to increasing access to more, fresher, culturally diverse food to a larger number of Peel residents in need.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- At Council's direction, Regional staff has been working with the Food Distribution Network, comprised of the major food organizations in Peel to determine whether a collective solution to increasing the amount of food, as well as provide more fresh culturally diverse food in the charitable food system in Peel is possible.
- In June 2010, the Network requested continued support from Regional staff because the members had not reached consensus on a collective solution.
- Regional staff shifted focus from assisting the Network members with building relationships amongst each other to working with the five key players in Peel's charitable food distribution system.
- Since the commencement of this project, Mississauga's formal food system created a hub and spoke model; Caledon Community Services began working with Mars Canada to develop a sustainable food bank; although relationships have been strengthened, the charitable food system in Brampton remains somewhat informal and with limited capacity.
- Three organizations have expressed an interest in playing a leadership role in Brampton's charitable food system.
- A report entitled, "A Peel Collaborative Project on Food Security", was prepared by the Network with assistance from staff and an external consultant.
- The work of the Network is part of a larger poverty reduction strategy being developed by the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy Committee, co-chaired by United Way of Peel Region and the Region of Peel.

DISCUSSION**1. Background**

In 2008, at Council's direction, the Commissioner of Health Services and the Commissioner of Human Services arranged a meeting with representatives from food organizations in Peel to discuss the charitable food sector and whether a process of working together to find solutions to growing concerns about the quantity and quality of food for Peel residents

February 15, 2011

FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN PEEL

experiencing hunger is warranted. The Region of Halton undertook a similar exercise which is detailed in the report "Food for All, A Blueprint for Regional Collaboration in Halton to Acquire and Distribute More, Fresher Food to Halton's Hungry". In 2006, the Halton region process which involved the Region of Halton, United Way, an external consultant, logistics expert and two food bank representatives resulted in the creation of a region wide system of food acquisition and distribution and launched Refresh Foods, a regional hub.

In 2009, United Way of Peel Region and the Region of Peel held consultations with Peel food organizations which resulted in the creation of the Food Distribution in Peel Network, chaired by Donna Carignan of St. Jerome's Parish in Brampton and Manny Castellino of the Mississauga Farmer's Market (see Appendix I). The Network's original objective was the creation of a sustainable plan that would increase the amount, quality and culturally appropriate food in the charitable food system by connecting agencies in Peel to each other and to the Provincial Food Distribution Network.

Over the course of their time together, the Network articulated core values to help guide their direction:

- a) **Poverty is not okay** - Our aim is to address the root causes of poverty by meeting the various needs of clients by feeding and connecting them to relevant services;
- b) **We believe in what we do** - Network members are passionate about the people they serve and are willing to work with each other to better serve the community;
- c) **Stronger together than apart** - Network members are willing to share their experiences, time and resources with each other;
- d) **Accountable** - Network members rely on volunteers and the community for food and monetary donations and are responsible stewards of their donations.

Other stakeholders such as the Peel Funder's Consortium, Peel Federation of Agriculture, City of Brampton, the Ontario Association of Food Banks, the Mississauga Fruit Tree and EcoSource, also expressed interest in the work of the Network and in finding ways of contributing to achieve the overall goal.

A Council report titled, "Food Distribution in Peel" was tabled in June 2010 with the following proposed direction:

With the organization of the Brampton agencies under the leadership of Salvation Army Brampton, Ste. Louise Outreach and Knight's Table, staff will shift the focus of the food distribution project from relationship building among members and the sector, and identifying challenges and barriers to working with the five largest Network members, namely The Mississauga Food Bank, Eden Community Food Bank, Salvation Army Brampton, Caledon Community Services and the Ontario Association of Food Banks (OAFB), to attempt to create a broader, more systemic regional solution. Bridges Consulting will continue to work with staff, these members and other stakeholders to find solutions to the challenges and barriers identified by these organizations and create a plan for moving forward, with the aim of bringing the process to a clear resolution by the end of 2010.

Regional Council supported the direction with Resolution #2010-621, "That staff continue to engage and support food organizations in Peel in working toward a collective solution of providing more and fresher food to Peel residents".

February 15, 2011

FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN PEEL

Staff met with these stakeholders on several occasions between June and October 2010. All of the organizations reinforced their commitment to improve the charitable food system in Peel, and felt that the steps taken in their respective area municipalities would accomplish this goal. As an illustration of how sharing and distribution of food could take place between Brampton and Mississauga, the United Way of Peel Region facilitated two large donations of non-food product from one of their core donors. Both Salvation Army Brampton and The Mississauga Food Bank were contacted by Region of Peel staff and encouraged to access this donation and distribute to their respective members.

2. Report Findings

A report entitled "A Peel Collaborative Project on Food Security" summarizes the work of the Peel Food Distribution Network, including lessons learned, areas of agreement, areas that still require work and possible next steps. The report was prepared with assistance from Regional staff and Bridges Consulting. Network members were asked to share the findings with their Boards of Directors and report back on three questions:

1. Does the report fairly and correctly describe the facts, as well as the diversity of opinions as you see them?
2. How do you respond to the suggestion that in the next phase we undertake some practical projects to assist with moving the Network forward? Or do you have other suggestions for the group to consider?
3. What help is your Board willing to commit to this?

Responses to the questions, as well as feedback about the report was received from many of the Network members and overall, they felt the report accurately captured the facts and diversity of opinion on the issues that prevent them from moving towards a regional collective solution.

Most Network members voiced the opinion that a regional collective system would be more difficult to achieve because there are significant differences between Mississauga and Brampton to achieving the objective of increasing the quantity and quality of food in the system.

The report highlights the current system and its capacity to feed people in need, other regional models that appeal to the Network members as well as areas for future collaborative work.

a) The Charitable Food System in Peel is Diverse

- The Mississauga Food Bank (TMFB) has been working steadily to organize food agencies in Mississauga into a hub and spoke model with seven spokes responsible for clients in one or more postal codes
- TMFB also serves 27 service agencies, such as shelters, where food is a secondary activity;
- TMFB members connect to Ontario Association of Food Banks' (OAFB) Provincial Food Distribution Network (PFDN), which also gets national Food Banks Canada (FBC) donations. However, that still leaves a number of mostly smaller, often faith-based food agencies in Mississauga unconnected to TMFB and OAFB, and its access to food;

February 15, 2011

FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN PEEL

- Until 2010, Brampton and Caledon food agencies were not formally connected to each other or the OAFB; most are small to mid-sized and faith-based;
- Many of these agencies are uncomfortable with the differences they perceive between Brampton/Caledon and Mississauga with respect to access to food;
- It has proven difficult for many players to strike mutually acceptable relationships particularly across geographical boundaries;
- Faith based organizations are an important part of the puzzle.

b) Current Capacity

- Based on the low-income cut-off measure (LICO), 167,000 people in Peel struggle to make ends meet; being below LICO puts someone at risk of struggling to meet their basic expenses;
- Fourteen Peel food agencies collectively touch an estimated 16 per cent of people in poverty (27,440 clients), providing them with an estimated 12.5 per cent of their annual need (3.3 million pounds food per year);
- These 14 agencies, and others like them, do a lot with a little: marshal hundreds of volunteers, manage food drives, and raise dollars, food and in-kind donations;
- Food agencies cannot do it all and are only one small part of the solution to poverty and hunger.

c) Regional Collaborative Models

- Peel Network visited eight other hub models in the province;
- They are all unique – in their history/philosophy, the mix of food they source, how they distribute to members, their governance and member relations;
- Halton Refresh Foods and The Food Bank of Waterloo Region models resonates strongly with the Network; locally, The Mississauga Food Bank model was also of interest;
- There is no perfect model; Peel can learn from other communities, but has to find its own model.

d) Issues Not Yet Resolved

- Leadership & Governance: it is for the Boards of the community food agencies to decide whether and how they wish to continue the process;
- Reliable baseline data: while the Support Group has done an overall assessment of agency capacity (# clients served, pounds distributed), the comparability and accuracy of these data, due to different methodologies used by agencies, may be inadequate for food allocation and 'hub' infrastructure planning;
- System Capacity: Network members identified access to more food as their key challenge, however, key questions that still need to be answered include: how much food would satisfy the current and future needs of food agencies, as well as how much can they accept, and how often?

Without greater understanding and consensus on some of the key issues identified, there is a risk making the wrong resource investment decisions.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN PEEL

3. Network Milestones

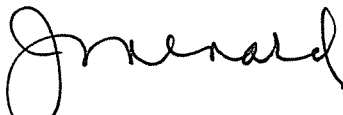
In spite of the issues not yet resolved, several milestones were achieved in the years since the project began:

- Sustained interest in the process – more than twenty-five organizations signed the Network Agreement form and average attendance at the monthly meetings averaged more than thirty organizations and other stakeholders;
- The report “A Peel Collaborative Project on Food Security” provides the first ever comprehensive research on food insecurity in Peel;
- Organizations established and strengthened relationships with each other and in some cases began sharing food, best practices and other resources;
- Under the leadership of Salvation Army Brampton, Ste. Louise Outreach and Knight’s Table, fourteen small faith based organizations have come together and created the Brampton Food Sharing Network. Salvation Army is the Ontario Association of Food Banks member and serves as a hub for the Brampton Network;
- Three organizations stepped forward and indicated a willingness to play a leadership role in ensuring Brampton is able to meet the current and future demand for food in general and fresher, more culturally diverse food in particular.
- In 2010, as part of its three-year strategic plan, The Mississauga Food Bank implemented a new model of food distribution for its members in Mississauga. The new ‘hub and spoke’ model means that TMFB no longer serves clients directly, but distributes food to seven food banks in Mississauga including Eden Community Food Bank (two locations), Seva Food Bank, St. Mary’s Food Bank (two locations), the Malton Food Bank and The Compass.
- The Caledon Community Services/Mars Canada Committee has continued working to develop a plan to achieve a sustainable food bank that provides more, fresher, healthier food for more people in Caledon.

February 15, 2011

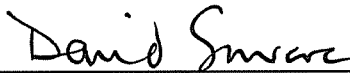
FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN PEEL**CONCLUSION**

Mississauga and Brampton food organizations under the leadership of The Mississauga Food Bank and Salvation Army Brampton respectively, have developed individual models that they believe meets their current needs. Additionally, both Networks have expressed the desire to build on this foundation to better meet the Network's original objective to create a sustainable plan that would increase the amount and quality of food in the charitable food system by connecting agencies in Peel to each other and to the Provincial Food Distribution Network. However, additional efforts and leadership are still required by all players if the system is to provide for the current and future needs of the community. Staff will continue to monitor the activities of the Network and offer assistance where feasible.



Janet Menard

Commissioner of Human Services

Approved for Submission:

D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

For further information regarding this report, please contact Gurpreet Malhotra at extension 4862 or via email at gurpreet.malhotra@peelregion.ca.

Authored By: Adaoma Patterson

c. Legislative Services

February 15, 2011
FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN PEEL

APPENDIX I

Food Distribution in Peel Network

Ontario Association of Food Banks	Ed Borkowski/Nicola Cernik
Knight's Table	Annie Bynoe
Deacon's Cupboard	Belinda Morrow/ Linda Leeder
Eden Community Food Bank	Bill Crawford
Mississauga Fruit Tree	Carlton Allen
EcoSource	Carolyn Bailey /Sarah Fairley
Ste. Louise Food Bank	Catherine Rivera
The Mississauga Food Bank	Chris Hatch
John Howard Society	Debbie Olaes/Peggy Jane Olaes/Kathryn Lynch
St. Jerome's Parish/Feeding the People	Donna Carignan
Grace Mount Zion Food Bank	Edris Thomas
Grace United Church	Eugenie Dover/Erika Friesen
	Farhat Jahan
The Salvation Army Brampton	Gordon Randell
Islamic Forum of Canada	Hafiza Hosein & Azam Hosein
Malton Network/ Holy Cross Breakfast Club	Helene Burrowes
Grace Place/Feeding the People	Jean Leckie
Caledon Community Services	Jo Anna Lenz
Feeding the People	Joe Crump
St. Paul's United Church	K. Grant Kerr
Salvation Army Brampton Citadel	Kathie Sharp
Redemption- Food Kitchen Pantry	Lynda Arthey
The Salvation Army	Major Bert Sharp/Lynne Marshall
Square One Farmers Market/Lion Club	Manuel Castellino
Regeneration	
St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church	Maureen Kelly
Mount Zion Church	Mrs. Patterson/Mrs. Hamilton
St. Mary's Food Bank	Nagy Salib
Harvest Community Services	Papillon McFarlane
Eden Community Food Bank	Ron Saito/Donna Behmer

FOOD DISTRIBUTION IN PEEL

Malton Food Bank

Rukhsana Asghar

Breakfast for Kids/Boys and Girls and Club
Hope Centre

Debbie Smith/Trish Marinoni
Tony Papasidero

Society of St. Vincent de Paul
Supportive Housing In Peel
St. Anne Food Assistance
City of Brampton

William Graham /Shirley Graham
Naima Adan Ismael
Jacqueline Regan
Jessica Skup

Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group