



The Regional Municipality of Durham
To: The Planning Committee
From: Commissioner of Planning
Report No.: 2009-P-17
Date: February 24, 2009

SUBJECT:

Food Security Policy – Growing Durham Regional Official Plan Amendment,
File: D12-05

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a) THAT Planning Committee authorize the consideration of the proposed policy amendments supporting food security, outlined in Section 5 of Commissioner's Report No. 2009-P-17, as part of the Growth Plan Implementation amendment;
 - b) THAT Commissioner's Report No. 2009-P-17 be forwarded to the Health and Social Services and Finance and Administration Committees for information; and
 - c) THAT a copy of Commissioner's Report No. 2009-P-17 be forwarded to the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Durham Federation of Agriculture and the GTA Agricultural Action Committee.
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REPORT:

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 On December 10, 2008 Regional Council adopted the following recommendation (as amended) of the Health and Social Services Committee:

“THAT the Planning Commissioner report back on how to consider incorporating Food Security Principles into the “Growing Durham” growth conformity plan including the following key actions recommended from the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's Food Security Strategy:

- i) Support provincial and local advocacy efforts to reduce household poverty;
 - ii) Increase the capacity of community service providers to build food skills in 'priority population' groups, including low-income individuals and families;
 - iii) Help build communities where healthy foods within easy reach of everyone (e.g. focus on food security and the built environment);
 - iv) Support of community actions to help build a healthy local food-based economy (includes helping to increase the demand for locally grown food, and raising awareness/appreciation of our local food production system)."
- 1.2 This Purpose of this report is to respond to the above resolution by:
- i) Examining the concept of Food Security and what Durham Region is currently doing;
 - ii) Reviewing the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit Food Security Strategy and outlining how current Official Plan policies align with the principles;
 - iii) Examining the American Planning Association (APA) Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning; and
 - iv) Proposing policies on food security, for inclusion in the Durham Regional Official Plan (ROP) Growth Plan implementation amendment.
- 2. DURHAM FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVES**
- 2.1 Community Food Security is defined as a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice. (Hamm and Bellows, Journal of Nutrition Education and Behaviour. 2003; 35:27-43.)
- 2.2 Food Security is an important issue in the prevention of Chronic Diseases and the promotion of overall health.

Health Initiatives

2.3 The Health Department annually assesses community food security in Durham Region, by monitoring food affordability using the Nutritious Food Basket Protocol. In addition, the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System survey is used to determine the overall percentage of our population that is considered to be food insecure. The survey identifies respondents as food insecure, if they experienced one or more of the following:

- did not have enough food due to lack of money;
- ate poor quality or variety of foods due to lack of money;
- worried about not enough food due to lack of money; and
- did not have a place to go if they didn't actually have enough food.

Food security was last measured in Durham Region in 2006. The results showed that 9.1 percent of Durham Region residents ages 18 and older were food insecure.

2.4 The Health Department's approach to promoting food security includes strategies under four main competency areas:

Health Communication:

The Health Department increases public awareness of food insecurity issues by implementing local communication strategies. Each year, the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket for Durham Region is publicized. The Food Resource Directory is a listing of locations where food is available throughout Durham Region and further support resources including pamphlets and educational materials are made available at a variety of locations for populations experiencing food insecurity.

Health Education:

Community Food Advisors are trained volunteers in the area of safe and healthy food selection, handling, preparation and storage. These volunteers provide opportunities for skill development in the areas of food preparation

and healthy eating practices around Durham Region for a variety of populations. Key topics for vulnerable populations include food security and healthy eating on a budget.

Capacity Building:

Durham Region Health Department works with community agencies and groups to improve access to healthy foods on an ongoing basis. Examples of this work include the Durham Lives! Food Charter working group, the Durham Child Nutrition Project Advisory Committee and the Community Food Advisor Advisory Committee.

Policy Development:

The Health Department works with municipalities to support healthy public policies and the creation of supportive environments regarding access to healthy foods. In addition, the Health Department has worked closely with community partners in the development of the Durham Region Food Charter.

Durham Lives!

- 2.5 Food security for Durham Region is an initiative also being pursued by Durham Lives!, a coalition of community agencies and individuals that promote, among other matters, healthy eating. The Regional Health Department is a member of the Food Charter Working Group of the Durham Lives! coalition.
- 2.6 In 2006, Durham Lives! Food Wellness Group initiated developing a food charter for Durham (refer to Attachment 1). The charter “presents a vision for a food secure Durham Region with access to quality food for its residents and protection of the whole food system as a foundation for population health. A food secure Durham is a place where food production, processing and distribution, is environmentally sustainable, socially just and financially sound.”

- 2.7 This vision is founded on three principles:
- i) Planning food into our future – cultivate institutional supports through education, research, laws, services and foster coordination of regional efforts through key Regional strategic planning documents;
 - ii) Local agriculture, sustainability and self-reliance; and
 - iii) Food for all and human health.
- 2.8 Durham Lives! representatives presented the food charter to Regional Council on February 18, 2009. A Symposium is also scheduled for March 26, 2009 in Durham Region Headquarters LL-C to “share the status of the Durham Region Food Charter with key stakeholders, and develop a collective vision for its future.”

Economic Development Initiatives

- 2.9 The Economic Development and Tourism Department is involved in the Durham Lives! Coalition Food Charter initiative with representation on the Food Charter Working Group.
- 2.10 In support of food security, new programs are continually being developed for the agriculture and agri-food sectors. The Rural Economic Development Officer coordinates several initiatives and programs to assist the Region’s agricultural industry, for example:
- i) Durham Farm Fresh Association; a non-profit Association with sixty two member farms and orchards, two restaurants and 8 farmer’s markets across Durham;
 - ii) Farm Market Makeover Workshop: assisting to make farm markets more customer friendly and better able to compete with larger retail operations;
 - iii) Agricultural Training Needs Survey: To assist in seeking and developing training programs pertinent to the industry needs;

- iv) Farm Connections: Annual three day event including livestock demonstrations, targeting Grade 3 Elementary students to raise awareness of where food comes from;
- v) Gates Open – Savour Durham: Fall annual two day public self guided tour of local farms, restaurants and bed and breakfast operations throughout Durham, featuring local operations and local food;
- vi) Apple/Berry Tracking Pilot Project: Research and tracking of apple and berry operation approaches from growing stage to table; and
- vii) Capturing Local Food Opportunities Research: Staff hired to implement Local Food Opportunities initiatives for the next four years.

3. THE SIMCOE MUSKOKA PRINCIPLES

- 3.1 The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) resolution considered by Health and Social Services Committee, and adopted by Council urges the Province to proceed with its poverty reduction strategy, taking the cost of a nutritious basket, which is calculated annually by boards of health, into account.
- 3.2 In developing this position, the SMDHU noted that the preparation of a Health Unit Food Security Strategy was underway proposing the four “actions” referenced in 1.1 of this report. Regional Council has asked how food security principles and the four “actions” could be included in the ROP as part of the Growing Durham amendment process.

4. PLANNING INITIATIVES

- 4.1 The SMDHU actions as well as the principles identified by Durham Lives!, have been considered in the context of the current policies of the Regional Official Plan (ROP).
- 4.2 One objective is to reduce household poverty. The ROP addresses this from a land use perspective through policies that promote and facilitate the

- development of the Region to its economic potential, providing complete communities that include a balance of jobs and population. A long range target is to provide 1 job for every 2 persons living in the Region to minimize travel and maximize access to local jobs.
- 4.3 Another objective is to ensure that all residents have the knowledge necessary to pursue food security. The ROP facilitates the pursuit of knowledge by accommodating educational and social service facilities in our communities. The Plan directs community facilities to locations that are visible and accessible to residents, preferably in close proximity to existing and future transit routes.
- 4.4 A third objective focuses on the need to build communities where healthy foods are within easy reach of everyone; food security and built environment. A direction of the ROP is to protect agricultural lands for future generations. Over 80 percent of the Region's land base is protected by the Greenbelt Plan.
- 4.5 A goal for prime agricultural areas is "to support a healthy and productive agricultural industry as an important element of the Region's heritage, identity and economic base." Other policies discourage fragmentation of the agricultural land base to secure long term viability. The ROP also permits farm gate sales and retail stands for the sale of agricultural products from a farm. These and other policies facilitate local food production and access to food, locally.
- 4.6 The Growth Plan conformity amendment to the ROP will reinforce food security, by maintaining a strong distinction between urban and rural areas. The vast majority of growth is directed to urban centres in a form that is to be transit supportive.
- 4.7 Overall, the ROP has many elements that support and facilitate the comprehensive food security work of the Health Department, the Durham Lives! Food Charter initiative and the SMDHU actions.
- 4.8 Reducing poverty, promoting knowledge on food security and making healthy foods easily accessible, go well beyond the ambit of the Official Plan. Federal

- and Provincial programs, producers and suppliers of food (the supply chain) and the actions of individuals and families and many more factors, all play a part in ensuring food security.
- 4.9 For example, through the efforts of the Durham Agricultural Advisory Committee (DAAC) and the Planning, Works and Finance and Administration Committees, the Region has taken action on such matters as farm land assessment and farm vehicle safety to enhance the viability of the local agricultural industry. DAAC has also held an annual farm tour to facilitate an enhanced public knowledge of the agricultural industry in Durham.
- 4.10 The Region, through the efforts of Councillor Pearce and the Planning Department, also supports the activities of the GTA Agricultural Action Committee in implementing the GTA Agricultural Action Plan aimed at keeping the GTA agricultural industry thriving and competitive. A key guiding principle is recognition that GTA agriculture is distinct in its proximity to a large market with beneficial climate and soils, advantages that are unique and must be capitalized on and marketed.
5. **THE APA POLICY GUIDE ON COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL FOOD PLANNING**
- 5.1 The APA, following an extensive consultative process, prepared a Policy Guide for food planning. The Guide is very comprehensive, examining a broad range of factors as a basis for the policy.
- 5.2 The APA Policy Guide seeks to strengthen the connections between “traditional planning and the emerging field of community and regional food planning”. In doing so, the guide identifies activities that go well beyond the scope of land use planning, recognizing other agencies and bodies necessary to facilitate food security.
- 5.3 The Guide recognizes that to effectively address food security, all of the major local planning functions, in the broadest sense, must be integrated. This includes health and human services, public safety, land use, economic development, transportation, environment, parks and recreation and

agricultural preservation. This will require collaboration between “groups representing diverse interests such as anti-hunger, nutrition, farming, and environmental issues; span many government agencies; and include multiple levels of government in dialogues.”

- 5.4 The scope of the Guide includes seven General Policies, under which 26 Specific Policies are identified. Under the Specific Policies, 90 possible actions are presented. The actions include, for example:
- i) Assessing food needs in the case of emergency – earthquake, hurricane, terrorist attack;
 - ii) Planning for local and regional food reserves;
 - iii) Educating citizens on food related emergency preparedness;
 - iv) Preparing economic development plans for food production;
 - v) Analyzing factors that support or constrain the viability of agriculture;
 - vi) Protecting prime agricultural land;
 - vii) Supporting the development of community gardens, farm/garden stands, and farmer’s markets;
 - viii) Preparing regional food resource guides;
 - ix) Assisting farmers in diversifying their products to meet consumer demand;
 - x) Supporting transit connections between low mobility neighborhoods and food source locations;
 - xi) Limiting the development of fast food outlets near schools and other youth centred facilities; and
 - xii) Supporting actions that prevent potential contamination of agriculture and food products from animal operations.
- 5.5 Many of the initiatives suggested are, to the extent possible, addressed in the ROP including the elements noted in 3.0 above. Many are within the purview of other Regional and agency programs. However, as previously noted, the APA Policy is very comprehensive and goes well beyond the scope of land use planning and what can be achieved in an Official Plan.
- 5.6 The APA Policy Guide can be viewed on the APA web site at www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/food.htm.

6. REGIONAL OFFICIAL PLAN

6.1 Having examined the initiatives, it is felt that the ROP policies can be further enhanced to more specifically recognize food security, the need for equal access to healthy and secure food, as a policy objective.

6.2 To achieve this, the following ROP policy changes/amendments are recommended, as part of the Growing Durham ROPA:

- i) Amend Section 1 Basis, Goals and Directions, to add a new Direction as follows:

“supporting *food security* for all residents of the Region;”

- ii) Amend Section 8.1, Urban System Goals, to add a new Subsection as follows:

“To provide convenient access to fresh locally grown produce and other healthy food from sources such as farm markets, community gardens and grocery stores;”

- iii) Amend Section 9.1, Rural System Goals, to add a new Subsection as follows:

“To support community *food security*”;

- iv) Amend Section 9A.1, Prime Agricultural Areas General Policies, to add a new Subsection as follows:

“Prime Agricultural Areas shall be protected as a significant element of the Region’s economy and a secure source of food.”

- v) Amend Section 15A Definitions, to add a new definition:

“Food Security: a situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a

sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.”

- 6.3 These changes will introduce the concept of food security to the ROP. As food security initiatives in Durham Region mature, consideration can be made for further enhancements to the ROP.

7. **CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 The research undertaken in the preparation of this report clearly indicates that food security is a very broad issue crossing the mandates of all levels of government, a number of Regional Departments, many public agencies, food producers and suppliers, and ultimately consumers. The Health Department partnered with local community agencies in the Durham Lives! coalition, to establish a Food Charter for Durham Region. The results of this initiative will establish a framework for further action on the food security front.
- 7.2 It is recommended that Planning Committee authorize the consideration of the proposed policy amendments supporting food security outlined in Section 5, as part of the Growth Plan Implementation amendment.
- 7.3 This report has been prepared in collaboration with the Health Department and Economic Development Department.

A.L. Georgieff, M.C.I.P., R.P.P.
Commissioner of Planning

RECOMMENDED FOR PRESENTATION TO COMMITTEE

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Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment: 1. Durham Region Food Charter

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Durham Region

Food Charter

The Durham Region Food Charter is a vision for a food secure Durham Region with access to quality food for its residents and protection of the whole food system as a foundation for population health. A food secure Durham Region is a place where food production, processing and distribution, is environmentally sustainable, socially just and financially sound.

1. Planning Food into Our Future

Ensuring the future of a sustainable local food system will require coordination of thinking for planning. To realize this we will cultivate institutional supports through appropriate educational programs, research, laws, services, etc. Further, we would foster coordination of our regional food security by inclusion of access to food and/or food systems in key regional strategic planning documents:

- Regional Official Plan and municipal official plans
- Community Strategic Plan
- Master Plan for emergency preparedness

2. Local Agriculture, Sustainability and Self-Reliance

Cultivation of local agriculture is important. A sustainable local food system will improve economic viability of Durham Region's farm industry, improve air and food quality by decreasing food miles, and secure a regional food supply now and for future generations.

Durham Region residents should expect the application of recognized principles to local agriculture:

- Sustainable development
- Precaution
- Biodiversity

Enhance Access to Locally Produced Food

- Produce foods locally for regional self-reliance and food security;
- Support convenient access to healthy and affordable, locally produced foods in neighborhoods through alternate food retail channels such as local food markets, street vendors, convenience stores, etc.;
- Encourage institutional food-service use of locally produced foods;
- Emphasize the sale of locally produced foods in grocery stores and super centres.

Build Capacity through Local Food Production

- Develop local food processing capacity – e.g. communal canneries, freezing plants, incubator kitchens;
- Support networks that provide information about local food choices and availability – e.g. farmers' markets, urban agriculture mapping;
- Support agriculture initiatives – e.g. community gardens, traditional agriculture, community shared agriculture;
- Foster communication between food producers, community groups and other key stakeholders in developing regional food system solutions;
- Regularly assess regional food security.

Environmental Stewardship

- Support strategies for sustainable food waste management;
- Protect agricultural land for production;
- Protect fish habitat;
- Ensure supply and quality of water for local agriculture;
- Support training choices on ecological farming;
- Promote sustainable food production.

3. Food for All and Human Health

Affordable, nutritious, safe, personally acceptable food is a basic human right. Food is also an experience that covers skill in selection, knowing what to do with it and ties to our traditions and culture.

Accessibility and Social Equity

- Advocate for social equity through increased social assistance benefits, jobs at living wages, adequate transportation and affordable housing to enable individuals and families to afford Durham's Nutritious Food Basket;
- Support access to nourishing food to meet the nutrition needs of all Durham Region residents – from as early as birth with breastfeeding and throughout all stages and experiences of life.

Education

- Support nutrition communication for all that includes: food knowledge and selection based on Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide, cooking skills, promotion of food safety and social marketing to raise awareness and encourage consumers to purchase locally produced, seasonal foods;
- Support community food programs and planning that promotes health and prevents disease.

Culture of Food

- Celebrate cultural diversity and food traditions;
- Enhance the dignity and joy of growing, preparing, and eating food.