

London's Food Charter

The London Food Charter emerged from the community's shared priorities of eliminating poverty and increasing healthy eating. This Charter establishes a vision of London as a food secure community. **Food security** exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Declaration of the World Summit on Food Security, 2009).

This Charter will guide and inform all levels of government, businesses, non-profit organizations, communities, families and individuals by linking sustainable food security policies to community action.

VISION: London is a food secure community.

PREAMBLE

All Londoners have the right to enjoy optimal health and to reach their full potential. However, an increasing number of Londoners lack one of the key components of health and well-being - food security. Due to physical, economic, educational, and other barriers, many are unable to obtain safe and nutritious food essential for good health. In addition, there are growing concerns about the sustainability of our local food system and the impacts of the global economy. By working towards a food secure community, we can ensure the well-being of all Londoners.

BACKGROUND

Through the leadership of London's Child and Youth Network, a group of experts, professionals, and advocates came together in fall 2009 to discuss the issues Londoners face related to food security. This conversation began the development of a Food Charter.

*The **Child and Youth Network (CYN)** is comprised of over 130 local organizations working together to improve outcomes for children, youth and families. With the vision of "Happy, healthy children and youth today; caring, creative, responsible adults tomorrow" the CYN's work is focused on four priority areas:*

- ending poverty*
- increasing healthy eating and healthy physical activity*
- making literacy a way of life*
- creating a family-centred service system*



"You struggle with everyday life...getting your basic needs. But it's hard because I don't eat very often. I eat like maybe once a day. I know we can't afford to get groceries every week." (26 year old mother, London Ontario)

MISSION

The City of London and its people are committed to creating a food secure community where there is:

1. A just and sustainable food system that contributes to the economic, ecological, and social well-being of our city and region which balances local production and fair international agricultural trade;
2. Sufficient personal income and resources to ensure safe, nutritious foods in adequate amounts for everyone everyday;
3. Ready access to quality grocery stores, farmers' markets and other food sources which provide safe, nutritious and culturally-appropriate foods;
4. Opportunity for residents to become food literate; and,
5. Opportunity for residents to grow and sell food within the City.

“Londoners living in inner-city neighbourhoods of low socioeconomic status have very poor levels of access to supermarkets by foot; indeed, there are no supermarkets in neighbourhoods that locals would associate with ‘downtown living’” (Larsen and Gilliland, 2008).

VALUES

Health and Well-Being – all Londoners have opportunities for optimal physical and mental health

Equity – There are sufficient resources to ensure dignified access to food

Sustainability – There is a reliable, secure and ecologically responsible food system

Collaboration and Partnership – Sharing responsibility and working together will improve food security

Awareness – Education is vital to improving knowledge on food security

Celebration – Communities come together in celebration of culture and diversity of food



COMMITMENTS & ACTION STEPS

In order to support a healthy community, five key commitments were identified along with specific action steps for each.

To implement the commitments, the London community will:

- Establish an accountability structure responsible for overseeing the principles of the Food Charter;
- Encourage cross-sectoral collaboration and partnerships in developing food system solutions; and,
- Evaluate and assess activities on an ongoing basis.

Government, businesses, non-profit organizations, communities, families and individuals all have a role to play in improving food security.



Commitments

Action Steps

Assess existing food-related policies, programs and services and develop new ones as required.

Explore opportunities and advocate for the adoption of local food procurement policies in public and private sectors.

Investigate and report on current food security policies and practices that affect low-income Londoners.

Support and advocate for local, provincial and national food strategies, to refine current policies which will ensure that all government organizations incorporate the importance of safe and nutritious food into their programs.

Develop strategies to eliminate food deserts in London.

Monitor the extent of food deserts in London.

Develop strategies to eliminate food deserts by engaging residents and all sectors of the food system.

Educate Londoners on food deserts through an awareness campaign.

Support the development of additional local farmers' markets and community gardens.

Support an ecological and economically viable food system which includes local farmers, producers, businesses, and consumers and is in balance with global food systems.

Increase the urban/rural dialogue to inform strategies that support local sustainable food production.

Develop strategies to ensure that the food system provides safe and nutritious food.

Develop education and awareness strategies to encourage all members of the community to expand and integrate nutritious food options into daily activities.

Build on existing education and branding campaigns to increase knowledge of nutritious food options.

Promote neighbourhood educational opportunities regarding growing, meal planning, cooking, and preservation methods that are targeted to youth, families, seniors, and other specific groups.

Encourage healthy habits in the workplace by promoting incentive programs.

Bring people together through food in celebration of culture and diversity.

Encourage Londoners to include and/or increase culturally diverse foods in all city-wide or neighbourhood events.

Develop tools to educate and celebrate the diversity of food.

Increase "culinary tourism" to promote healthy and diverse foods in the community.



DEFINITION OF TERMS

Culinary tourism

The promotion of a community's unique food to residents and tourists by encouraging experiences such as visiting local restaurants, grocery stores, specialty shops or attending events where farmers showcase their produce.

"The pursuit of unique and memorable culinary experiences of all kinds"

(Source: International Culinary Tourism Association, www.culinarytourism.org).

Food literacy

Knowledge of food production, preparation, nutritional content, and its importance within different cultures to allow consumers to make informed decisions.

"Food Literacy is the ability to organize one's everyday nutrition in a self-determined, responsible and enjoyable way" (Source: www.food-literacy.org).

Food secure community

A community where a diverse and sustainable food production system supplies safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food, and where all residents are food literate and have sufficient income and access to ensure adequate food on a daily basis.

Local

Food grown and/or produced in southwestern Ontario or across the province.

For further information about London's Food Charter:

Email: cyn@london.ca

Or visit: http://www.london.ca/Child_Youth_Network/

