

## TORONTO FOOD POLICY COUNCIL 2001: Ten Years of Getting Things Done

### Food and Hunger Action

Because of structural food insecurity and the great social costs and injustice in having so many hungry people without access to nourishing food the TFPC has concentrated its efforts and:

- Wrote and championed the City of Toronto Declaration on Food and Nutrition in 1991.
- Produced a ground-breaking series of 12 Discussion papers on Food Systems Policy.
- Developed feasibility study of not-for-profit healthy food delivery system for Toronto's low-income citizens. Operational control assumed by FoodShare in 1992. Named the Field-to-Table program, it provides affordable nourishing food from Ontario to 15,000 low-income Toronto citizens each month. As part of the steering committee, and as City staff, the TFPC worked to identify opportunities, thus TFPC helped to get provincial grants, the Field-to-Table warehouse 200 Eastern Ave. itself and trucks and other resources to the project.
- Provided fundraising assistance that allowed community organisations to obtain \$3.5 million for projects increasing people's access to affordable nourishing food in the early 1990's.
- Helped initiate policy and program co-operation between many players in the food security movement. This included the Food 2002 discussions between all sectors of the food system on how to build a more resilient equitable and just system that serves more Ontario citizens.
- Designed Canada's first Food Access Grants Program, approved by Toronto City Council in 1995, and then administered the program 1996-98. Directed the distribution of \$2.4 million in (FAP) program. This money went to direct purchase for kitchen hardware for 180 schools and social agencies.
- Our role on the Red Cross Hunger Task Force helped with coalition building resulting in general co-operation in World Food Day presentations and policy development with senior levels of government.
- We also helped develop the launch of an information service listing local food action program for people in need. This became the FoodLink Hotline sponsored by FoodShare and the Community Information Toronto.
- Provided crucial staff and resources to the formation and work of the Food and Hunger Action Committee of City Council and their two reports Planting the Seeds (2000) and A Growing Season (2001). City Council's adoption of the Phase I report are evidence of the city's ongoing policy commitments to food security. The "Planting the Seeds" report noted the verve, energy and diversity of the city's community groups testifying to the creativity and openness that flourish in a city in which people feel that their voices are heard.
- The City's long-term investment in healthy public policy expertise continues to pay off, as the range of innovative proposals tabled by the Toronto Food Policy Council and others

indicate. There is still much to be done. Phase II of the Food and Hunger report is crucial to that lead. It is published as the “Growing Season” on the City’s Web site.

## **Health**

It is clear that the long term costs to the health system of having poor nutrition and food access to large number of citizens are astronomical and because the changing food system contributes to emerging new diseases the TFPC has endeavoured to:

- Conducted critical research and advocacy on bovine growth hormone licensing issues, contributing to a campaign that organised consumers and agencies to successfully oppose federal government licensing of Bovine Growth Hormone, a biotechnology drug used in milk production and suspected of causing health problems in humans and cows.
- Co-authored the Ontario Public Health Association’s Food and Nutrition Strategy Statement, If adopted, this would commit the provincial government to fund programs to improve citizens’ access to affordable nutritious food.
- Undertook major work on future cancer prevention initiatives, centred on research in nutritional and dietary risk factors. Did this ongoing work in the public health field, with the Ontario Public Health Association and participated in the formation of Toronto cancer prevention coalitions.
- Leadership role in forming the Greater Toronto Food Policy Commission uniting the City and regional Boards of Health in biotechnology discussions
- Co-wrote Is Food the next Public Health Challenge Paper to Board of Health in 1998. Considered as a public health policy formulation document for the 21st century.
- The TFPC was very active along with Toronto Public Health and many other organisations in the Breastfeeding Network of Metropolitan Toronto, and played key roles in research, analysis social marketing campaigns and coalition building on this important issue. Breastfeeding is a crucial public health promotion issue with myriad health benefits for babies, mothers, families and society.
- Promoted the Innocenti Declaration of UNICEF and the World Health Organisation, in public policy, cumulating in the “Mother friendly workplace” breastfeeding promotion campaign in the city of Toronto making city hall a place for breastfeeding. We worked with many allies on preventing violations of the WHO code on the marketing of breastmilk substitutes to nursing mothers.
- Helped create Ontario’s first Green Community food program that helped consumers buy food in a way that is better for their health and environment.

- Founding member of Student Nutrition Coalition and helped in the expansion of school food programs in the City from 53 to 350. Helped persuade the provincial government to provide \$3 million to student nutrition programs.
- Active in movement to promote nutritious home-made baby food and questioning the quality, market monopolisation, messaging, and cost of commercial baby foods along with FoodShare and the Centre for Science in the Public Interest.

### **Agricultural Land Preservation and Urban Planning**

Since long-term food security means that we need farmland in and near the city and that we must begin to account for the true cost of haphazard urban sprawl on Canada's prime agricultural lands. We wrote extensive contributions to many planning consultative processes including:

- ◆ Commission on Planning and Development Reform in Ontario (Sewell Commission) Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs discussion paper on Agricultural Land Preservation in Ontario.
- ◆ Ontario Bill 163 (Planning Act) and Comprehensive Set of Policy Statements, the Reformed Planning Act (Bill 20) and the new Provincial Policy Statement.
- ◆ Report of the Greater Toronto Area Task Force (Golden Report)
- ◆ Contributed to the City of Toronto existing Official Plan and draft Official Plan 2001 (submission called Food Secure City).
- ◆ Submissions also made to the City of Toronto Strategic Plan, and Environmental Plan.

### **Economic Development**

Since 10% of the jobs in the City are in the Food sector and since many trade and economic changes have affected this sector and because income is a key need to improve food security the TFPC has had an active role in promoting economic development at many scale s of this sector.

- Worked with several governments and business and community on the need for a new food-processing centre in Toronto, to retain industrial jobs and promote environmentally-sound approaches to food processing. Called the Toronto Food Fair proposal, the initiative helped to profile small food businesses as an essential part of a job creation strategy.
- Worked with the City of Toronto Economic Development Division on consolidated health regulations approval process for small food processing businesses.
- Undertook initial research on Commercial Kitchen Incubators and forwarded that to the City of Toronto Economic Development Division and FoodShare. This led to a 2,000 sq. Foot Toronto Commercial Kitchen Incubator in 1997, installed at 200 Eastern Ave.
- Initiated a "Buy Ontario" food program involving Huron County farmers and 8 Ontario Hospitals, to increase hospital purchase of local food and increase farm revenues

- Worked with city staff and many CED groups in a steering committee process to form a Local Economic Development strategy for the City of Toronto, adopted in 1997.
- Organised a series of business development educational workshops for Food Access Program Grant recipients on project planning, food handling, distribution and marketing.
- Promoted Farmer's markets in Toronto in talks and action with several BIA's and aided the successful development of the Junction Farmers Market. Advocates to the Economic Development Committee and the Board of Health on the benefits of harmonising the Civic Centres Farmers Markets administration.

### **Urban Agriculture & Food Waste Recovery**

Current food systems are not cyclical, but linear and long-distance, with the focus on production and consumption. Consequently, they use vast quantities of synthetic fertilisers and non-renewable fuels to move food around. To begin to eliminate garbage and integrate production:

- We promote the redesign of Toronto's urban infrastructure to an environmentally sound food system. Designed as production - consumption - recycle semi-closed loop. We want to adopt a more sustainable model that mimics the energy pathways and cycles of nature.
- We advocate that the City should completely capture its food wet waste stream. A principle of no net loss of urban nutrient resources meaning establishing a natural cycling which produces feedstock for urban agriculture, community gardening and brownfield remediation. These processes can include animal feed, compost, mulch, and biogas energy.
- TFPC served on the Steering Committee of the Ministry of Environment and Energy's Wet Waste Strategic Planning process (STEWWR)
- Participated in several community composting and neighbourhood scale composting projects such as Toronto Urban Nutrient Recovery Committee in the Broadview-Gerrard neighbourhood and the Greenest City worm project in Kensington Market neighbourhood.
- A TFPC report to the Board of Health asking for a one-tonne per day pilot composting project resulted in Works and Environment Department undertaking one 1997.
- Participated in the Metro Wet Waste sub-committee, resulting in 6 composting projects.
- Organised and co-ordinated a half day workshop at the 1998 Moving the Economy Conference in Toronto. This major workshop focused on the environmental effects of food miles travelled.
- Working with the community greening movement we propose studying compost in association with scientifically selective crops to remediate certain brownfield sites.

- Contracted for and completed a pre-feasibility study from the Toronto Atmospheric Fund on a composting greenhouse project, one that captures heat, nutrients and CO2 gas for a proposed community based greenhouse business.
- 1999 at request of The Environmental Task Force, submitted Feeding the City from the Back Forty Report. As an overview of how Toronto could plan to produce 25% of it's fruits and vegetables within the City by 2025. Included in the TFPC submission to the Official Plan.
- Initiated and organised the 1st North American Conference on Urban Agriculture, March 6, 2000 in Philadelphia. This conference brought together 100 participants to hear from civic officials, economic development officers, growers, brokers and buyers.
- Founded the Rooftop Garden Resource Group and spearheaded the establishment of Greenroof research and promotion of a greenroof industry in Canada.
- Initiated the City Hall GreenRoof project in 1999.
- Member of the advisory group for the CMHC study Greenbacks from Greenroofs; Creating a New Industry in Canada and hosted a conference of the same name in 1998.

### **Community Gardens**

Since contact with the food system can begin in a garden and because community gardens have so many social and environmental benefits (they grow community, food, leadership, recover compost and promote physical and emotional health) we have actively:

- ❖ Lead the effort for a community gardening promotion strategy in the City of Toronto, assisting expansion from 50 community gardens in 1991 to 122 in 2001.
- ❖ Chaired Inter-departmental working group that crafted report in support of community gardening. Called Supports for Urban Food Production: Creating a Garden City, 1993.
- ❖ We played an international role with the American Community Gardening Association and conferences presentations and networking in Europe and South Africa.
- ❖ Key support for the Alex Wilson community garden Park in downtown Toronto 1997
- ❖ Showed leadership in joint efforts with community founded GROW T.O.GETHER Community Gardeners, and it's successor, the Toronto Community Gardening Network which we co-chair.
- ❖ Chaired the School garden and Compost committee at the Toronto Board of Education (TBE), 1992-1998 reporting to two TBE sub-committees, Environmental Issues and Health and Physical Education. Conducted 25 workshops for parents and teacher in this period and completed official guidelines manual for the many school garden and compost projects.

### **Communications , Capacity building & Public Education**

Because outreach, education and community capacity on food systems issues are so important to framing food security as a crucial public policy investment we have made strides to :

- Have made many speeches and slide show presentations on community food security, food systems issues, food policy development ideas and sustainable and urban agriculture to universities classes, environmental and community groups, and conferences.
- Played key organising role in the International Urban Food Systems Conference in association with the Ryerson University Centre for Studies in Food Security.
- Built and maintained operational food security Resource Centre used by the general public, researchers and university students.
- Presented at the 1997 Jane Jacobs Ideas that Matter conference, and documented many Toronto Public Health Division presentations made during that month
- We have been members of and worked with many boards and agencies including:
  - American Community Gardening Association
  - Community Food Security Coalition
  - FoodShare Toronto,
  - HungerWatch
  - Coalition for a Green Economic Recovery
  - Ryerson University Centre for Studies in Food Security.

#### Academic Liaisons

Finally we have formal ties with the academic world and profit from joint action research

- ❖ Client of three annual Ryerson University Planning students studio projects.
- ❖ Preceptor overseeing two students work projects with the University of Toronto.
- ❖ Served on Masters Degree university committees and Ph.D. student supervision.