Towards Food Security Policy for Canada's Social Housing Sector

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Research Abstract

Despite high levels of economic prosperity in Canada, food insecurity is increasingly being recognized as a crucial issue that lacks a coherent policy response at both federal and local levels. The concentration of low-income populations in social housing makes the problem especially acute for social housing residents and providers. The purpose of this report is to help develop food security policy, with a specific focus on social housing providers in Canadian cities. Using secondary sources, key informant interviews and case study primary research, this study focuses on developing a policy framework around the notion of community food security (CFS), an alternative approach for dealing with food insecurity that applies participatory community development strategies. Drawing on the literature on food security and CFS from a variety of disciplines, the study will review the overall Canadian policy context to assess Canada's past and present performance on food security. Interviews and case studies, in particular, focus on three community food security initiatives in Toronto. The report concludes with CFS policy recommendations aimed at social housing providers in Canadian cities.

Executive Summary

Notwithstanding Canada's stated commitment to the right to food at national and international levels, the number of Canadians defined as food insecure reached 1.1 million in 2004. Yet no level of government in Canada has developed a coherent policy approach to respond to food insecurity. For Canada's low-income population living in urban social housing settings, this situation is even more acute. Policy alternatives are suggested in this research paper for issues of food security for social housing authorities in Canadian cities using the notion of community food security (CFS). CFS applies participatory community development strategies to issues of food insecurity. Although many examples of CFS currently exist, social housing authorities are in an ideal position to develop, implement and maintain these initiatives at an institutional level by incorporating them into coherent food security policy frameworks that focus on community building.

Responses to food insecurity are examined using three case studies based in Toronto. Community gardens at Toronto Community Housing, the Good Food Box and Good Food Markets are highlighted to support the idea of introducing coherent food security policy into the social housing sector.

Fourteen recommendations are made based on a synthesis of interview responses from key informants, a literature review and case studies.

The first set of recommendations is concerned with the role of social housing providers in constructing a coherent food security policy that builds on the health of individuals and communities:

- **Social housing providers should put into practice an organizational commitment to food security**, ensuring that food becomes integral to the organization in recognition of the multiple social and health benefits connected to food secure environments. Food security needs to both become a priority and requires a commitment to helping make food security happen. This commitment requires a strategic plan to make specific programs part of a comprehensive course of action towards enhancing CFS over the long-term.

- **Social housing providers should support the development and maintenance of CFS programming** such as community gardens, farmers' markets, good food boxes and community kitchens by incorporating them into food security policy frameworks that focus on community building.

The second set of recommendations is concerned with program-specific guidelines that support consistent food security policies:

- **Staff support is a necessary resource** for all CFS projects. Staff support is required to support systematic outreach, facilitation and the programs.

- **Support top-down and bottom-up strategies.** Support for CFS requires a balance between enough staff support and community self-organization. Bottom-up strategies require tenant involvement, but at the same time social housing providers need to have a commitment to implementing food security programs.

- **The approach to food security should be multi-pronged** by linking several CFS programs such as community gardens and community kitchens. Multiple programs can work together in a symbiotic relationship while maintaining flexible strategies. As well, the case studies revealed that some strategies work well in some cases, but not in others. The Good Food Box is one example of an excellent program that only appears to work in some specific cases.

- **Integrate food programs with other non-food programming,** such as community economic development and youth programs. In isolated communities, food programs function as a bridge to other programs.

- **Coordinate existing programs**. Before "reinventing the wheel," social housing providers should coordinate already existing resources and talents. Constructing a more systematic policy can help link disparate programs together.

- **Funding for food security programming may be bolstered through community funding streams.** All CFS programs require sustained funding.

- **Consider implementing a community animation program** as part of an overall food security strategy. Community animation is a method of community development in which the worker, living in the region where he or she works, serves as a catalyst to bring together people, knowledge, skills and other resources that will help improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of communities.

- **Recognize the importance of partnerships** to the success of CFS programs. This includes affiliations with community centres and agencies, municipalities, food policy councils and local groups with expertise in food programming such as community gardening networks or other non-profit organizations.

- **Use the many resources already available in social housing buildings,** including buildings, land, access to water, communal space such as kitchens, partnerships and staff skills.

- **Integrate education** about food, nutrition and local farming issues into all CFS programs.

Finally, the third set of recommendations is meant to strengthen support for up-stream policies as part of broad-based food security strategies:

- **Social housing providers should advocate** for income security, social program spending and other initiatives that affect households' financial resources. These up-stream policies are fundamental to any long-term strategy to tackle food security.

- **Provincial and federal levels of government have a responsibility to fund programs that support food security.** Existing federal commitments to support food security and the health of Canadians require support from senior levels of government for CFS programs that enhance individual and community health and well-being.

Towards Food Security Policy for Canada's Social Housing Sector

1. Introduction: A Global Food Crisis?

The current global food crisis – shortages and steeply rising prices – is exacerbating both the incidence and depth of food insecurity. Pushed by rising fuel prices, unpredictable weather and high demand, a "'silent tsunami' of hunger is sweeping the world's most desperate nations," according to a World Food Programme representative (Stringer, 2008). This has created a host of humanitarian, socio-economic, developmental, political and security-related challenges and, most notably, immediate hunger needs. Although most analysts believe the current acute crisis will eventually end, "underlying it is a basic problem that will only intensify unless we recognize it and try to remedy it" (Sen, 2008). A fundamental question remains unanswered: How will we address global food insecurity and, in Canada, how we will do so for those most at risk?

1.1 The Question of Food Security in Canada

Food security, as defined by the World Food Summit in 1996, "exists when all people at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (Food and Agriculture Organization, 1996). Often listed among the social determinants of health, food security is clearly a determinant of many things including life, health, dignity, growth, justice and sustainable development (McIntyre, 2003). Food security is linked in many ways to where individuals and households live and thereby to housing, including – perhaps especially – social housing.

The right to food was first recognized as a fundamental human right in 1948 by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Since then, Canada and many other wealthy nations have committed to national and international agreements promoting the right to food. Despite this commitment to long-term solutions and government action, food security has not been achieved domestically in Canada. Currently, there are 1.1 million Canadians, or 9.2% of the population, living in what are called food-insecure households, while 48.8% of those with the lowest incomes are food insecure (Health Canada, 2004).

Hunger and food insecurity first became apparent in Canada in the 1980s when charitable food assistance programs, later known as food banks, began to appear (McIntyre, 2003). They rapidly proliferated during the 1980s and 1990s. Since 1989, food bank use has risen by 91%, outstripping baseline population growth and suggesting that food insecurity is both a persistent and a growing problem (Canadian Association of Food Banks, 2007; Health Canada, 2004).[1] The situation only worsened during the 1990s as a fundamental restructuring of Canadian social programs took effect. This included cutbacks to federal spending on social programs especially social assistance, welfare services, support for housing and employment insurance. Growth in poverty throughout the country, together with falling real wages and a growing income gap between the wealthiest and the poorest Canadians, has meant that Canada has witnessed increasing levels of food insecurity as one manifestation of growing poverty and inequality (Power, 2005a; McIntyre, 2003).

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[1] Between 2006 and 2007, food bank use declined by 4.4% (Canadian Association of Food Banks, 2007). However, because this decline has been observed for only one year, it is unclear whether this is a trend.

1.2 The Problem: Housing, Food and the Community Food Security Challenge

The tension between housing and food has long been recognized in studies of food security. This rent-food dichotomy often means that housing payments have priority over food purchases in low-income households (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999). Although conventional notions of affordable housing are based on housing costs that are 30% or less of a household's income, a huge segment of the population is spending, increasingly, even more on housing. Thus, as the proportion of income spent on housing increases, resources available to support social determinants of health such as food become secondary priorities for many families (Bryant, 2003). Finally, while the tension between housing and food needs has been well recognized in a general way for some time, several recent studies have found that housing costs can play an important role in determining the food security status of low-income households (Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk, 2007; Burnell, Weber and Edwards, 2006).

At the same time, the approaches to food security in Canada are highly fragmented, inhibiting rational analysis of problems and the development of effective policy (Riches, 2002). In spite of a variety of scattered initiatives to deal with food poverty, there is virtually no official systematic policy at any level of government to tackle the problem of food insecurity in Canada. Traditional responses to food insecurity in Canadian cities have involved charitable food distribution through food banks, an incomplete response to food poverty, which remains to this date.

Community food security (CFS) is an alternative strategy for dealing with food insecurity, an approach to "provide more lasting solutions to problems of food insecurity through the application of more participatory, community development strategies" using local non-emergency, non-charity methods (Tarasuk, 2005: 306). CFS strategies are located in a continuum of food security related to the time frame of the expected outcome (MacRae et al., 1990; McCullum et al., 2005; Kalina, 2001).

While CFS initiatives have tended to be ad hoc and community-based, social housing authorities are in an ideal position to develop and maintain them by incorporating them into food security policy frameworks that also focus on, and harness, community building. The benefits of tackling food insecurity for social housing providers, tenants and their communities are evident from various perspectives, but especially from an approach focusing on health (McIntyre and Tarasuk, 2002). For the population living in social housing, there is an obvious need to address the food security issue. Research shows that even among households in subsidized housing, food spending falls below the cost of a basic nutritious diet, indicating that housing subsidies may not be sufficient to ensure adequate resources for the full basket of goods needed by households, including food (Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk, 2007). While issues of food insecurity are usually equated with financial insecurity, the social housing sector cannot rely solely on whether or not senior levels of government address social program spending and other initiatives that affect households' financial resources, although these up-stream policies are fundamental to any long-term strategy to tackle food security.

1.3 Research Assumptions

This research begins with four basic assumptions. The first is that the existing model of charitable ad hoc food provision cannot solve the food insecurity problem in Canada.

The second assumption is that long-term solutions to food insecurity involve increasing real incomes and reducing poverty through increased government spending on social programs, increased support for affordable housing and a rise in real incomes.

A third assumption is that CFS may be able to play a role in promoting food security. A variety of CFS initiatives are already taking place both in social housing settings and in other low-income communities. These kinds of initiatives are expected to play a role in promoting food security in the social housing sector. Although many examples of CFS already exist in Canadian cities, the challenge lies in transforming these from piecemeal programs into a more substantial, sustainable and broad-based policy.

A fourth assumption is that current ad hoc solutions can be strengthened by moving to sustainable policy frameworks.

1.4 Research Objectives

The purpose of this research is to review, document and recommend policy alternatives for social housing authorities on food security issues in Canadian cities. The research focuses on best practices in CFS using case studies of three types of CFS initiatives. That is, what are the characteristics and practices of successful CFS initiatives? How can these initiatives be brought into the realm of social housing services to better address the needs of tenants (current and prospective) and communities? How can these be translated into a useful policy framework for social housing authorities? Finally, what other benefits would a more consistent policy framework for providing community-based food security initiatives bring to social housing?

This study will focus on the research concerning links between housing and food security and will build a novel link with *social* housing in particular. The research will help fill this gap and inform social housing authorities' response to food insecurity issues. It will investigate some of the current CFS strategies in Toronto to inform policy recommendations for the social housing sector in Canada.

1.5 Methodology

The research includes a literature review and a case study method. The review draws on literature from multiple disciplines and perspectives and focuses on two themes to set the context of food security in Canada:

The first theme is the Canadian context of food insecurity, including trends in food insecurity since the 1980s, the connection between housing and food insecurity and policy development to date. The second theme considers responses to food insecurity in Canada, with a particular focus on CFS, including initiatives tackling food access and food production issues.

Second, the research methodology focuses on three case studies to highlight examples of CFS projects based in Toronto. The methodology used to develop the case studies includes:

- a preliminary investigation of relevant background material of each case study based on Internet research;

- a review of relevant reports and evaluations for each case study; and

- 14 semi-structured in-depth interviews with key informants in the case studies as well as experts working in the area of food security based on the research questions.[2]

    1. For each case study, program leaders and field workers were consulted to inform the policy recommendations. Interviews with key informants in the case studies focused on the features that make the case studies successful food security initiatives and the role currently played by social housing in these initiatives.

    2. Experts from the City of Toronto, Toronto Community Housing and key community organizations were also consulted to support the research objectives. Interviews with experts working in food security focused on the role of social housing in food security and the ways of making CFS programs more accessible for low-income people. For a sample interview, see Appendix C.

The interviews inform the policy recommendations suggested by the research and ground the study in the experience of experts working in CFS.

The case studies showcase several novel approaches that deal with food insecurity in social housing communities in Toronto. Because CFS programs take on many forms, including farmers' markets, community kitchens and food buying clubs, an attempt was made to select several types of programs to inform an adaptable policy involving multiple types of programming.

The first case study is the community garden program at Toronto Community Housing where 100 community gardens thrive throughout the social housing provider's portfolio. In most cases, the gardens are tenant-led initiatives, although staff provide support in a variety of ways to facilitate the growth of the gardens. The second case study is the Good Food Box, a form of food buying cooperative run by FoodShare Toronto that aims to improve access to affordable food while at the same time supporting local farmers. Participants purchase a low-cost healthy box of produce, collected from a drop-off in their neighbourhood. The third case study is the Good Food Markets, also run by FoodShare. These small produce stands in Toronto's low-income neighbourhoods act as an inexpensive alternative to full-fledged farmers' markets.

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[2] The views expressed in the interviews do not necessarily represent the view of the organizations covered in the report, but they are the views of the key informants.

1.6 Why Focus on Toronto?

Most families in Canada experiencing food insecurity live in large urban centres (Cook, 2008a). Toronto was a clear choice as the study area for this research for a number of reasons. Hunger is a growing problem in Toronto, the largest city in Canada and the fifth-largest urban centre in North America. In the Greater Toronto Area alone, food bank visits totaled 905,543 between April 2006 and March 2007, a 1.3% increase from the previous year (Daily Bread Food Bank, 2007). More importantly, Toronto has numerous food activists, initiatives and non-governmental organizations working on food security issues (Friedmann, 2007); Toronto's municipal government was an early supporter of food security and has been active on issues of food insecurity since the early 1990s. Finally, the approaches to dealing with food insecurity in Toronto are extremely creative. Some programs have been replicated in other parts of Canada.

1.7 Organization of the Report

The report is divided into six sections. Section two sets the background by defining food security, the links to the social determinants of health and connections between housing and food. It looks at the Canadian context of food insecurity including measurement, the right to food, the trend towards charitable food assistance, the breakdown of the social safety net and the overall fragmentation of food security policy.

Section three considers responses to food insecurity in Canada using the CFS conceptual model. This discussion leads to a consideration of food security as a continuum and strategies that promote food security including community gardens, food cooperatives and farmers' markets.

Section four brings together the discussion of CFS strategies from the previous section with the social housing sector to consider establishing concrete policy options. Starting with a consideration of food as an urban issue and "scaling up" food security, it uses health as a rationale for taking an increased role in food security. The fourth section concludes with a discussion of food security policy in social housing settings.

Section five provides three case studies based in Toronto that have emerged as successful CFS examples. This section offers key observations to gain insight from the case studies.

The sixth section sets out conclusions and makes policy recommendations on food security for the social housing sector in Canada. These recommendations help guide future food security policy for social housing providers.

2. The Context of Food Insecurity

This section sets the overall background for the report, starting with a discussion of key terms and exploring the Canadian context of food insecurity. This situates the research within a larger discussion of food security both globally and in the Canadian context.

2.1 Food Security and Food (In)security

The term food security is derived from the international development literature of the 1960s and 1970s and is conceived as a strategy to meet aggregate food needs in a coherent way (Anderson and Cook, 1999). Following the world oil crisis as well as the related food crisis of the early 1970s and the African famine of the early 1980s, public interest in global and domestic food security intensified. At the same time, the literature on food security multiplied along with food assistance crises in developing countries and growing numbers of food banks in the United States and Canada. In the early 1980s, Amartya Sen's work on "food entitlements" helped bring about a paradigm shift away from food access and toward food as a basic right, bringing the issue of food insecurity to centre stage as a global dilemma (Maxwell, 1996; Sen, 1981).

Since the initial use of the term food security, a variety of definitions have been proposed. One study listed approximately 200 definitions and 450 indicators of food security (Hoddinott, 1999). Early definitions of food security focused on the ability of a region or nation to assure an adequate food supply for its current and projected population (McKeown, 2006). Different conceptions of food security differ in the way that their authors answer the following questions in Table 1 about the distribution, production and consumption of food (McKeown, 2006). Today the term food security is understood and used in multiple ways at the level of individual, household, community, regional, national and world (Power, 2005a). Individual or household food insecurity can be distinguished by a focus on problems of food access rather than on concerns related to the organization of a food system (Tarasuk, 2005). Focusing on food security at these levels helps promote solutions that will address low-income citizens' specific concerns (Power, 2005a).

Table 1. Conceptions of Food Security

1. Who should get the food?	➡ UNIVERSALITY
2. When?	➡ STABILITY
3. How?	➡ DIGNITY
4. How much food?	➡ QUANTITY
5. What kind of food?	➡ QUALITY

Source: McKeown (2006).

The most popular definition of food security was developed at the World Food Summit in 1996 and adopted by the Government of Canada: "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (Food and Agriculture Organization, 1996). Food *in*security, by contrast, is the absence or assurance of food security.

The conceptualization of food security goals by Koc et al. (1999) goes beyond the adequacy of food quantity and quality and extends to the four "As": availability, accessibility, acceptability and adequacy. Food security requires that there is sufficient food for all people at all times (availability) and that it be accessible to all equally (accessibility). Adequacy is defined as access to food that is nutritious and safe, and produced in environmentally sustainable ways. Acceptability addresses access to culturally acceptable food, produced and obtained in ways that do not compromise people's dignity, self-respect or human rights. A fifth additional component is agency, which focuses on program and policy development that enable the achievement of food security.[3]

The City of Toronto's official definition provides a thoroughly comprehensive view of the concept of food security (Food and Hunger Action Committee, 2000; Toronto Food Policy Council, 1994):

1. The availability of a variety of foods at a reasonable cost.

2. Ready access to quality grocery stores, food service operations or alternate food sources.

3. Sufficient personal income to buy adequate foods for each household member each day.

4. The freedom to choose personally acceptable foods.

5. Legitimate confidence in the quality of the foods available.

6. Easy access to understandable, accurate information about food and nutrition.

7. The assurance of a viable and sustainable food production system.

Food security is typically considered to be a continuum of increasingly severe conditions and experiences (Hamelin, Habicht and Beaudry, 1999). This evolves "from uncertainty and anxiety about the household's food supplies, to depletion of those supplies, altering the eating patterns of adults, and ultimately, when food supplies and resources are exhausted, hunger among children" (Che and Chen, 2001: 11). Ultimately, the depletion of resources results in "absolute food deprivation, when individuals fail to eat because of lack of food" (Power, 2005a: 6).

2.1.1 Household Income and Food Insecurity

Because food insecurity is defined as resulting from a lack of financial resources, income plays a pivotal role as a predictor of food insecurity (Che and Chen, 2001; Power, 2005a; Power, 2005b; Cook, 2008a).[4] Population surveys consistently show low-income status as the major predictor of household food insecurity (Cook, 2008a). As the adequacy of household income declines, the likelihood that a household will experience some form of food insecurity rises dramatically (Tarasuk, 2005; Che and Chen, 2001). Although income is the most significant determinant of food insecurity and hunger, the relationship between income and the degree of food insecurity is not linear (Power, 2005a). The most recent survey of food insecurity among Canadians showed that 28.8% of those with the lowest incomes are severely food insecure, and 23.5% are

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[3]   Adopted by the Centre for Food Security, Ryerson University, www.ryerson.ca/foodsecurity/. However, there is a need for conceptual development of this term, which has been absent in the literature on food security.

[4]   Female lone-parent household status and Aboriginal status are additional predictors.

moderately insecure (Health Canada, 2004).[5] The same survey also found that food insecurity was more prevalent among households in which the main source of income was social assistance (59.7%) or worker's compensation/employment insurance (29%) than in households with other main sources of income (Health Canada, 2004). This conclusion is supported by research confirming that incomes for welfare recipients and minimum wage earners are inadequate to purchase the food needed for a healthy diet (Power, 2005b). These figures highlight the reality of food insecurity as a product of poverty and low income, a marked characteristic of many social housing residents and most of the people on waiting lists.

2.1.2 Food Deserts and the Issue of Food Access

One of the key components of food security is access to quality grocery stores, food service operations or alternate food sources (Campbell, Katamay and Connelly, 1988). However, food insecurity often means limited access to grocery stores and supermarkets or other places to buy or acquire food. This idea is termed "food deserts," "poor urban areas where residents cannot buy affordable, healthy food" (Cummins and Macintyre, 2002: 436). A government publication in the United Kingdom documenting limited food store accessibility in a subset of low-income areas (Beaumont et al., 1995) was the first to introduce this term into policy discourse (Smoyer-Tomic, Spence and Amrhein, 2006; Wrigley, 2002). Consider the following illustrative example:

> A hypothetical declining central-city neighborhood has become a 'food desert,' from which the last conventional supermarket has departed for a neighborhood with more affluent households. Low-income neighborhood residents without automobiles must either travel long distances by public transportation to reach a grocery store in another neighborhood or depend on convenience stores and liquor stores within walking distance for access to fruits and vegetables. The 'fresh' produce sold at these outlets, however, is typically of limited selection and poor quality and offered at high markups. The neighborhood has a few fast food restaurants that are a source of inexpensive food, but the oversized menu portions are laden with fat and salt. Low-income neighborhood residents find themselves with few healthful food options and are at increasing risk for diet-related health problems such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity (Campbell, 2004: 348).

In Canada, issues of supermarket access and food deserts have only recently drawn attention and little research has been published in peer-reviewed literature. As far back as 1996, the Toronto Food Policy Council observed that "Toronto's food retail system functions better than that of many USA cities, which may be completely lacking food retail stores in their central or low-income areas" (1996: 1). By 2000, it documented increased concerns about the system's operation (Cosgrove, 2000). Indeed, research is beginning to identify food deserts in parts of Toronto's northern inner suburbs where low-income residents have moved, many without vehicles, due to growing gentrification of downtown neighbourhoods (Carey, 2005) as well as downtown neighbourhoods with "a high proportion of social housing, poor transit connections, [and] no major food stores" (Food and Hunger Action Committee, 2000: 32). Although Toronto

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[5] The lowest income bracket includes families up to four with an income of less than $10,000, or families over five of less than $15,000.

has a range of food options, access to affordable, healthy food is inconsistent (Lister, 2007). (See Figure 1 for a map of food deserts in Toronto.) Similarly, a study conducted by the City of Vancouver found a loss of seven supermarkets, a replacement of small and mid-sized stores with megastores, and a general "thinning out" of stores, particularly in the poorest part of the city (City of Vancouver, 1998). While Canada, in some ways, resembles the United States and the United Kingdom, "its geographic, demographic, political, and economic characteristics suggest that in terms of food access, its experiences may be unique" (Smoyer-Tomic, Spence and Amrhein, 2006: 309).

Figure 1. Food Deserts in Toronto
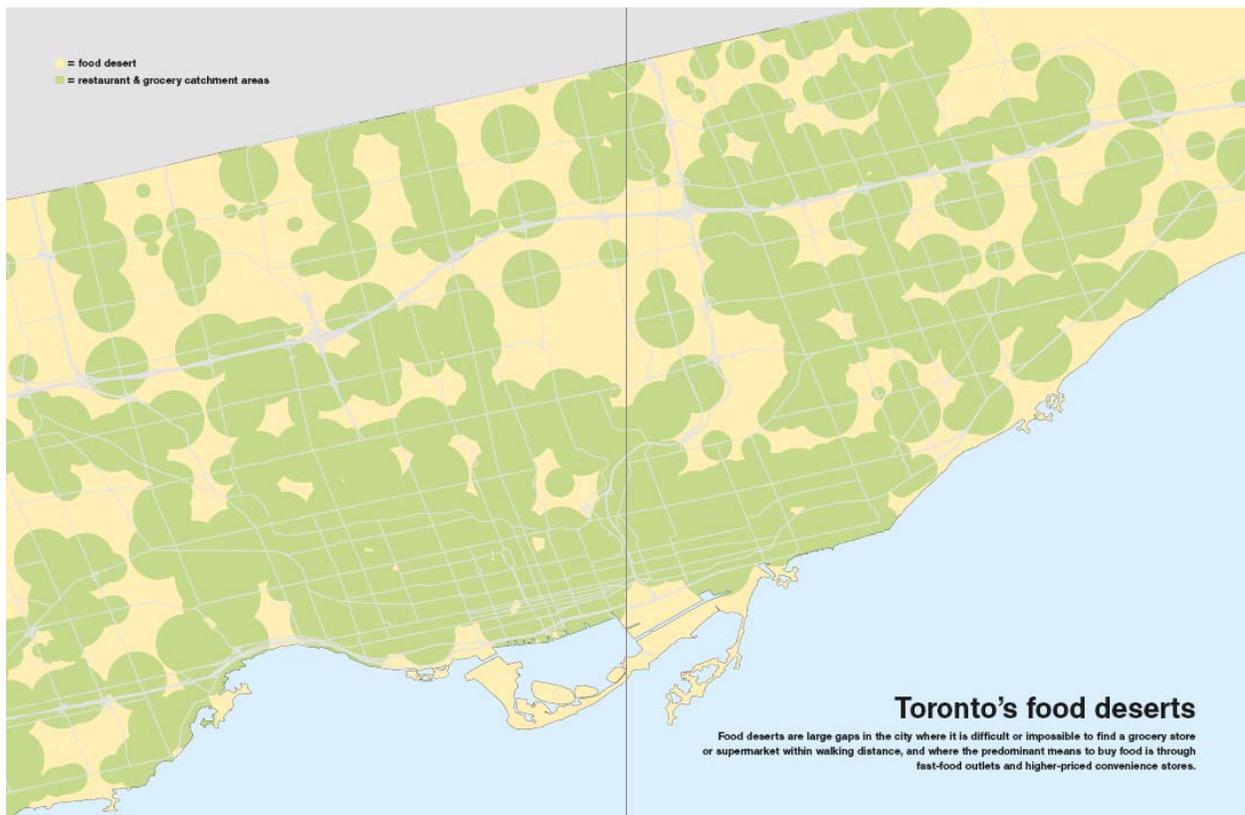
Source: Lister (2007).

2.1.3 Food Security as a Social Determinant of Health

The most influential predictors of health relate to the social, economic, physical and political environments in which we live and determine our ability to make choices that support a healthy and productive life (Ontario Healthy Community Coalition, 2006). These factors are often referred to as the social determinants of health and include:

- income and income distribution
- social inclusion and exclusion
- employment and working conditions
- unemployment and job insecurity
- health services

- the social safety net
- early life and childhood care
- education
- housing
- food security

Because of the link between food security and poor health, food security has been identified as a social determinant of health over and above being a basic need (McIntyre and Tarasuk, 2002). In fact, "food security is the foundation for healthy people, healthy communities and healthy environments" (Community Nutritionists Council of BC, 2004: 25). There are significant links between food insecurity and health outcomes. Indeed, the social determinants of health do not operate in isolation and several factors may affect the same individuals or population at the same time (Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 2006). The World Health Organization summarizes what is known about food as a social determinant of health:

> A good diet and adequate food supply are central for promoting health and well-being. A shortage of food and lack of variety cause malnutrition and deficiency diseases. Excess intake (also a form of malnutrition) contributes to cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, degenerative eye diseases, obesity and dental caries. Food poverty exists side by side with food plenty. The important public health issue is the availability and cost of healthy, nutritious food. Access to good, affordable food makes more difference to what people eat than health education (Marmot and Wilkenson, 2003: 26).

Individuals from food-insecure households are at increased risk of poor nutritional status and negative health outcomes. For adults, this includes poorer diets, lower nutrient intake, health status of people with diabetes, poor self-rated general health status and lower scores on physical and metal health scales. Among children this includes poorer cognitive, academic and psychosocial development, and among women, depression, obesity and weight gain (Cook, 2008a).

2.1.4 The Housing-Food Insecurity Nexus

Housing, as is food security, is a social determinant of health (Bryant, 2003; World Health Organization, 1986).[6] In-depth research on housing as a socio-economic determinant of health confirms that housing is crucial for the operation of a wide range of socio-economic factors that influence the nature of everyday life (Dunn et al., 2006). Dunn notes that "housing, as a central locus of everyday life patterns, is likely to be a crucial component in the ways in which socio-economic factors shape health" (2002). Although this study notes that there is a "dearth" of research on the socio-economic dimensions of housing, it is clear that the availability and affordability of housing plays a key role in other social determinants of health (Bryant, 2003). As Figure 2 shows, one effect of housing availability and affordability is food insecurity.

Figure 2. How Housing Affects Other Health Determinants
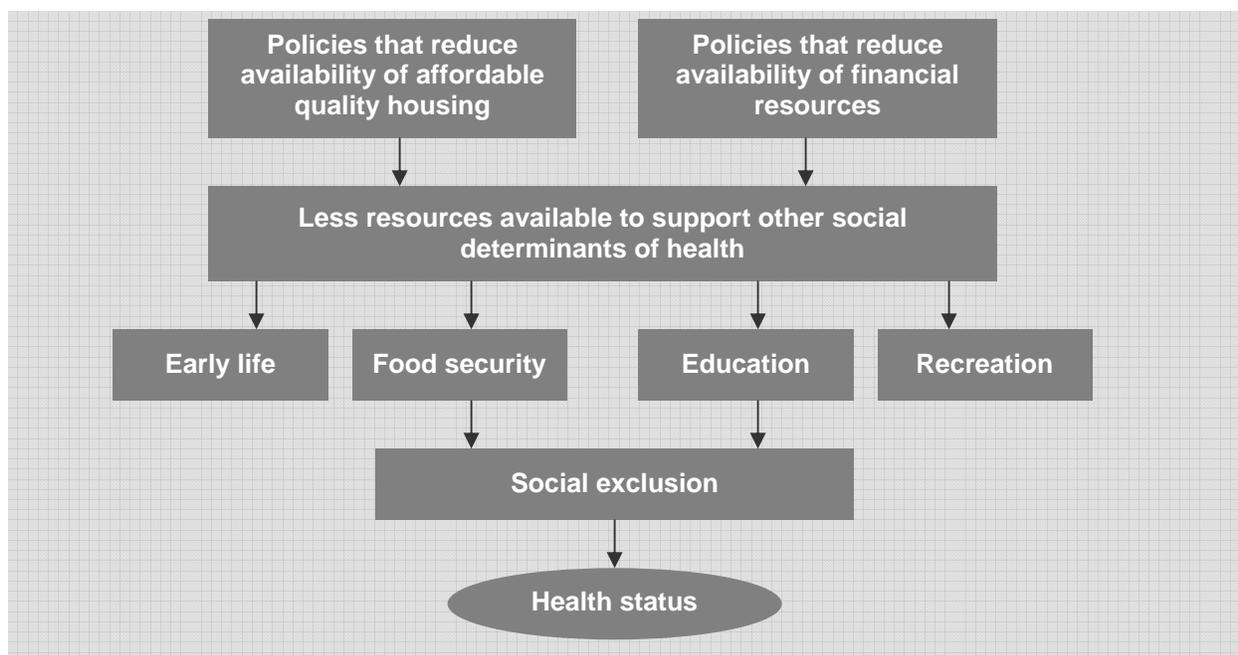
Source: Bryant (2003).

At a basic level, housing and food are linked in the idea of the rent-food dichotomy (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999; Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk, 2007). For Lister, "the lack of affordable housing in Toronto…is directly responsible for hunger: food bank users in the GTA are paying an average of 73 percent or more of their income on rent, leaving less than $5 a day for food" (2007: 170). Similarly, the Toronto Food Policy Council (1994: 25) "is especially concerned that affordable housing be available to alleviate the housing crisis because it directly leads to hunger." Indeed, in low income households, housing payments often have priority over food purchases. Tarasuk notes that "the tension between housing and food needs, epitomized in the

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[6] In 1986, the World Health Organization's *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* recognized shelter as a basic prerequisite for health.

phrase 'pay the rent or feed the kids,' is well documented in in-depth studies of food insecurity" (Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk, 2007: 1465). In 2004, about 23% of all Canadian urban households spent 30% or more of their income on shelter costs (Canada Mortgage and Housing, 2007). While food budgets are flexible, fixed payments such as rent and energy bills are not. As the proportion of income spent on housing increases (between 30 and 50%), resources available to support social and, in terms of food shortage, physical determinants of health become secondary priorities for many families (Bryant, 2003). As stated by one co-op housing community member, "housing and food are both basic needs. They're necessities: but food is the first to go after bills – it's housing before food. I eat less so that the kids can have more when things are tight" (Brownlee and Cammer, 2004: 17).

This tension between housing costs and food needs can be examined by looking at the case of Toronto, shown in Figure 3. In 2006, the average market rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Toronto was $1,067[7] (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2007), although households receiving rent-geared-to-income (RGI) receive a subsidy to reduce rent to about 30% of their before-tax income. Total monthly income for a family of four receiving social assistance in 2007 was $1,707.64. The cost of a Nutritious Food Basket for a family of four was $576.06 (Toronto Public Health, 2007).[8] As Bryant notes, "it is difficult to imagine how it would be possible for such a family to cover other important expenses such as food with that after-rent income" (Bryant; 2003: 55). Similarly, a report by Health Canada notes that, "when rents take 30 to 50% or more of one's income, there is little money left for food, recreation, transportation and the other necessities of life" (Edwards, 2003: 3). To take this issue further, when affordable housing is scarce, low-income residents may be at greater risk of hunger due to the graver consequences of rent default over food purchases (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999).

Figure 3. Housing Costs and Food Needs for a Family of Four in Toronto

Average market rent, 2 bedroom	$1,067	Monthly income from social assistance		Available $	
	+				
Nutritious food basket	$576.06				
	= $1643.06		**= $1,707.64**		**= $64.58**

While the tension between housing and food needs is generally understood, several recent studies have found that housing costs play an important role in determining the food security status of some low-income households (Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk, 2007; Burnell, Weber and Edwards, 2006). These studies recommend a re-examination of policies relating to housing affordability and income and underscore the need to focus on solutions that increase real incomes and reduce poverty.

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[7]   Average market rents in other cities include $1,045 in Vancouver, $960 in Calgary and $941 in Ottawa (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2007).
[8]   The Nutritious Food Basket is Ontario's standardized food costing tool that measures the real cost of healthy eating. Toronto Public Health collects data from grocery stores across the city each year to monitor the cost of eating nutritious food in Toronto.

2.2 Food Insecurity in Canada

2.2.1 Measuring Food (In)security in Canada

In 2001-2003, there were 854 million undernourished people worldwide: 820 million in the developing countries, 25 million in the transition countries and as many as 9 million in industrialized countries (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006).[9] Despite high levels of economic growth, 1.1 million Canadians reported food insecurity in 2004, according to the 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), the most recent national survey (Health Canada, 2004).[10] As a rule, "measures of household food insecurity are essentially measures of the manifestations of acute financial insecurity on diet" (Cook, 2008b: 5). See Table 2 for a snapshot of food security in Canada.

The analysis of food insecurity in Canada has been exceedingly confusing due to the wide variation in the way food insecurity has been measured from one survey to another. Beginning in 1994, the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth was the first national survey to raise *any* questions about food insecurity, focusing on child hunger. According to this survey, the observed prevalence of child hunger affected approximately 1.2% of families and 1.6% in the 1996 version (McIntyre, Walsh and Connor, 2001). However, the low prevalence on these surveys can be explained by the fact that child hunger typically occurs in the context of relatively severe food insecurity and that the reporting of this problem is highly stigmatized (Tarasuk, 2005). The National Population Health Survey (NPHS) was the first Canadian survey to ask questions about household food insecurity. In 1996-1997, 4% of Canadians were estimated to be food insufficient (Vozoris and Tarasuk, 2003). The 1998-1999 NPHS included three screening questions to assess worry about not having enough to eat and compromise in quality or variety of food eaten. The survey estimated that approximately 10% of Canadians lived in a food-insecure household in the year leading up to the survey (Rainville and Brink, 2002).[11] Food-insecure households were identified when a household respondent answered positively to at least one of the screening questions.

The NPHS was replaced by the CCHS in 2000. The first cycle of this survey included the same three screening questions as previous surveys. The proportion of food-insecure households was 14.7% in 2001-2001 (Ledrou and Gervais, 2005). The 2004 CCHS found that 9.2% of Canadians were moderately or severely food insecure, while 48.8% of those with the lowest incomes and 29% of those in the lower middle income category were food insecure (Health Canada, 2004). At the same time, the prevalence of food insecurity was higher among those relying on social assistance (59.7%) or worker's compensation/employment insurance (29%) as their main source of household income, compared with those with salary/wages (7.3%) and those with pensions or seniors' benefits (4.9%) as their main source of income; off-reserve Aboriginal

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[9] The industrialized countries include Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.

[10] While food security is measured at the national level in Canada, currently there is no local or regional level measurement. This may mask localized food-insecure populations such as low-income, social housing residents and, however met, may not mean that food security exists in other jurisdictions or in the country as a whole.

[11] Those responding positively to the screening questions included in the NPHS 1998-1999 were contacted for the Food Insecurity Supplement.

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households (33.3%), compared with non-Aboriginal households (8.8%); those who do not own their dwelling (20.5%), compared with those who do own their dwelling (3.9%); and those with children (10.4%), compared with those without children (8.6%) (Health Canada, 2004). In contrast to all surveys thus far, the 2004 CCHS determined food insecurity through a more elaborate process based on 18 questions about the food security situation in the household over the previous 12 months, ranging in severity from worrying about running out of food, to children not eating for a whole day.[12]

Table 2. Food Insecurity in Canada

Survey	Prevalence of Food Insecurity (%)	Number of Food Insecure
1994 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth	1.2	53,995 children
1996 National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth	1.6	75,615 families
1996-1997 National Population Health Survey	4.0	1.1 million
1998-1999 National Population Health Survey	10.4	3 million
2000-2001 Canadian Community Health Survey	14.7	3.7 million
2004 Canadian Community Health Survey	9.2	1.1 million

Source: Tarasuk (2005); Health Canada (2004).

National survey data make assessment of trends in the prevalence of food insecurity over time difficult because different questions were used on different surveys. Nevertheless, "the data support the inference from food bank statistics that household food insecurity is growing" (Tarasuk, 2005: 300). Indeed, the increase in food bank use by 91% since 1989, outstripping baseline population growth, suggests that food insecurity is both a persistent and a growing problem (Canadian Association of Food Banks, 2007). Food bank use is regarded as an underestimate of food poverty because only 20-30% of food insecure or economically disadvantaged Canadians use food banks (Rideout et al., 2007; Che and Chen, 2001; Tarasuk, 2005).

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[12]   This method considers food security on a continuous linear scale referred to as the Food Security Module, adapted from food security measurement methods developed in the United States.

2.2.2 Canada's Commitment to the Right to Food

As is becoming increasingly clear, questions of food, food poverty and food security are political (Robertson, Brunner and Sheiham, 1999; Riches, 1999). These issues go far beyond welfare and social assistance to include basic issues of human rights, health inequalities and social inclusion (Dowler, Turner and Dobson, 2001). For that reason, "food as a human right is clearly an important way of reframing the debate about food poverty and suggests an agenda for action which goes beyond the welfare/human capital responses," that have been suggested by others (Riches, 2002: 660). Moreover, as Rocha (2007: 16) explains, food security is a public good because it can be "simultaneously enjoyed by many people (a public good), in contrast to private goods (e.g. food), 'which are marked by rivalness in consumption.'"

According to Robertson, the right to food means:

> a condition in which each person can eat food which, by prevailing medical standards, is judged adequate for the full realization of physical and metal health. A person's diet should also consist of food which satisfies cultural preferences. The food should be obtainable in a manner which is not an affront to the dignity of self-esteem of the person. The process by which the food is made available should be stable and sustainable, thus ensuring continuing access to food of acceptable standards (1990: 188).

Likewise, food security includes the conditions in society whereby individuals may have that right to food realized (Riches, 1999). The right to food, therefore, requires a minimum standard for all Canadians. However, the fact that this approach appears novel is ironic given that a rights-based approach has been a given for many years in other areas of Canadian society.

The right to food was first recognized as a fundamental right in 1948 by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Since that time, Canada and many other nations have signed several international agreements (shown in Table 3) and national agreements (shown in Table 4) promoting the right to food.

According to Riches et al. (2004), there are three main reasons that it is appropriate to apply a rights-based framework when examining food security in Canada. First, human rights are an important part of the Canadian legal and political landscape and already shape the way many government policies and programs are developed and delivered. Second, Canada has undertaken international obligations to recognize and implement the right to food, as shown in Table 3 below. Third, Canada remains food insecure despite its wealth of human capital, natural resources and industrial infrastructure.

The current situation, however, whereby large numbers of Canadians live in food poverty, is untenable under Canadian commitments and obligations (Power, 2005a). As a result, "hungry Canadians, searching for their legal entitlement to food, find in the law bits and pieces of the right, not a full course meal" (Robertson, 1990: 194). Indeed, there exists a paradox concerning Canada's commitments regarding food. Although Canada has commitments to the right to food internationally, it has not fully implemented its commitments domestically, either in fact or in law (Robertson, 1990). The right to food is not established in constitutional agreements in Canada.

Neither the *Canadian Bill of Rights* (1960) nor the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) explicitly spells out the right to food (Riches, 2002). However, the Charter does recognize the right to food through a later interpretation of section seven guaranteeing that people are not to be deprived of basic necessities (Rideout et al., 2007).

At the same time, Canada has historically acknowledged the right to food internationally in a range of agreements including, among others, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (1966), the *International Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) and the *Declaration on World Food Security* (1996). The difficulty is that "the treaties to which Canada is a party are not self-executing. Their incorporation into domestic law is dependent upon implementing legislation" (Robertson, 1990: 205). The implementation into Canadian law has yet to occur.

Table 3. Canada's International Commitments to the Right to Food

Name of Agreement	Year	Description
Universal Declaration of Human Rights	1948	Sets out the ensemble of human rights to be protected internationally.
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	1966	Establishes state obligations to protect economic and social rights including the right to be free from hunger and to an adequate standard of living, including food.
Convention on the Rights of the Child	1989	Establishes immediate rights and obligations for states for rights for children including nutrition.
World Declaration on Nutrition	1992	Recognizes food as part of a right to an adequate standard of living.
Rome Declaration on World Food Security and World Food Summit Plan of Action	1996	Seeks clarification of the content of the right to food and suggests international bodies complete the task.
Code of conduct on the Human Right to Adequate Food	1997	Series of guidelines and principles for nations to implement the right to adequate food, including state obligations at the national and international level.
General Comment 12, The Right to Adequate Food (Article 11 of ICESCR)	1999	Establishes the precise content and implementation of the right to adequate food.

Source: Riches et al. (2004); Rideout et al. (2007).

Table 4. Canada's Domestic Commitments to the Right to Food

Name of Agreement	Year	Description
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms	1982	Sets out essential rights and freedoms for all Canadians, including rights to life and equality.
Canada's Action Plan for Food Security	1998	Response to commitments of the World Food Summit Plan of Action, including plans for cross-sectoral participation in efforts to achieve the right to food.

Source: Rideout et al. (2007).

Finally, as Rocha (2001) points out, like other human rights, the right to food security is not always sustained. Using the case of Brazil, Rocha points out that a lack of resources is not a limiting factor in Brazil, nor in many other countries. Rather, "guaranteeing food security as a human right then becomes a question of political feasibility" (Rocha, 2001: 44). In fact, an essential requirement for the right to food is political will on the part of both governments and civil society committed to the right to food as a human right and a right of citizenship (Rocha, 2007). Naturally, even if Canada were to "protect" the right to food in explicit legislation making adequate food available to everyone, that protection does not imply actually fulfilling the right (Robertson, 1990). Public goods take for granted "a legitimation of governmental authority" (Ver Eecke, 1999: 140), which has clearly not been the case in Canada.

2.2.3 Charitable Food Assistance during the 1980s and 1990s and the Breakdown of the Social Safety Net

The first food bank in Canada was established in Edmonton in 1981 as an emergency measure to temporarily resolve the severe recession caused by a bust in the oil industry and the state's inadequate response to meet the needs of the growing number of unemployed people in Alberta (Riches, 2002).[13] The idea was that the food bank would close once the recession was over. However, the problem did not disappear and community groups began to set up ad hoc charitable food assistance programs. These programs became known as food banks – "extra-governmental community organizations that collect donated foodstuffs and redistribute them to the needy, working largely with volunteer labour and donated equipment and facilities" (Tarasuk, 2001a: 488).

Food banks rapidly proliferated during the 1980s. Even as the economy improved during the 1990s and beyond, demands for charitable assistance have not declined. In 1989, 378,000 people were assisted by food banks each month (Hungerwatch, 1989) and, by 2007, that number had climbed to 720,231 (Canadian Association of Food Banks, 2007). By 1990, there were 235 food banks in Canada (Canadian Association of Food Banks, 1990). Today, there are 673 food banks in the country (Canadian Association of Food Banks, 2007). Since 1989, food bank use has increased by 91%, although between 2006 and 2007, it declined by 4.4% (Canadian Association of Food Banks, 2007).[14] These figures may only reveal the tip of the iceberg because only about 20-30% of food-insecure households use charitable food assistance programs (Tarasuk, 2005). Even more astounding, the level of charitable food assistance witnessed since the 1980s is at a level not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s (Davis and Tarasuk, 1994). This suggests that in Canada, "food banks have constituted the primary response to problems of household food insecurity in Canada" (Tarasuk, 2005: 299) and that they "play a primary role in meeting the food needs of vulnerable populations" (Riches, 2002: 649).

The groundwork for the Canadian social security system, laid out in the post-Second World War era, was based on Keynesian economic policies including full employment, economic growth, social programs and a guaranteed social minimum (Guest, 1997). By the late 1960s, the key ingredients of the Canada welfare state were in place.

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[13] The first food bank in North America was established as early as 1967 in Phoenix, Arizona.
[14] Because this decline has been observed for only one year, it is unclear whether this is a trend.

Warning signs of a weakening welfare state were apparent when charitable food banks emerged in the early 1980s. Indeed, the proliferation and institutionalization of food banks since the 1980s are evidence of the breakdown of the social safety net in Canada including the privatization of social services and the downsizing and downloading of social programs (Riches, 2002; Rideout et al., 2007). Food insecurity emerges in the context of poverty and financial insecurity as well as systemic inequities, which result from social policies affecting income distribution (Power, 2005a).

As noted earlier, questions of food and food security are political (Robertson, Brunner and Sheiham, 1999; Riches, 1999). In response to high levels of poverty and unemployment in Canada, an erosion of spending on social programs has occurred (Davis and Tarasuk, 1994), which has "engineered a profound shift in federal and provincial social policy towards market-driven, neo-liberal concepts of social welfare" (Riches, 2002: 658). As a result, while the Canadian social safety net has deteriorated, those already at risk of food insecurity have become more vulnerable. A number of changes to social programs during the 1990s have affected Canadians' economic security and social support (Power, 2005a), for example:

1. restructuring unemployment insurance, now known as employment insurance, with reduced numbers of workers eligible for benefits, lower benefit levels and shorter benefit periods;

2. cuts in federal financial transfers to the provinces and territories for education, social services and health care;

3. the replacement of the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) with the Canada Health and Social transfer (CHST), reducing federal conditions on how the provinces spent these funds and allowing them to make significant cuts to welfare rates;[15]

4. restricted eligibility for social assistance, a decline in benefit levels in most provinces and an overall deterioration in the welfare system's attitude toward recipients;

5. the "claw back" of the National Child Benefit from families receiving social assistance in some provinces;

6. changes to federal taxation policies, which have disproportionately increased the tax burden of lower-income Canadians; and

7. the cancellation of social housing programs by the federal government.

As food banks have become more entrenched in Canadian society, there has been a strong critique of the adequacy and appropriateness of food banks as a response to food insecurity. Food banks have been criticized as being part of the problem, permitting governments to "offload welfare responsibilities" (Riches, 2002: 658). They have also been criticized for facilitating the erosion of publicly funded programs through their role as charitable partners with Canadian governments or by buffering the impact of policy shifts (Riches, 2002; Davis and Tarasuk, 1994). Food banks may also divert attention from other ways of dealing with the issue of food insecurity or facilitate the further pulverization of social programs to those at the bottom, leading to a growing need for direct charitable food assistance (Power, 2005a; Tarasuk, 2001a).

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[15] The CAP, introduced in 1966, recognized food, clothing and shelter as basic human needs and held the provinces accountable for providing sufficient benefits to allow people to meet these basic needs. The CHST, by contrast, no longer recognizes food as a basic need (Rideout et al., 2007).

The intensification of charitable solutions to food insecurity, then, has altered the policy debate from a rights approach based on principles of entitlement to one of benevolence due to governments not fulfilling their obligations (Rideout et al., 2007).

2.2.4 The Policy Context: Canada's Fragmented Food Security Policy

Not only have Canadian governments never affirmed the right to food in Canada, but there is also virtually no policy to tackle the problem of food insecurity. During the late 1970s, Canada considered implementing a food policy that ultimately failed due to opposition in the Ministry of Agriculture (Rideout et al., 2007). The food strategy included the following areas: income stabilization and support; trade policy and safeguards; research, information and education; marketing and food aid; the processing, distribution and retail sectors; and consumer concerns including price stability, nutrition and food safety (MacRae, 1999). At the time, policy-makers believed that the efficient operation of the marketplace was the best way to meet policy objectives (MacRae, 1999). In 1988, following the food strategy's failure, a policy statement supporting Health Canada's work on nutrition was adopted by Agriculture Canada. However, this statement also reflects the primacy of production over nourishment, observing that "in order to support the Canadian agri-food industry, Agriculture Canada has a major responsibility with respect to nutrient composition and nutritional value of agri-food products" (quoted in MacRae, 1999: 185).

Today, food policy is fragmented at all levels of government in Canada (Rideout et al., 2007; MacRae, 1999). The position on food and food policy held by governments is "mechanistic, technocratic, incomplete, fragmentary, and contradictory – sufficiently so that it may not be accurate to refer to what Canada has as food policy" (MacRae, 1999: 182). Although policies exist for agriculture, fishing, food safety and nutrition, these are not connected through a common set of goals or a comprehensive policy framework (Slater, 2007). As many experts have noted, however, a coherent food policy must "integrate health, agriculture, social, educational, trade, economic and communication policies and ensure that the food system is financially and environmentally sustainable" (MacRae, 1999). Canada "lacks a comprehensive, or 'joined up' food and nutrition policy directed at the optimal nourishment of the population" (Rideout et al., 2007: 570). A "joined up" food policy would lead to a more sustainable and equitable food policy, one that links health and nutrition, agriculture, environment and social welfare (Riches et al., 2004). A harmonizing policy is clearly a prerequisite for ensuring national food security in Canada (Slater, 2007).

Albeit, one report found "genuine merit" in the federal government's acknowledgement of food insecurity as a domestic problem in its response to the 1996 World Food Summit entitled *Canada's Action Plan for Food Security* (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 1998; cited in Riches et al., 2004). Canada was one of a handful of nations to prepare a plan with broad-based, multi-sectoral participation (Riches et al., 2004). The Action Plan is the primary component of Canada's policy infrastructure on food security. In 1999, a virtual Food Security Bureau was set up in Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to monitor the Action Plan's progress. In 2003, this team was incorporated into the Programs and Multilateral Affairs Division of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and continues to function there. The Action Plan is a blueprint outlining the highest priorities identified by members of the Joint Consultative Group, shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Priorities under *Canada's Action Plan for Food Security*

Priority 1:	The right to food	Priority 6:	Food production
Priority 2:	The reduction of poverty	Priority 7:	Emphasis on environmentally sustainable practices
Priority 3:	Promotion of access to safe and nutritious food	Priority 8:	Fair trade
Priority 4:	Food safety	Priority 9:	Acknowledgement of peace as a precursor to food security
Priority 5:	Traditional food acquisition methods of Aboriginal and costal communities	Priority 10:	A monitoring system for food insecurity

Source: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (1998).

Shortly after the introduction of the Action Plan, MacRae remarked that "Canada has nothing specifically labeled a food policy" (1999: 182). That statement is still true today. The Action Plan has been criticized for "failing to provide a legal framework necessary to achieve its stated goals" (Riches et al., 2004). Another analyst argues that there is little evidence that the Action Plan has been integrated into the planning processes of even the most relevant ministries following its formulation – a clear example of the disconnect between rhetoric and action (cited in Riches et al., 2004).

Following the introduction of *Canada's Action Plan for Food Security* in 1998, the federal government compiled four progress reports addressing different dimensions of the Action Plan. The fourth progress report, published in 2006, addresses some of the initiatives undertaken by Canada to achieve the goals of the World Food Summit (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2006). The report refers to the development of the National Food Policy Framework, a new food policy integration effort underway since 2004. However, there is an indication that this framework will focus primarily on production, export and market access, and to some extent nutrition and other health issues (Rideout et al., 2007). Thus, while there is a general commitment on the part of the federal government to addressing food insecurity issues, consistent and systemic food policy is slow in coming.

Although charitable food banks are not part of any official government response to food insecurity, they "serve as a de facto policy instrument whereby government workers, such as public health employees, work closely with food banks as a source of emergency food in the absence of other formal policies" (Slater, 2007: 5). However, as noted in section 2.2.3, charitable food distribution is clearly an inadequate response to food insecurity problems in Canada.

In the absence of federal and provincial leadership, the City of Toronto made a commitment to preventing hunger and ensuring nutrition for its residents by setting up the Toronto Food Policy Council in 1991. Food policy councils are the closest thing to policy work at the local level (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999). In 1992, the Food and Hunger Action Committee of the City of Toronto issued a "Declaration on Food and Nutrition" (Food and Hunger Action Committee, 2000) and in 2001, "Toronto's Food Charter," shown in Appendix A (Food and Hunger Action Committee, 2001b).

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Experiences in other countries illustrate the difficulties of developing food policy. In the United Kingdom, the experience has been one of bounded policy rather than integrated, "joined up" policy, confined to narrow departmental channels. On the other hand, countries such as Norway and Finland have developed more integrated approaches to food, the environment and public health and offer models for more joined up thinking. Norway's approach to food policy is comprehensive and coordinates interventions to promote healthy eating with agricultural policy (Barling, Lang and Caraher, 2002).

In sum, Canada's food policy is fragmented resulting in the absence of a coherent and "joined up" national food and nutrition policy. As a final note, the Canadian social housing sector has also remained silent on the issue of food insecurity.

3. Responses to Food Insecurity in Canada

This section of the report focuses on responses to the crisis of food insecurity using the CFS conceptual model. This leads to a discussion of a continuum of food security and the community-level strategies that promote food security, including community gardens, farmers' markets and food cooperatives.

3.1 Community Food Security

Community food security (CFS) is a fairly new conceptual model of food security and as yet has no commonly accepted definition. Even so, the growing CFS movements and their related literature distinguish common elements, identifying CFS as both a process and a goal for achieving food security (Slater, 2007). In that sense, CFS is a remarkably broad concept that stresses systemic approaches to promote food security for all, with the goal of ensuring an adequate and accessible food supply (Allen, 1999). From its beginnings in the mid-1990s in the United States, CFS has emerged as an alternative understanding of food security by borrowing elements from the anti-hunger movement and the sustainable agriculture movement and including elements of environmental sustainability and community building (Power, 2005a; Levkoe, 2006). The following definition, adapted from Hamm and Bellows (2003) sums up these elements:

> Community food security exists when all community residents obtain a safe, personally acceptable nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self-reliance and equality access for everyone (Community Nutritionists Council of BC, 2004).

In Canada, the adoption of CFS as a broad-based concept by many public health authorities was a response to the apparent rise of several food-related problems during the 1990s (Ontario Public Health Association, 2002). This included the proliferation of food banks, the rise of obesity and diabetes, increasing food industry marketing of highly processed foods and numerous environmental concerns in the food system (Nestle, 2002). It was an attempt to alleviate problems of hunger and to reduce the dependence on food banks (Davis and Tarasuk, 1994).

Traditionally, food security initiatives have focused on alleviating hunger in low-income populations through short-term relief strategies including food banks, soup kitchens and other charitable or emergency food programs. Alternative responses to charitable food programs characterized by CFS require a longer time-frame (Anderson and Cook, 1999) and typically take the form of participatory, community development strategies to provide long-lasting solutions to problems of food insecurity (Tarasuk, 2001a). The assumption is that, rather than focusing narrowly on the individual or household level, strategies should tackle the role of food production and distribution, as well as issues of social justice, self-reliance and community economic development (McKeown, 2006). In that way, CFS is not only about food, but also focuses on a host of other important community issues.

Six principles have been identified that reflect a common theme among CFS efforts that (Community Food Security Coalition, 2008):

1. focus on low-income populations' food needs;

2. comprise broad goals, suggesting that food security is a product of wide social issues and policies;

3. highlight a community focus, building community food resources to meet community needs;

4. emphasize community self-reliance and empowerment resulting from strategies that do not depend on charitable food relief;

5. focus on local agriculture as a key component of a community food system; and

6. assume a systems approach, relying on participation from a range of stakeholders.

These smaller scale, community-based initiatives, shown in Table 6, include community kitchens, community gardens, food markets, food buying cooperatives and nutrition education programs.

Table 6. Community Food Security Initiatives

• Community gardens	• Community-supported agriculture
• Food markets/farmers' markets	• Food-related community economic development
• School food programs	
• Culturally diverse community food programs	• Community food assessments
• Community kitchens	• Food-buying cooperatives

Section 3.1.1 established the focus on individual or household food security on physical and economic access to food, and social policy (Power, 2005a). While CFS shares these goals, it addresses food security with a systems approach, acknowledging the importance of sustainable economic, environmental and social aspects of the food system (Power, 2005a). Thus, CFS implicitly identifies the role of the larger food system in ensuring food security. In that sense, CFS is an extension of the concept of food security (Winne, Joseph and Fisher, 1998).

The focus on food systems leads to questions related to food policy (Power, 2005a). A food policy is a decision, program or project endorsed by a government, business or organization that affects how food is produced, processed, distributed, purchased, protected and disposed of (City of Vancouver, 2008). According to one researcher, CFS cannot be realized outside a policy context because "food policies are the mechanisms by which food security action projects can be transformed into a framework to meet the goal of a food system that is economically and environmentally sustainable, promotes health, and supports food security for all" (Slater, 2007: 5).

Food issues are particularly robust because "food has the power to galvanize people from diverse backgrounds and opinions" (Levkoe, 2006: 90). Part of the strength of CFS is its multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary nature (Power, 2005a; Ontario Public Health Association, 2002). CFS brings together a wide range of disciplines, professions and organizations to co-ordinate a framework

towards a more food secure population. According to Anderson and Cook (1999), CFS encompasses three streams of practice and disciplinary orientation: first, community nutritionists and educators; second, progressive agricultural researchers and grassroots activists; and third, anti-hunger and community development researchers and activists.

Although "CFS has conceptual richness and deals with a scale of analysis which has been neglected in food security work" (Anderson and Cook, 1999: 144), questions have been raised regarding the adequacy of CFS. For example, the multi-sectoral, disparate nature of CFS makes framing it as a concept difficult because the theory varies across different fields (Hamm and Bellows, 2003). Another concern highlights the fact that few evaluations of CFS projects have been carried out as they relate to alleviating food insecurity (Power, 2005a; Tarasuk, 2005). Thus, Tarasuk notes that:

> … the effectiveness of these approaches has come under little scrutiny. This, coupled with the ad hoc and, in some cases, short term nature of many community-based projects, means that little has been written about them. There are no central inventories of programs and few published reports or evaluations (2001a: 490-491).

CFS approaches have been criticized for being an inadequate solution for food insecurity and the erosion of the welfare state (Tarasuk and Davis, 1996) and for embracing often contradictory tensions between the needs of low-income communities and sustainable agriculture (Allen, 1999). Despite this criticism, it is useful to point out that in spite of the extremely valuable contributions of these community actions, they are often measured against a vast set of systemic roots of food insecurity, which no isolated local program alone can counteract (Bellows and Hamm, 2003).

Another serious issue is the ad hoc, short-term nature of many CFS initiatives. Their stop-gap nature is often seen as failing to address the need for long-term solutions to food security. To address this problem, CFS must be carried out through a coherent policy (Slater, 2007; Anderson and Cook, 1999). This requires a progression from ad hoc, community-based programs to arrangements at an institutional level that introduce perennial policy frameworks focusing on community-building.

3.1.1 The Food Security Continuum

Strategies to build food security are not isolated processes and outcomes, but rather are located within a continuum of food security related to the time frame of the expected outcome (MacRae et al., 1990; McCullum et al., 2005; Kalina, 2001). A veritable "road to food security" (Community Nutritionists Council of BC, 2004: 24), the continuum is a valuable framework to describe the various stages that planners and policy-makers can follow to construct a more secure, sustainable food system (Slater, 2007). A continuum of food security implies multiple approaches with diverse stakeholders. These strategies fall into three progressive stages (see Figure 4 for more details):

1. *Efficiency strategies* are essentially stop-gap measures, but generate small, significant changes in the existing food system and provide immediate and temporary relief to hunger and food issues. Examples are charitable responses to hunger including food banks and soup kitchens.

2. *Transitional strategies* build capacity through greater involvement by those experiencing food insecurity and by strengthening current food systems through partnerships and networks. Examples include community kitchens, community gardens and food-buying clubs.

3. *Redesign strategies* are broader in scope, requiring long-term commitment from representatives of the entire food system. Strategies are based on a rethinking of the roots of the problem and the solutions to address it. Examples include reducing socio-economic disparities and developing a national or provincial policy that brings together agriculture and public health.

Figure 4. The Food Security Continuum

Stage of Continuum	Efficiency Strategies	Transitional Strategies	Redesign Strategies
Strategies and Activities	Counsel clients to maximize access to existing programs providing food and nutrition assistance Education on healthy food and lifestyle options Support existing charitable food outlets Map the location of charitable food outlets Document the nutritional value of charitable foods as a baseline for improvement Identify price imbalances in low-income neighourhoods, using the nutritious food basket	Connect charitable food programs with local food producers Multi-sector partnerships and networks that work toward CFS Facilitate development of: • community kitchens • community gardens • good food box programs Facilitate low-income consumers' access to farmers' markets, community gardens and other CFS programs	Advocate for minimum wage increase, adequate social assistance and more affordable housing Work with governments and communities to develop policies for: • land use that facilitates urban agriculture • increasing communities food self-reliance and achieving nutrition goals • tax incentives and financing mechanisms Adopt healthy food and nutrition food policies within government Promote the development of food policy councils Promote the development of community food charters
Time Frame	*Short Term*	*Medium Term*	*Long Term*

Source: MacRae et al. (1990); McCullum et al. (2005); Kalina (2001).

CFS can, therefore, act to effect positive change in the short, medium and long term. A challenge for building CFS is that processes are often medium and long term, making it difficult to associate with specific strategies. As a result, identifying objective, measurable indicators, often called "evidenced-based strategies," as part of a planning process is helpful (Slater, 2007; McCullum et al., 2005).

Having said that, no single approach or organization of CFS alone can solve the problem. CFS should be considered in the context of a community's needs and priorities, recognizing that "one size may not fit all" (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2006: 33). CFS programs "are most attainable through comprehensive, population-level food security programming. Implementing a single strategy and expecting significant results will not work, as food security is a complex, multi-faced issue" (BC Ministry of Health, 2006: 13). Despite the often limited scope of small-scale projects, collectively these approaches are an important part of changing the nature of food insecurity (Johnson, 2003; Community Nutritionists Council of BC, 2004). Achieving food security, then, requires success using all three strategies on the food security continuum (Kalina, 2001).

Community-based responses to food insecurity have been formulated as an alternative to the traditional charitable model, providing healthier, better-quality food and preserving participants' dignity by requiring their participation, time and often some investment of financial resources (Power, 2005a). These programs assume that food resources will be more accessible, support neighbourhood revitalization, community capacity-building and local economies if they are community-based. Most programs focus on supplying individuals with nutritious, affordable food while at the same time increasing awareness of healthy food and how to prepare it (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2006).

Although there is a great deal of evidence suggesting that approaches to tackle food insecurity should focus primarily on redesign strategies to improve income, this research supports the notion that there is a value in focusing on transitional strategies (Cook, 2008b). Furthermore, there are suggestions that the redesign stage is unlikely to be realized until efficiency and transitional strategies have been attempted and exhausted (Toronto Food Policy Council, 1994). Examples of transitional CFS strategies include community gardens and urban agriculture, food markets and farmers' markets, food cooperatives, community kitchens, community-supported agriculture and field-to-school programs. These strategies are considered in the following sections.

3.1.1.1 Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture

Community gardening is one part of a larger concept of urban agriculture, defined broadly as growing food in cities, "a continuum from backyard gardens to community gardens to commercial production at small, medium and large scales" (Toronto Food Policy Council, 1999: 6). The 1987 Bruntland Report, also known as *Our Common Future*, stressed urban food production to allow for greater access to food for the urban poor. It was probably the first United Nations document to highlight urban agriculture as a tool to support urban development (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987).

In Canada and around the world, "community gardens are increasingly becoming part of the urban fabric" (Wakefield et al., 2007: 92). These gardens are often built on abandoned or underutilized land, in schools, in housing communities, in parks, and in both urban centres and rural areas. Today, community gardens increasingly appeal to immigrants, those committed to sustainability and those who may not have access to nutritious food outlets (Twiss et al., 2003).

Community gardens are part of a broader strategy to increase food security through CFS and access to food (Baker, 2004). They are understood to have a multitude of benefits. These include heath benefits such as improved access to food, culturally appropriate food, better nutrition and cost savings (Dickenson et al., 2003; Wakefield et al., 2007), improved mental health and increased physical activity (Armstrong, 2000). A study of community gardening in southeast Toronto noted that "most participants spoke of improved food access and cost-saving in some way" (Wakefield et al., 2007: 97). Regarding access to healthy food, one study compared community gardeners with non-gardeners in Philadelphia and found the gardeners ate a wider variety of vegetables than the non-gardeners (Blair, Giesecke and Sherman, 1991). Another study of community gardens, this one in upstate New York, found that the most common reasons cited for people becoming involved in the gardens were access to fresh foods, to enjoy nature and the resultant health benefits (Armstrong, 2000). In California, a community garden project documented specific health benefits from increased physical activity and consumption of fresh vegetables and fruits (Twiss et al., 2003).

Community gardens also provide opportunities for education, job skills training and income generation (Holland, 2004; Ferris, Norman and Semple, 2001) and improved security and safety (Ferris, Norman and Semple, 2001). Additional benefits include increased social interaction and social capital, and an increased appreciation of local diversity (Handcock, 2001). As Wakefield el al. note (2007), this is a particular benefit of community gardens, especially where social exclusion and marginalization are pervasive. A study of community gardening in upstate New York found that gardens in low-income areas were four times as likely as non-low-income gardens to provide additional benefits due to the organizing facilitated through community gardening (Armstrong, 2000).

There are many types of successful community gardens, but several elements considered essential for success include commitment of local leadership and staffing, involvement of volunteers and community partners, availability of skill-building opportunities for participants (Twiss et al., 2003), building on existing community resources and nurturing ethnic and cultural diversity (Hopkins, 2000). Despite the wealth of positive benefits attributed to community gardens, "the dearth of data on the positive impacts of community gardens hinders the ability to make a convincing argument when resources…are at stake. Anecdotal evidence abounds, but important outcomes such as the physical benefits of gardening and community connectedness are difficult" (Twiss et al., 2003; 1437-1438).

3.1.1.2 <u>Food Cooperatives</u>

Food cooperatives are non-profit organizations that make common grocery items available at wholesale prices, often formed to meet a need not being met by a traditional retail store or to provide an alternative source of food in areas poorly served by retail markets (Kantor, 2001). These programs help families save money by pooling food resources to buy food in bulk quantities at reduced cost, often saving as much as 60% on groceries (Kalina, 2001). The most common example across Canada is the "Good Food Box" or "Harvest Box." Such programs may offer a dignified alternative to food banks for those who can afford to participate in them, and can have some community-building and social capital value that food banks lack (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2006).

3.1.1.3 <u>Food Markets/Farmers' Markets</u>

Although farmers' markets have multiplied in Canada over the past decade, most successful markets are located in middle-class neighbourhoods. During the same period, interest in combining the goals of food security with farmers' markets has also grown in the United States (Guthman, Morris and Allen, 2006). Farmers' markets have not, by contrast, developed in low-income neighbourhoods in Canada, although recent attempts by CFS advocates and organizations in Toronto to start farmers' markets in low-income communities have begun (Baker, n.d.). However, farmers' markets must contend with a central tension between satisfying small-scale farmers on the one hand, and low-income consumers on the other (Guthman, Morris and Allen, 2006). This perceived "win-win" situation is particularly challenging for farmers' markets that attempt to achieve the goals of food security.

Some work has begun to document successful elements of farmers' markets in low-income communities. First, as most of the research has pointed out, low-income markets need to be subsidized to make them possible and to satisfy both farmers and low-income consumers (Guthman, Morris and Allen, 2006; Project for Public Spaces, 2003; Fisher, 1999). In the United States, the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program has linked food access for low-income communities with farmers' markets. The program provides low-income women and children with coupons to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers' markets, providing a solution to the question of food access as well as to the issue of how to support local farmers (Joy et al., 2001). Second, community organizing is a crucial element for farmers' markets. Third, low-income markets need to focus on basic food at affordable prices. This mix should reflect the cultural diversity of the community. Fourth, transit programs may help increase the market's trade area. Fifth, hiring staff from the neighbourhood may help break down barriers. Sixth, support from local community groups or community-based organizations may help strengthen markets as community institutions. Seven, the location of the market is an important factor (Fisher, 1999). Finally, customer education may be an important component of markets in low-income neighbourhoods (Project for Public Spaces, 2003).

Overall, farmers' markets may serve several purposes, including creating vibrant community spaces, stimulating the local economy and building a sense of community (Spitzer, 1995). In low-income neighbourhoods, farmers' markets provide access to produce at a lower cost than grocery stores (Flournoy and Treuhaft, 2005), access to fresh and affordable food, nutrition and

health education (Project for Public Spaces, 2003), space for interaction and learning, entrepreneurial opportunities for residents (Flournoy and Treuhaft, 2005), and social interaction and a sense of place (Project for Public Spaces, 2003).

3.1.1.4 Other Community Food Programs

Other community food programs include community kitchens, school food programs, community-supported agriculture, food-related community economic development programs and community food assessments.

- Part of a larger grouping of community-based cooking programs, community kitchens are groups of people who come together regularly to prepare food for themselves and their families and are "characterized by the pooling of resources and labour to produce large quantities of food" (Tarasuk and Reynolds, 1999: 13).

- School food programs seek to reduce hunger and enhance nutrition among children who are considered to be at risk of poor nutrition. Some are the response to problems experienced by low-income children, while others, such as the Coalition for Student Nutrition, consider it an issue for all children.

- Farm-to-school programs connect schools with local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias, improving student nutrition, providing health and nutrition education opportunities and supporting local small farmers.

- Community-supported agriculture (CSA), a system that connects consumers and growers, is another way to improve access to quality food. Consumers purchase a share in a growers' harvest at the beginning of the season. Growers then provide a weekly harvest that is distributed to the CSA shareholders. Consumers benefit by receiving fresh, high-quality products and learning about food and sustainable agriculture, and farmers benefit from a secure market for their crops.

- Food-related community economic development programs give people the opportunity to start or enhance food-related small businesses. The Toronto Kitchen Incubator is one example. A not-for-profit kitchen located at FoodShare, the Incubator allows new entrepreneurs to develop products and test them before committing to their own kitchen.

- A Community Food Assessment is a participatory and collaborative process that examines a broad range of food-related issues and resources in order to inform actions to improve the community's food system.

4. Connecting Community Food Security and Social Housing

Starting with an account of food as an urban issue, this section joins the discussion of CFS strategies from the previous section with social housing to consider establishing concrete policy options. Demonstrating the importance of "scaling up" food security, it uses health as a rationale for taking an increased role in food security. The section concludes with a discussion of food security policy in social housing settings.

4.1 Why Food Is an Urban Issue

Despite the evident linkages between food and cities, the connection has been made only sparingly. More often than not, food issues are thought of as agricultural issues located in rural settings. Urban historian Arnold Toynbee even defined cities in term of their inability to produce sufficient food, arguing that "a city is a human settlement whose inhabitants cannot produce, within the city limits all of the food that they need for keeping them alive" (Toynbee, 1970: 8).

In spite of this perception, several researchers have begun to make the link between food and cities (Pothukuchi and Kaufman 1999; Mendes, 2007). Although food has often been confused as rural issue, it is in fact, an urban issue, influencing the local economy, the environment, public health and the quality of neighbourhoods (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999). The following points illustrate some of the ways food and cities are tied:

- Many households spend over 30% of their income on food purchases (Canada Mortgage and Housing, 2007).

- Health problems resulting from food-related issues are the cause of many illnesses (Mead et al., 1999).

- Because low-income residents are less likely to own cars, the quality of a city's transportation system is a major factor affecting access to affordable food stores (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999).

- When a city has a shortage of affordable housing, low-income residents may be at a higher risk of hunger, due to priority given to housing payments over food purchases (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999).

- Most families dealing with food issues are, at least in Canada, in large urban centres (Cook, 2008a).

- Many cities, especially in northern climates such as Canada's, import a vast proportion of their food and cause many environmental problems (Roberts, 2001).

In 1902, Ebenezer Howard's concept of the "garden city" made the link between food and other community systems. The concept included 5,000 acres of agricultural "greenbelt" land, collective kitchens, and dairy and fruit farms, all located to serve transportation and avoid overcrowding (Howard, 1965; Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999). The inter-related nature of food and cities is, however, not understood by the current piecemeal approach to food insecurity.

4.2 "Scaling Up": Creating an Enabling Environment for Food Security

Referring to a case study on local supply chains in Toronto, Harriet Friedmann's (2007) use of the term "scaling up" is illustrative for the present study. Friedmann refers to the limits of local community food organizations to solve social problems, and the subsequent partnership with a municipal institution to "scale up" sustainable local food systems. Scaling up is an important concept for the current study. Referring to the case of the Good Food Box, the authors point out that the criticism that CFS should attain socio-ecological goals on a broader scale

> …indicates the need to scale 'up' – identifying state-sponsored solutions …and not assume that a patchwork of community-based activism or green entrepreneurialism can solve these problems…the idea of scaling up to actively pursue state involvement is relatively absent in the CFS literature (Johnston and Baker, 2005: 319).

According to Slater (2007: 5) and others (Community Nutritionists Council of BC, 2004; Kalina, 2001; Anderson and Cook, 1999), CFS "cannot be realized outside a policy context." This means moving from ad hoc, community-based programs to arrangements at an institutional level that introduce policy frameworks focusing on community-building. Slater continues, reasoning that "food policies are the mechanisms by which food security action projects can be transformed into a framework to meet the goal of a food system that is economically and environmentally sustainable, promotes health, and supports food security for all" (2007: 5). Viewed within the food security continuum, policy frameworks fit into a redesign strategy (see section 3.1.1).

Although food policy has not initially been perceived as an urban strategy, over the past few decades a renewed recognition developed of the need for both cities and local authorities "to play a proactive and co-ordinating role in alleviating urban food insecurity" (Mendes, 2007: 100). The Food and Hunger Action Committee (2003) points out that municipal governments are limited in their ability to address systemic social issues such as poverty. However, municipal institutions could offer more comprehensive supports to urban food systems planning (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999). As MacNair (2002: 26) notes, "that a number of city govern-ments have incorporated community gardens into their programs and policy, suggests that there are clear benefits to doing so." In general, food policy is lacking in academic research connecting governance, planning and food system issues (Mendes, 2007). Indeed, several researchers argue that there is a critical need for more comprehensive descriptions of the evolution of food policy initiatives in order to learn from past examples (Rocha, 2001; Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999; MacRae, 1999).

In Canadian cities, local governments including Montréal, Toronto, Ottawa, Prince Albert, Kamloops and Vancouver currently take part in some form of food-related program delivery, policy-making or urban planning (Mendes, 2007). Other food policy development includes the foundation of official food charters, a variety of community food programs and food policy councils.

Food policy councils are the closest thing to concentrating attention on food-related issues at the local level (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999). In North America, there are at present no less than 60 food policy councils (Cook, 2008a). With the aim to improve CFS through redesign strategies and promote sustainable food systems, food policy councils are inter-sectoral coalitions that seek to create a unified vision and formulate food policies responsive to local needs (Webb et al., 1998). Although most food policy councils operate outside government, the Toronto Food Policy Council is unique in its position operating as a sub-committee of the Board of Health, functioning with a measure of independence that most councils do not have to drive the policy side by supporting innovative programs (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 1999; Johnston and Baker, 2005). Although food policy councils differ in their functions, resources and the degree of success in addressing food policy in a comprehensive way, these councils are essential for achieving local food security.

Mendes (2007) points out the complexity of negotiating a place for food policy on municipal agendas. Mendes outlines several concerns regarding food policy as a municipal responsibility, including tensions over the "operationalization" of food policy within local governments, and the perception that municipalities have limited jurisdiction to formulate such policy and lack the mandate and resources necessary to implement it (Mendes, 2007: 101-102). However, even beyond these practical concerns, a necessary requirement for realizing food policy is political will: "it is this commitment that will lead to policies and programs promoting food security" (Rocha, 2007: 5).

The term "healthy public policy" refers to "coordinated action that leads to health, income and social policies that foster greater equity" and an overt concern for health and equity in the policies of all sectors (World Health Organization, 1986). As the next section makes clear, "the creation of healthy food policy enables the infrastructure supports and strategy initiatives necessary to facilitate sustainable progress towards food security goals and objectives" (BC Ministry of Health, 2006: 7). Healthy public policy is, then, a key strategy towards real change for food security (Ontario Public Health Association, 2002).

4.3 Food Security for Health

The Food and Hunger Action Committee (2003: 4) notes that "food security is good for Toronto's integrity, cohesion and reputation as 'the city that works'" and these "win-win combinations" produce benefits for the community, the environment, the economy and for public health. Because of the link between food insecurity and poor health (Vozoris and Tarasuk, 2003), food security has been identified as a social determinant of health (McIntyre and Tarasuk, 2002; Slater, 2007). Food security itself is a prerequisite for disease prevention and overall well-being (Slater, 2007). The benefits of tackling food insecurity for social housing providers, tenants and their communities are evident from various perspectives, but especially from an approach focusing on health (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2006; Cook, 2008a). Many public health authorities agree that "food security is a health matter. Food security is the foundation for healthy people, healthy communities and healthy environments" (Community Nutritionists Council of BC, 2004: 25).

By contrast, food *in*security can result in a variety of severe health-related consequences, both for individuals and communities. For individuals, food insecurity can lead to lower dietary intakes (Tarasuk and Beaton, 1999), poorer health including "a range of physical, mental and social health problems" (Vozoris and Tarasuk, 2003: 120), lower health status of adults with diabetes (Nelson et al., 2001), poorer cognitive, academic and psychosocial development of children (Alaimo, Olsen and Frongillo, 2001), and can impede the management of chronic diseases that rely on good nutrition (Tarasuk, 2005). Several studies have linked obesity to food insecurity (Che and Chen, 2001); however, more recent studies have not found a correlation between these factors (Vozoris and Tarasuk, 2003). For communities, the social exclusion that accompanies food insecurity is relevant to population health approaches (Tarasuk, 2005).

In Canada, while there has been some discussion towards a policy on food security, nothing substantive has emerged. Thus, during the 1990s, the connection between health outcomes and systemic food factors arose when several food-related issues became increasingly critical and visible, "viewed by many as interconnected systems of a food system which was not intrinsically health promoting" (Ontario Public Health Association, 2002: 4). According to a report by the Ontario Public Health Association Food Security Work Group (1995: 1), "adverse social and physical environments, unemployment, poor housing and inadequate social support limit access to safe, nutritious food in amounts adequate to achieve and maintain health." In British Columbia, the Ministry of Health has designated food security as a core public health function (Community Nutritionists Council of BC, 2004). In Ontario, food security is a mandated activity of public health nutritionists (Ontario Public Health Association, 2002).

Many food policy analysts have referred to a well-functioning food system for the health and vitality of communities (Pothukuchi and Kaufman, 2000). As yet, there is little evidence regarding the effectiveness of community-based food security (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2006; Tarasuk, 2001a; Cook, 2008b). Although the evidence is weak for CFS initiatives, it is important to establish

> whether community approaches to address economic determinants of healthy eating are workable in a variety of Canadian contexts, have an impact on food and eating at the population level, influence population-level policies that promote supportive environments for healthy eating, and ultimately influence population health status (Raine, 2005: S11).

Moreover, the complexity of measuring an effect at the population level is often beyond the scope of most community-based projects (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2006). Many CFS interventions are mid- to long-term strategies. As such, short-term results are difficult to perceive. A report from the United Kingdom makes clear that

> …food projects should not be judged solely on whether they produce changes in nutrition or health outcomes in the long-term – such as changes in blood vitamin levels, or reductions in mortality, important as they are. Rather, they should also be seen as contributing to changes in short-term nutrition indicators, such as increasing skills and confidence to use a wider range of food stuffs than before, or to improve food purchasing or eating patterns through access to cheaper food. Measurements of process outcomes have to become part of the definition of success (McGlone et al., 1999: 23).

Finally, "the relative success or failure of individual activities and approaches has as much to do with the community context of the activity and the associated infrastructures than with the individual merits of the specific activity itself" (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2006: 33). Across Canada, work done by public health authorities have shown that food security interventions including policies, programs and services have achieved a range of positive health outcomes (Community Health Nutritionists of BC, 2004; Ontario Public Health Association, 2002; Provincial Health Services Authority, 2006; BC Ministry of Health, 2006).

4.3.1 Individual-Level Health Outcomes

Several individual-level health outcomes are evident from a review of the literature. The first is the development of personal skills (BC Ministry of Health, 2006). This means fostering skills to enhance individual and community control over food-related health and the food environment. As one of the action strategies of health promotion in the *Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion* (World Health Organization, 1986), this "increases the options available to people to exercise more control over their own health and over their environments, and to make choices conducive to health."

A second outcome includes a variety of health improvement outcomes to "improve overall health and well-being and/or have a broad preventive impact on a wide variety of physical and mental health problems" (Community Nutritionists Council of BC, 2004: 27). These include increased knowledge on how to support health such as the capacity to choose good food (James et al., 1997) and increased ability of individuals to access healthy foods such as availability of more healthy food choices (Koc et al., 1999).

A third outcome is prevention of disease, injury and disability outcomes (Community Nutritionists Council of BC, 2004). This includes a reduced incidence of chronic disease (Marshall, 2000), reduced incidence of behavioural issues contributing to poor health such as crime (Gesch et al., 2002) and decreased incidence of non-food-borne illnesses including pesticides (Schafer and Kegley, 2002). As the Food and Hunger Action Committee notes,

> A healthy diet is the most cost-effective form of health care available. Heart disease, strokes, diabetes and cancer, all of which are related to diet, cost Toronto $491 million a year in medical bills and lost productivity… To protect Canada's health care system, especially as the population ages and chronic diseases peak, nutrition needs to be treated as a first line of defense (Food and Hunger Action Committee, 2001b: 3).

A final outcome is decreased social isolation and the development of social capital and community-building. Social capital refers to "features of social life – networks, norms, and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (Putnam, 1996: 36). Research suggests that a high social capital level positively affects health promotion, taking charge of health and psychosocial mechanisms such as social inclusion (Bouchard, Roy and Van Kemenade, 2005). McGlone et al. explain that:

> The social gains at individual and community levels are not separate from nutritional outcomes but intrinsic to their achievement. Overcoming social isolation, giving people a sense of worth and well-being, empowering them, and raising levels of skills and training enable individuals to feel in more control of

their own health and welfare. There is then the possibility to implement changes and move towards healthier eating. For these reasons food projects contribute to raising the social capital of a community (1999: 41).

Participants in CFS projects foster social capital among participants as people get to know each other. For example, a study of over 300 low-income households in Connecticut found that households with higher levels of social capital are less likely to experience hunger, even though they may have similarly limited financial or food resources (Martin et al., 2004). Social capital "can be an important latent outcome of many [CFS] programs" (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2006: 32). Furthermore, "this community-building function of community-based food security activities may be their most important contribution to improving the lives and health of the participants" (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2006: 33).

4.3.2 Community-Level Health Outcomes

In addition to individual-level outcomes, CFS contributes to community-level health outcomes including the development of healthy communities. The combination of social, economic and environmental factors related to food persuaded many health professions during the 1990s that these issues required undertaking systemic solutions (Ontario Public Health Association, 2002). This involved working towards "healthy communities" rather than simply health, which would enhance determinants of health in the social, economic and environmental realms (Hancock, 1993). According to the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition (2006), healthy communities involve various ways of accessing healthy food, but also include other benefits that emerge from creating food security through a healthy community process. In the case of community gardens, they "are seen to benefit the community as a whole, by improving relationships among people, by increasing community pride, and in some cases by serving as an impetus for broader community improvement and mobilization" (Wakefield et al., 2007: 97). Other benefits may include enhanced personal health, economic development, more meaningful jobs, increased community spirit, reduced overlap and duplication in services and programs, increased viability of smaller family farms, protection of rural culture, improved water and air quality, economic and environmental stability and safe and supportive communities (Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 2006).

The Ottawa Charter refers to healthy communities as "supportive environments." This recognizes "the need to encourage reciprocal maintenance – to take care of each other, our communities and our natural environment…the way society organizes work should help create…living and working conditions that are safe, stimulating, satisfying and enjoyable" (World Health Organization, 1986). Supportive environments entail "making the healthy choice the easy choice" (BC Ministry of Health, 2006: 7).

Food purchases provide a useful example of supportive environments. Research shows that while less healthy diets tend to be cheaper, even small price reductions can influence purchasing and consumption (French, 2003; Power, 2005b). This extends to the idea of food deserts. A study of the results of introducing a supermarket into an area previously considered a food desert determined that fruit and vegetable consumption increased considerably only among those initially consuming the lowest quantities of fruits and vegetables (Wrigley, Warm and Margetts, 2003).

Finally, research shows that when low-income groups are healthy, the benefits are transferred to all income groups, suggesting that the benefits to communities may be more than meets the eye (Raphael, 1998).

4.4 Food Security and Social Housing

The previous section described the benefits provided by CFS programs, especially when viewed from the perspective of individual and community health. If food security is beneficial for low-income individuals and communities, it follows that the social housing sector would directly benefit from becoming a pioneer in driving CFS programs. As sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.4 indicate, there is an obvious need to address the food security issue in the social housing sector. While this has been traditionally done in a community-based, ad hoc manner, social housing authorities are in an ideal position to develop, implement and maintain CFS initiatives at an institutional level by incorporating these initiatives into coherent food security policy frameworks that focus on community building.

4.4.1 What Do We Know from Past Experience?

To apply policy on food security in social housing settings, a review of experience is helpful. A global search of CFS programs in social housing reveals an array of initiatives. Several North American garden programs are noteworthy. In Chicago, the Cabrini Greens Garden Project is a market garden project in Cabrini Green, one of the most notorious public housing projects in the United States. Operating since 1991, Cabrini Greens has a variety of youth-related projects underway on three sites, including a community garden where children grow salad greens and other vegetables for sale to upscale local restaurants (Kaufman and Bailkey, 2000). In Vancouver, there are many food-growing gardens on the rooftops of social housing projects or co-ops (Kurbis et al., 2006). The New York Housing Authority's Garden Program began in 1962 as a competition between resident gardeners. It is the largest in the United States. The program provides materials, including seeds and bulbs, and technical support to 572 registered gardens across the city (New York Housing Authority, 2008).

Several other garden programs – in the United Kingdom and Australia – are also illustrative for the current study. Neighbourhoods Green, based in the United Kingdom, is an organization dedicated to raising the profile of green and open spaces – including community gardens – under the ownership and management of social housing providers in London.[16] In Australia, Waterloo Public Housing Estate in Sydney has 2,500 units with a tenant base of disadvantaged and socially excluded groups with multiple and complex needs. The community garden project included establishing several community gardens that help reduce food costs and provide a source of fresh food. More tellingly, a report on the project reveals "that community gardens can make a positive contribution to community development in public housing estates" (Bartolomei et al., 2003: 5).

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[16] For more information, see www.neighbourhoodsgreen.org.uk/ng/.

Aside from garden projects, several other types of CFS initiatives are also present in social housing. Steeves Manor in Vancouver, a social housing complex for the elderly and disabled, has a good food box program called the Fruit and Veggie Deal. The program began in 2004 and provides 26 to 40 boxes to Steeves Manor residents and members of the surrounding community. Boxes cost either $10 or $15 dollars depending on quantity and are available once a month (Kurbis et al., 2006). A farmers' market at Tasker Homes, the oldest public housing project in southwest Philadelphia housing more than 2,500 people, was established in the early 1990s "to recreate the network of public farmers' markets that used to serve these neighborhoods before the supermarkets came and went" (Hinds, 1994). The program was so successful in 1994 that it now includes 19 markets in underserved neighbourhoods administered by the Food Trust.[17] Now called Greater Grays Ferry Estates, Tasker Homes was redeveloped in 2004.

Social housing in Scandinavia, particularly specialty housing for seniors, includes well-appointed kitchen/cafeteria areas intended for food programming in the buildings. There, housing planners improve social housing buildings by providing common meeting spaces. Social housing developers are trying to create a positive image for seniors' social housing. Money has been spent to break down social isolation by using common kitchens and eating areas (Cosgrove, 2000).

4.4.2 Towards Food Security Policy for Social Housing

Despite the many examples cited above, a likely criticism of CFS programs in a social housing context is the tension between, on the one hand, the need for more housing units or upgrades to existing buildings, and on the other hand, gardening space or other resources spent on food programs. "While the benefits of community gardens are many, land and housing shortages may compete for gardening space" (Twiss et al., 2003: 1437). As Schmelkopf (1995: 364) observes in the case of community gardening in Loisaida, a neighbourhood in the Lower East Side of New York City, this "dilemma of whether to develop land for low-income and market-rate housing or preserve the gardens" is contentious. "Juxtaposed against these circumstances is the need for low-income housing in a financially strained city with numerous demands on scarce resources" (Schmelkopf, 1995: 379-80). Shmelkopf's response to this dilemma is instructive for the present study. She notes that:

> …many of the garden activists appreciate the need for housing and acknowledge the potential real estate value of the larger gardens. However, they also feel that…there are other options and justifiable reasons to save the larger gardens. Among these reasons are the sizable proportion of Loisaida gardeners who garden there and the social, economic, and physical benefits derived by them; the investment of labor and the elaborate infrastructure that has evolved over time; and the positive effect the gardens have on the surrounding neighbourhood (Schmelkopf 1995: 380).

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[17] For more information, see www.thefoodtrust.org/php/programs/farmers.market.program.php.

In Toronto, the Community Food Animators Project (n.d.) recommends that Toronto Community Housing "create a food policy strategy focused on food security" and "continue supporting markets, gardens and community kitchens."[18] Similarly, the Food and Hunger Action Committee of the City of Toronto recommends increased food security initiatives in social housing:

> Some social housing already offers on-site community gardens, food buying clubs and community kitchens. However, many more residents of social housing could benefit from similar community food initiatives. The Food and Hunger Action Committee would like to see more social housing providers consider such initiatives, which could offer many benefits to individuals and families in social housing and to the housing programs as a whole (Food and Hunger Action Committee, 2001a: 19).

An overall strategy would bring together all aspects of food security at social housing sites. For example, policy scenarios may include "making all TCHC buildings a site of fabulous food systems – food markets, gardens, compost and kitchen programs in each buildings" (Field, 2008). CFS, then, provides for a multitude of benefits to social housing providers, tenants and their communities.

4.4.3 Benefits for the Social Housing Sector

Establishing a policy on CFS has the potential for a variety of important benefits – for tenants and social housing providers. CFS programming may help make an organization stand out. For example, at one community centre in downtown Toronto, the community food program is an attractive element of the community centre and gives the organization a positive profile (P.I., 2008f).[19] For social housing authorities, the following quote is illustrative.

> The garden is an investment, not just a physical investment, but a social one as well. We promote the garden as a service that has been designed to enhance the quality of living at the Oaks [Riverside], and to make us stand out from other properties. If someone is choosing between living in one apartment or the next, here's something we have that's considered a value-added asset to living here. It not only beautifies the landscape and physically benefits the property, but it benefits the lives of the people living here and that's an asset in itself (Ramdharry, 2000, quoted in Baker, 2004: 320).

Indeed, such programs may also raise the value of certain communities, offer opportunities for partnerships with schools and other organizations, and also present an innovative way to deal with conflict in communities including community leadership, issues with youth and community economic development (P.I., 2008f).

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[18] The Community Food Animators Project includes the following project partners: FoodShare, Afri-Can Basket and the Stop Community Food Centre.
[19] In this report, "PI" refers to Personal Interview.

On a more practical note, implementing a consistent policy on food security may benefit a social housing provider by affecting the rate of arrears. Arrears are considered to be one indicator of extreme financial hardship of food insecurity in some contexts (Tarasuk, 2001b). At Toronto Community Housing, revenue lost through arrears restricts the organization's ability to fund its operations and investments; in 2006, the total revenue lost through arrears was over $500,000 (Toronto Community Housing, 2007b). Thus, concrete action on food security may benefit both tenants as well as social housing authorities by its effect on the rate of arrears.

A final benefit for social housing authorities relates to security concerns. CFS programs, such as community gardens and other programs that bring communities together, build safer communities and prevent crime. For one staff person in a social housing building, programs such as community gardens and farmers' markets create a positive atmosphere and prevent negative incidents because of the presence of people in otherwise deserted housing complexes (P.I., 2008d). Indeed, it is easy to see the difference between a housing complex where the residents run a community garden to harvest their own food and another left with bare paved areas.

This section has outlined the benefits of tackling food insecurity for social housing providers, tenants and their communities from an approach focusing on health. Food security is a prerequisite for disease prevention and overall well-being (Community Nutritionists Council of BC, 2004); the development of personal skills (BC Ministry of Health, 2006); decreased social isolation and the development of social capital and community building (Bouchard, Roy and Van Kemenade, 2005); and the development of healthy communities as "supportive environments" including enhanced personal health, economic development, more meaningful jobs, increased community spirit, improved water and air quality, economic and environmental stability and safe and supportive communities (Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 2006). Taking these valuable benefits into account, the absolute cost of CFS programs appears negligible compared with the overall expenditures in building upgrades and upkeep in social housing. Moreover, implementing a food security policy requires a vision for real change rather than the current piecemeal approach to hunger and food security. As Joseph (1999: 12) argues, what is needed is an underlying consensus about the meaning and purposes of CFS and "a framework to bridge vision, principles, and implementation: to make a specific action agenda possible." This will allow CFS to move to a coherent framework to guide action rather than to ad hoc responses and piecemeal solutions.

5. The Case Studies

This section presents three case studies that have emerged as successful examples of CFS. It begins by placing them in the context of food security in Toronto and concludes by offering key observations to gain insight from these experiences.

5.1 Toronto: A "Municipal Pioneer" of Food Security

There are a number of reasons for selecting case studies in Toronto. For example, in Canada, most families dealing with food issues are, in fact, in large urban centres (Cook, 2008a). In this context, the high cost of housing, low incomes and inaccessible low-quality food retail outlets contribute to experiences of food insecurity.

Further, hunger is increasingly becoming a problem in Toronto. In the Greater Toronto Area, food bank visits totaled 905,543 between April 2006 and March 2007, a 1.3% increase from the previous year when food bank usage in Canada had actually declined marginally (Daily Bread Food Bank, 2007). On a larger scale, Ontario, in addition to Québec and British Columbia, "have traditionally accounted for the lion's share of food bank use in Canada"; for 2007 Ontario accounted for 2.5% as a percentage of provincial population, the fourth highest after Newfoundland, Manitoba and Saskatchewan (Canadian Association of Food Banks, 2007).

In Toronto, close to 6% of residents live in social housing, where hunger and food insecurity are often major issues. There are over 90,000 City-funded social housing units in Toronto; 78% are rent-geared-to-income (City of Toronto, 2007). Although measurement of food insecurity at the national level does not translate to municipalities, food bank use is one indication of the food-insecure population in Toronto.[20] Just over a quarter of food bank clients live in subsidized housing (Daily Bread Food Bank, 2007). However, reduced housing costs do not provide a great financial advantage due to the "stacking effect" of social benefits whereby individuals "lose" from one service what is gained from another (Daily Bread Food Bank, 2007; Shillington and Fair, 2001). For example, an individual on subsidized housing would consequently receive less financial support from Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program because of lower housing costs, thus leaving them in a similar financial dilemma.

Toronto also boasts a large number of food activists, initiatives and municipal and non-governmental organizations working on food security issues (Friedmann, 2007). This is what Wekerle (2004: 381) terms "a new political space for food justice issues in Toronto," complimented by "dense, interlocking networks of community agencies, advocacy groups, place-based movements, municipal agencies, and staff that collaborate on policy innovations, education, and specific projects." The food security movement in Toronto includes a range of initiatives and agencies, successful in developing both policies and programs. As a result the range of creative approaches to food insecurity, Toronto is viewed as a "municipal pioneer" in the area of food security (Food and Hunger Action Committee, 2003: 13). Moreover, the range of actors working on food issues "are unique in linking a wide range of top-down and bottom-up

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[20] Food bank usage is generally considered an underestimate of the prevalence of food insecurity in Canada, perhaps because only about 20% of food-insecure or economically disadvantaged people use food banks (Tarasuk, 2005; Che and Chen, 2001).

initiatives that emerge and evolve within and across a range of 'sectors' – public, voluntary (NGO) and market" (Friedmann, 2007: 395).

In addition, municipal bodies in Toronto have been active on food insecurity issues for almost two decades. In the mid-1980s, Toronto supported the Healthy Cities movement, an initiative of the World Health Organization to encourage cities to support policies that promote health and wellness. In 1990, the Toronto Food Policy Council was established as a subcommittee of the City's Board of Health. It has brought together agencies dealing with a range of issues to seek long-term solutions to the problems of hunger and sustainable food systems and to link communities with the political process (Wekerle, 2004). Toronto City Council (1992) issued a "Declaration on Food and Nutrition" in 1992 to promote the long-term sustainability and security of Toronto's food supply. In 2001, the City of Toronto adopted a Food Charter (shown in Appendix A), affirming its commitment to "access to an adequate supply of nutritious, affordable and culturally-appropriate food" for Toronto residents (Food and Hunger Action Committee, 2001b).

Finally, the creative approaches to deal with food insecurity in Toronto in response to the diversity of the city makes for particularly robust programs (MacNair, 2002). The 2006 Census highlights Toronto's ethno-cultural mix: Toronto took in 40.4% of all newcomers to Canada between 2001 and 2006 and in that same time the visible minority population grew by 27% (Statistics Canada, 2008). As well, almost half of Toronto's residents (45.7%) were born in another country and Toronto's myriad ethno-cultural groups speak as many as 100 languages (Statistics Canada, 2007; City of Toronto, 2008). This diversity means that efforts toward food security must include a broad range of cultural groups with varying needs.

The purpose of this research is to identify creative approaches that deal with food security that may guide a coherent policy framework for social housing providers. Drawing on key informant interviews, the case studies are presented in the following format: the first part is a description of the program highlights and the general context of the program; and the second part makes key observations to gain insight from the case studies.[21]

5.2 Community Gardens at Toronto Community Housing

Toronto Community Housing is the largest social housing provider in Canada and the second largest in North America. With 164,000 tenants, Toronto Community Housing is larger than the province of Prince Edward Island (Bain, 2007). In Toronto Community Housing, there are over 100 community gardens, including fruit and vegetable gardens, flower gardens and environmental gardens with native plant species (shown in Appendix D). While many of the gardens are established with partners from the local community, they are clearly tenant-led initiatives (Toronto Community Housing, 2007a). An additional component of the community gardens is the connection with farmers' markets and community kitchens, and in some Scarborough communities, gleaning programs (Toronto Community Housing, 2006).[22] In 2007, Toronto Community Housing completed a Community Gardening Manual to help facilitate

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[21]   The views expressed in the interviews do not necessarily represent the view of the organizations covered in the report, but they are the views of the key informants.

[22]   Gleaning is the collection of leftover crops from farmers, processors or retailers, usually for charitable purposes.

existing and new community gardening projects (Toronto Community Housing, 2007a). From the early beginnings, the program explicitly recognized the need to expand community gardens to new sites and that "a supported garden program compliments community development work and fits well into Toronto Community Housing's Healthy Communities initiative" (Toronto Environmental Alliance, 2004: 45).

As a brief on the program in 2006 observed, "TCHC has provided continued support to the development of community gardens and food security initiatives in TCHC communities to increase access to food, reduce hunger, improve the nutritional health of tenants, and strengthen community development" (Toronto Community Housing, 2006: 1). Toronto Community Housing staff support the community gardens in a number of ways, including giving garden groups ongoing support such as helping assign plots to the tenants; assisting, facilitating and mediating the resolution of disagreements among tenants; involving tenants in the community gardens; promoting the gardens to the broader community; arranging and managing partnerships with agencies or other organizations; helping with contractors and garden tools; and helping tenants apply for funding (Toronto Community Housing, 2007a). Finally, an updated brief reports that staff should identify opportunities to develop community gardens on certain pieces of land throughout the communities and review opportunities for community gardens in revitalization projects such as Lawrence Heights (Toronto Community Housing, 2008a).

Toronto Community Housing has continued to work with the City of Toronto to identify opportunities and develop community food initiatives, such as the community gardens, for tenants living in social housing. The Community Food Animators Project was started to develop best-practice, food-based programs in high-need neighbourhoods. A Project's report notes that "Toronto Community Housing is uniquely positioned to be a leader by investing in the substantial social benefits that community gardens can bring to Toronto Community Housing communities" (Community Food Animators Project, 2005: 22) and recommended that "Toronto Community Housing work with tenants, community garden leaders from Toronto Community Housing…to establish protocols for community garden siting, funding, management and ongoing support through all levels of Toronto Community Housing" (Community Food Animators Project, 2005: 22). An additional recommendation was to establish partnerships with local agencies to support community gardens and to increase the rate of garden development across the city.

5.2.1 General Observations

Many of the responses to the question about the benefits of the community gardens showed that the community gardens are often a starting point for other community activities, often offering "spill-over effects" (P.I., 2008f). Food is, then, a catalyst for building community, especially in social housing buildings

> …isolated from anything that could build community...People feel like they are 'loitering' in front of their own buildings and have stated numerous times that food security initiatives such as community gardens and markets have allowed them to get to know their neighbours and be proud of the place they live in – which has all kinds of community development implications such as safety, health of individuals – mental, physical, etc. (P.I., 2008l).

As one staff member notes, "once [the tenants] get involved in something little, they can get involved in other bigger things" (P.I., 2008d). In an east end Toronto Community Housing building on the Danforth, establishing the garden helped launch a social club, which now comprises almost half the tenants in the building (P.I., 2008d). In contrast to other CFS programs such as farmers' markets, the payback from the community gardens at Toronto Community Housing are mostly intangible benefits, including safe communities, community development and healthy living (P.I., 2008j).

Community animation is a method of community development in which a community member or community worker is a catalyst who brings together people, knowledge, skills and other resources that will help improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of communities (Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition, 2008). Currently, Toronto Community Housing is implementing a community animation model to support behaviour-change on a variety of issues, including community gardens (P.I., 2008j). The model seeks to draw on the skills of tenant leaders to engage fellow tenants in serving their community by connecting with individuals in their neighbourhood as a fellow tenant (Toronto Community Housing, 2008c). This model is based on several successful past experiences of community animation and helps ensure ongoing tenant engagement. Other community animation programs, most notably the Community Food Animators project, highlighted the need for a person to act as a community organizer, provide knowledge, energy and consistency (P.I., 2008l).[23] According to one community animator, the past success of community food animation is evident; the need for increased animation is apparent from the high number of requests for help, far more than the program can currently handle (P.I., 2008l). The community animation model is a prototype for other social housing authorities and may prove to be an essential component in any food security policy in a social housing setting.

A final lesson learned from Toronto Community Housing's garden program is that commitment to the issue is crucial. Toronto Community Housing was a partner in the Community Food Animators Project through Social Investment Fund support ($138,500 over three years) for food access initiatives in south Scarborough (Toronto Community Housing, 2008b).[24] The Social Investment Fund (SIF) is a community funding stream established by Toronto Community Housing in 2004 to support community initiatives that build strong and healthy communities. The project involves outreach to Toronto Community Housing communities, linking tenant leaders to community resources in order to establish community kitchens, community gardens and fresh produce markets. Toronto Community Housing funded one animator, seconded from the Stop Community Food Centre, to work in south Scarborough. A report by the Toronto Community Foundation (2006: 5) notes that:

> The 2005 pilot of the Food Animators project…has been successful in increasing access to healthy food where it was limited before. Benefiting communities were better able to deliver food programs, with over 90 per cent prepared to continue the programs on their own as a result of the Animators' support and training.

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[23] Community animation is also essential for the Good Food Markets program, discussed in section 5.4.

[24] The Community Food Animators project partners are FoodShare, the Stop Community Food Centre and Afri-Can Food Basket. The animator from each organization focuses on different areas: Afri-Can Food Basket focuses on community gardens, primarily in North York; the Stop Community Food Centre focuses on all three streams (community kitchens, community gardens and fresh produce markets); and FoodShare acts as the project lead and supports the development of Good Food Markets throughout the city.

As Wayne Roberts explains, "food has always lacked a major institution that will go to bat for it in the absence of [Public] Health…So TCHC was a turning point, it was a major institution, a big player with resources. It gave it credibility, and allowed us to move from the margins" (2008).

What Wayne Roberts says is a corroboration of the point made in section 4.4: social housing authorities are in an ideal position to develop, implement and maintain CFS initiatives at an institutional level by incorporating these initiatives into coherent food security policy frameworks that focus on community building.

5.3 The Good Food Box

Run by FoodShare, the Good Food Box is an outcome of the Field-to-Table project begun in 1991 as a traveling market truck that made various stops at social housing complexes throughout the city (Field, 2008). Both Field-to-Table and ultimately the Good Food Box were born out of the recognition that food banks were an inappropriate solution to urban hunger.[25]

FoodShare's first Good Food Boxes – a total of 40 – were packed in February 1994 (Scharf, 1999). The idea for the project was modeled after a program called "Share Box" in rural communities in the United States (Field, 2008). It also borrowed many elements from a similar program in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, called *sacolão*, or the "big bag" program.[26] Today, the Good Food Box distributes between 4,000 and 5,000 boxes through 170 volunteer-run neighbourhood drop offs to between 8,000 and 10,000 people in Toronto. The program provides both a local market for regional producers and nutritious food to urban residents, especially for marginalized low-income and ethnocultural communities (Johnston and Baker, 2005). The Good Food Box has several goals, including improving low-income people's access to affordable food, promoting healthy eating, supporting local farmers, encouraging sustainable agriculture and promoting community development (Scharf, 1999).

The Good Food Box "seeks to marry direct food delivery strategies to transform the food system over the long term" (Johnston and Baker, 2005: 316). FoodShare purchases fresh produce from the Ontario Food Terminal. Over time and as the project expanded, it began to buy directly from the farmers. Twice monthly, volunteers pack the boxes, which are delivered to neighbourhoods in Toronto having 10 or more participants. Volunteer coordinators collect money before delivery, make the orders and ensure that customers receive their boxes. Food is purchased centrally based on the number of advance orders. The order system is designed to correspond to the income cycles of people on social assistance and "works on the principle that a project must meet demonstrated community needs and rely heavily on community input (Scharf, 1999: 126). In that sense, the project "combines the economies of scale involved in bulk purchasing with extensive community in-volvement" (MacAdam, 1995: 28). Finally, the program's principles recognize "that food security will not and cannot be provided by the market and that there is an urgent need to develop 'third sector' modes of food provisioning that have an entrepreneurial dimension, but that are supported by state funds" (Johnston and Baker, 2005: 319).

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[25] FoodShare, founded in 1985, works with communities to improve access to affordable healthy food and to reduce hunger. It focuses on the entire food system, from "field to table."

[26] *Sacolão*, or "big bag," is a program of the municipal governments in Brazil, started during the 1980s to encourage the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables among low-income groups. The municipal government selects basic items, sold in *sacolões* by the kilo for one single price for any product.

5.3.1 General Observations

The Good Food Box is a successful model in terms of accessibility, providing high-quality, low-cost food to several thousand households throughout Toronto (Johnston and Baker, 2005). In that sense, it meets the need to provide accessible, high-quality healthy food. The Good Food Box allows participants to budget for a specific amount each week, ensuring that the wide variety of fresh produce included in the box is part of their diet (P.I., 2008k).

Another feature of the program is high-quality food. An early evaluation of the program reported that the high quality of the food in the Good Food Box is a significant motive for purchasing the boxes (Smaller World Communications, 1995, quoted in Scharf, 1999). In addition, the fact that the program does not operate by using a means test suggests that the program is not regarded as a charity for the poor; payments for the Good Food Box are approximately equivalent to the cost of the food, delivery and the accompanying newsletter (Scharf, 1999). The Good Food Box offers a dignified alternative to food banks for those who can afford to participate in them, and can have some community-building and social capital value that food banks lack (Provincial Health Services Authority, 2006). All of this "suggests that projects like the Good Food Box are important not just for their direct effects on participants, but because they provide models of more sustainable and socially just ways of growing and eating food" (Johnston, 2003: 29).

In spite of these successes, there are few Good Food Box stops in Toronto Community Housing buildings. Currently, there are two Good Food Box stops in Toronto Community Housing, one in Peel Housing and 16 in co-op buildings. In the past, there were 16 stops in social housing buildings and 40 in co-op buildings (P.I., 2008i). One reason for this may be that collecting money has traditionally been an issue in Toronto Community Housing (P.I., 2008c). Another possibility is that the box may just be too expensive for people living on a fixed, low income, or that the lack of choice is not appealing to many (Field, 2008; P.I., 2008e). In contrast, there are a number of Good Food Box stops in co-op housing throughout Toronto. Social housing may be able to learn from this experience. Similarly, an evaluation of a Saskatchewan Good Food Box program

> …had participants connecting the co-operative housing strategy and the not-for-profit [Good Food Box] system, regarding them as ways to help each other collectively. They noted that cooperative housing and [the Good Food Box] were both linked to the community and about people supporting each other (Brownlee and Cammer, 2004: 8).

According to an evaluation of the program done in 1996, approximately 70% of Good Food Box customers at that time were living below the poverty line (Johnston and Baker, 2005).[27] However, a more current evaluation showed that the people buying the Good Food Box are mainly around median or lower incomes, but do not have the lowest household incomes (P.I., 2008b). One obstacle that the Good Food Box will have to overcome is that it may remain out of reach of the poorest and most marginalized populations, who often rely on food banks (Johnston, 2003).

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[27] This figure likely refers to the regular box. The program also includes an organic box, but this is generally out of reach for low-income people.

Despite its challenges, the program does support local agriculture. In this way it addresses other aspects of food security including buying from local suppliers and supporting local farmers. In fact, supporting local farmers was one of the "selling points" that a recent survey of the program discovered (P.I., 2008b). Another important aspect of the program is that the different types of boxes – including small and regular sized, organic and a special wellness box – mean it is not a one-size-fits-all approach.

Finally, models such as the Good Food Box are "inspirational prototypes," but on their own, they cannot solve the multitude of food insecurity problems (Johnston and Baker, 2005). However, if social housing staff were able to collect money for the Good Food Box, "there would probably be a lot more stops" (Field, 2008). Although the program may have some difficulties, its successes are illustrated by its replication across the country, "whose impact transcends the municipality of Toronto and reaches into other municipalities and regions in Canada" (Johnston and Baker, 2005: 318).[28] In the end, as one staff member pointed out, "the Good Food Box is a great idea, but only if it's accessible" (P.I., 2008c).

5.4 Good Food Markets

The "Good Food Market" program, pioneered by FoodShare, aims to bring farmers' markets closer to customers by setting up small produce stands in low-income "priority neighbourhoods" throughout Toronto where food access is an issue and farmers' markets may not be viable.[29] Although Toronto boasts a variety of farmers' markets, "to date, the most successful markets are not near high densities of low-income or immigrant populations and there are relatively few markets given the population density of Toronto" (FoodShare Toronto, n.d.: 3). Lister notes that

> While Toronto has a wide variety of food choices, there are large gaps in the urban fabric where basic access to high-quality food is a problem. In these 'food deserts' within the city – areas where it is difficult or impossible to find a grocery store or supermarket within walking distance, and where the predominant means to buy food is through fast-food outlets and higher-priced convenience stores – food prices are inversely proportional to nutritional value (2007: 170).

In 2001, a report from the Food and Hunger Action Committee (2001a: 24) recommended "a special community market for neighbourhoods underserved by conventional food stores to increase Toronto residents' opportunities to purchase fresh and affordable food." Flemingdon Park and Parkdale Liberty secured funding for farmers' markets through a food access grant from the City of Toronto and a Neighbourhood Based Community Market Feasibility Study was carried out. FoodShare acted as the technical assistant for the project (Baker, n.d.).

The Good Food Market program started with two markets in 2006 and expanded to 12 by 2007 (Fried, 2007). In 2008, the program is likely to expand significantly to potentially between 12 and 20 markets (P.I., 2008b). Although the Good Food Box will always require FoodShare to pack the boxes, the Good Food Market program is more sustainable, aiming to tackle food security in Toronto's low-income communities. Common locations for Good Food Markets

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[28] There are 31 Good Food Box programs in Ontario and 26 listed in the rest of Canada (for details, see www.foodshare.net/train08.htm).

[29] The City of Toronto designated 13 underserviced "priority neighourhoods" in 2005.

include Toronto Community Housing buildings, community centres and churches (FoodShare Toronto, n.d.). While FoodShare provides produce, training for the leaders and volunteers involved in the market as well as posters and flyers, the markets are otherwise independent operations.[30]

Partnerships are also key to the program because the markets are located in health clinics, community centres and social housing buildings (Fried, 2007). FoodShare works with community organizations to set up a one-vendor stall of produce that is then sold by the community organization in the neighbourhood so that the stalls will eventually attract farmers (Daalderop, 2007). The overall goals of the program are:

- health (access to healthy food);

- affordability (reducing the cost of healthy food);

- accessibility (locating markets in food deserts);

- community-building (through social interaction, networking, volunteerism, education and celebration); and

- supporting local farmers (buying food directly from farmers at a fair price).

By "bridging" the gap between farmers and low-income communities, the program acts as an inexpensive alternative to running a full-fledged farmers' market (FoodShare Toronto, n.d.). Aside from access to healthy produce, the markets also enable people to access other resources including creating a public space for socialization, volunteerism and celebration, education and dialogue, and community development (FoodShare Toronto, n.d.).

5.4.1 General Observations

In terms of facilitating access to reasonably priced food for low-income populations, the Good Food Markets attempt to make sure prices are as low as possible (P.I., 2008h) and available in areas of "isolation" (P.I., 2008l). Because the markets have to compete with prices at discount supermarkets such as No Frills that offer a lower quality of produce, many of the market coordinators research prices and "tweak" them by lowering one item and raising another (P.I., 2008b). In terms of affordability, the prices at Good Food Markets are marked up by 20% (10% by FoodShare to cover transportation costs and 10% by market organizers to cover the cost of any left-over produce) as opposed to 30 to 50% in retail supermarkets (P.I., 2008b). At the end of the day, a customer will typically pay an average of 10 to 30% less at a Good Food Market compared to the average retailer. The markets are not intended to make a profit; some of the cost of the markets are absorbed by FoodShare and the local partner. As one staff member noted, "it's affordable, it's good produce, so it's very popular" (P.I., 2008c). In some cases, the markets are encouraging people to eat healthier food than they would normally (P.I., 2008j). Although the markets are small, the organizers try where possible to order culturally appropriate food (P.I., 2008l).

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[30]   FoodShare also provides a guide to facilitate the development of markets, entitled "How to Start a Good Food Market: A Guide for Communities" (FoodShare Toronto, n.d.).

The markets are also convenient and physically accessible (P.I., 2008k; P.I., 2008l). In neighbourhoods with little or no access to grocery stores, the cost of transportation to and from the store increases the cost of groceries, making access to them difficult for people without vehicles or with disabilities (P.I., 2008l).

As one market coordinator notes, the markets are more than just providing food (P.I., 2008h). The Good Food Markets, as do community gardens, "act as a base from which to build a sense of place" and "make it a gathering place for local community members – a unique, refreshing and effective way of creating all the benefits that a sense of community brings" (P.I., 2008l). Other benefits of the markets include bringing people together to work and being seen supporting each other, creating a positive atmosphere and allowing local people to make extra money. For example, in one community, vendor tables are set up for a low cost; this year, the market will include a flea market (P.I., 2008c). As did those of the community gardens, the benefits of the markets spread to other parts of the community. As people find out about the benefits of the market, they want to get involved (P.I., 2008h). As one staff member notes, the markets are

> …so healthy on so many levels: socially, capacity-building wise, connecting people with what they wouldn't otherwise connect with, getting kids out to see fresh food and how things are grown…It's not just about food; food is important. It's just an excellent program; I wish we had one in every CHU (P.I., 2008c).

In some ways, the Good Food Markets are more sustainable than the Good Food Box. Research shows that the average person shopping at a Good Food Market spends between $7 and $9. Because the Good Food Box costs $12 or $17, this shows that there may be many tenants in Toronto Community Housing buildings who have less than $12 to spend on produce, reinforcing the fact that the cost of a Good Food Box may be out of reach of some people and that the lowest income people in Toronto may be better served by a Good Food Market (Field, 2008). While the Good Food Box will always require FoodShare to pack boxes and facilitate delivery of the boxes, as FoodShare's role recedes, the Good Food Market program will grow and eventually become a vibrant community space (P.I., 2008b). In one community, the market started in late December and runs year-round (P.I., 2008h). As noted in the guide to Good Food Markets, "continuing markets in the winter help to make affordable, healthy produce and products available when accessibility is most difficult for isolated and/or low-income areas of Toronto" (FoodShare Toronto, n.d.). Through training, the Good Food Markets may become a more sustainable community program.

One of the primary challenges of the Good Food Markets is financial sustainability (FoodShare Toronto, n.d.). While some of the markets can "break even," they require funding to support a market coordinator and the resources necessary to run a market are huge.

Another important lesson from the Good Food Markets is that flexibility is key. The Good Food Markets play a role in offering a range of services for a range of incomes, thus going beyond a "one-size-fits-all" role (P.I., 2008b). Finally, partnerships have also been key to the success of the Good Food Markets, both in terms of agencies and other CFS programs such as community kitchens. In one east end Toronto community, local agencies, churches and other local organizations have come together to support the 14 week-long market.

5.5 Synthesis of Toronto Case Studies

The previous sections have outlined three case studies that take novel approaches to dealing with food insecurity in Toronto's social housing communities. However, these new approaches were sparked and have been maintained thanks to ad hoc voluntary initiatives and in spite of the non-existence of a joined-up coherent food policy. The first case study dealt with community gardens at Toronto Community Housing, where over 100 community gardens flourish throughout social housing communities. The community gardens are run by tenants and staff, who provide support to facilitate their growth and development. The second case study was the Good Food Box, a variety of food-buying cooperative with a goal to improve access to affordable food and support local farmers. Participants in the program purchase a low-cost healthy box of produce, picked up from a Good Food Box "stop" in their neighbourhood. Finally, the Good Food Markets are small produce stands in Toronto's low-income neighbourhoods intended to provide an inexpensive and easy alternative to running a traditional farmers' market.

One of the major lessons from the case studies is that food security needs to "have an elevation of priority and a commitment to helping make [food security] happen" (Field, 2008). The Food and Hunger Action Committee (2000: 37) makes a parallel proposal for the City of Toronto, recognizing the City's "role in advocating, coordinating and supporting systems, policies and programs to ensure food security in Toronto." In the case of community gardens, Toronto Community Housing represented a major institution with resources willing to support the program (Roberts, 2008). Thus, public institutions such as social housing authorities must commit to the right to food by ensuring commitment and political will to support food security (Rocha, 2007). This reiterates the comments made in sections 4.4 and 5.2 above.

The case studies also point out that different communities have diverse needs; thus, programs should be crafted to fit those needs. As a result, programs are not one-size-fits-all. In one community, the staff person indicated that the Good Food Box would be helpful during the winter months to deal with access problems, even if it was only run as a seasonal program (P.I., 2008c). Food programs in social housing may be able to learn from FoodShare's experience with the Student Nutrition Program. Although FoodShare aims to establish Student Nutrition Programs in each school, the approach has been a bottom-up rather than top-down model with programs organized on a case-by-case basis where there is community interest and a group of community leaders ready to take on leadership (Field, 2008). Held in schools throughout the city, these programs provide nutritious meals, help parents to cope with morning-time stress, provide educational venues and help build community. A related finding from the case studies is that some strategies work well in some cases, but have not worked in others. This suggests a need to consider a multi-pronged approach to food security to take into account communities' diverse needs.

All CFS programs require funding. The Good Food Markets require funds primarily to compensate a market coordinator and to subsidize the cost of the produce. Community gardens also necessitate some funding, while the Good Food Box only requires funding to subsidize the boxes. However, in the case of the Good Food Box and the Good Food Markets, FoodShare subsidizes the cost of the produce through a variety of funding grants. Thus, while food security

provides a host of individual and community heath benefits, as shown in section 4, the absolute cost of CFS programs appears negligible, considering the use of existing staff, equipment and space, and especially when compared with the overall expenditures in building upgrades and upkeep in social housing.

Finally, staff support for CFS programs is essential. One of the biggest problems for the Good Food Markets is accountability for collecting the money; staff support would aid in this respect, also adding legitimacy to the process. In the case of the Good Food Box, staff time is also important to help distribute the boxes and may help increase the number of stops if staff collected money. In the case of the community gardens, continued staff support is provided in number of ways, including ongoing facilitation, involving tenants in the community gardens and initiating partnerships with other organizations.

This report has considered food as a human right, much as are water, shelter or other basic needs. Although a later interpretation of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (1982) recognizes that people are not to be deprived of basic necessities, the right to food is clearly not protected (Rideout et al., 2007). Drawing on food security as a social determinant of health, this report emphasized a fundamental tension between food and housing. It underlined the conceptual model of CFS, one particular response to food insecurity considered as a continuum related to the time frame of the expected outcome. Examples such as the community gardens at Toronto Community Housing, the Good Food Box and Good Food Markets are highlighted to provide insight to support the change to a coherent food security policy for the social housing sector.

6. Policy Recommendations for the Social Housing Sector

Lessons from the Toronto case studies, as well as from the literature help inform development of a policy framework on food security for social housing providers. The following 14 suggestions are informed by interview responses from key informants, a literature review and successful case studies that offer insight to support the change to a coherent food security policy for the social housing sector.

The first set of recommendations is concerned with the role of social housing providers in constructing a coherent food security policy that builds on the health of individuals and communities:

- **Social housing providers should put into practice an organizational commitment to food security,** ensuring that food becomes integral to the organization in recognition of the multiple social and health benefits connected to food secure environments. Food security needs to both become a priority and requires a commitment to helping make food security happen. This commitment requires a strategic plan to make specific programs part of a comprehensive course of action towards enhancing CFS over the long term.

- **Social housing providers should support the development and maintenance of CFS programming** such as community gardens, farmers' markets, good food boxes and community kitchens by incorporating them into food security policy frameworks that focus on community building.

The second set of recommendations is concerned with program-specific guidelines that support consistent food security policies:

- **Staff support is a necessary resource** for all CFS projects. Staff support is required to support systematic outreach, facilitation and the programs.

- **Support top-down and bottom-up strategies.** Support for CFS requires a balance between enough staff support and community self-organization. Bottom-up strategies require tenant involvement, but at the same time social housing providers need to have a commitment to implementing food security programs.

- **The approach to food security should be multi-pronged** by linking several CFS programs such as community gardens and community kitchens. Multiple programs can work together in a symbiotic relationship while maintaining flexible strategies. As well, the case studies revealed that some strategies work well in some cases, but not in others. The Good Food Box is one example of an excellent program that only appears to work in some specific cases.

- **Integrate food programs with other non-food programming,** such as community economic development and youth programs. In isolated communities, food programs function as a bridge to other programs.

- **Coordinate existing programs**. Before "reinventing the wheel," social housing providers should coordinate already existing resources and talents. Constructing a more systematic policy can help link disparate programs together.

- **Funding for food security programming may be bolstered through community funding streams**. All CFS programs require sustained funding.

- **Consider implementing a community animation program** as part of an overall food security strategy. Community animation is a method of community development in which workers, living in the region where they work, serve as catalysts to bring together people, knowledge, skills and other resources that will help improve the social, economic and environmental well-being of communities.

- **Recognize the importance of partnerships** to the success of CFS programs. This includes affiliations with community centres and agencies, municipalities, food policy councils and local groups with expertise in food programming such as community gardening networks or other non-profit organizations.

- **Use the many resources already available in social housing buildings,** including buildings, land, access to water, communal space such as kitchens, partnerships and staff skills.

- **Integrate education** about food, nutrition and local farming issues into all CFS programs.

Finally, the third set of recommendations are meant to strengthen support for up-stream policies as part of broad-based food security strategies:

- **Social housing providers should advocate** for income security, social program spending and other initiatives that affect households' financial resources. These up-stream policies are fundamental to any long-term strategy to tackle food security.

- **Provincial and federal levels of government have a responsibility to fund programs that support food security.** Existing federal commitments to support food security and the health of Canadians require support from senior levels of government for CFS programs that enhance individual and community health and well-being.

6.1 Conclusions

Since the early 1980s, Canada has witnessed increasing levels of food insecurity among those in the lowest income bracket and in households relying on social assistance. Despite Canada's stated commitment to the right to food, no level of government has developed and implemented a coherent policy approach to food insecurity. Charitable food distribution through food banks has been the traditional response to food insecurity in Canada's cities, although this is an admittedly band-aid solution that cannot solve the problem.

In this context, given the concentration of low-income populations in Canadian cities and among social housing residents, the issue is especially apparent and problematic for these communities and for social housing providers.

Drawing on an approach focusing on individual and community health, this report has highlighted a host of benefits to providers, tenants and communities from engaging social housing providers in promoting food security for their residents. A continuum of food security

describes the various stages that policy-makers can follow to construct a more secure, sustainable food system using the alternative strategy of community food security (CFS).

This report argues that social housing providers as institutions are in an ideal position to pioneer development and implementation of a policy approach to community food security initiatives. It recommends adopting consistent food policies by social housing providers not only as a strategy to achieve food security among tenants, but also as a way of taking leadership in developing institutional support to the right to food for all Canadians.

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Appendix A. Toronto's Food Charter

In 1976, Canada signed the United Nations *Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights*, which includes "the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger." The City of Toronto supports our national commitment to food security and the following beliefs:

Every Toronto resident should have access to an adequate supply of nutritious, affordable and culturally-appropriate food.

Food security contributes to the health and well-being of residents while reducing their need for medical care.

Food is central to Toronto's economy, and the commitment to food security can strengthen the food sector's growth and development.

Food brings people together in celebrations of community and diversity and is an important part of the city's culture.

Therefore, to promote food security, Toronto City Council will:

- champion the right of all residents to adequate amounts of safe, nutritious, culturally-acceptable food without the need to resort to emergency food providers

- advocate for income, employment, housing, and transportation policies that support secure and dignified access to the food people need

- support events highlighting the city's diverse and multicultural food traditions

- promote food safety programs and services

- sponsor nutrition programs and services that promote healthy growth and help prevent diet-related diseases

- ensure convenient access to an affordable range of healthy foods in city facilities

- adopt food purchasing practices that

- serve as a model of health, social and environmental responsibility

- partner with community, cooperative, business and government organizations to increase the availability of healthy foods

- encourage community gardens that increase food self-reliance, improve fitness, contribute to a cleaner environment, and enhance community development

- protect local agricultural lands and support urban agriculture

- encourage the recycling of organic materials that nurture soil fertility

- foster a civic culture that inspires all Toronto residents and all city departments to support food programs that provide cultural, social, economic and health benefits

- work with community agencies, residents' groups, businesses and other levels of government to achieve these goals.

The Food Charter also sets out the "Ten reasons why Toronto supports food security."

Source: Food and Hunger Action Committee (2001b).

Appendix B. Sample Good Food Box

Good Food Box, $17

5 lb new potatoes*
1 bunch green onion
2 pomegranates
1 green cabbage*
1 green pepper
1 bunch bananas
1 bag bean sprouts*
1 bag spinach
1 bag oranges
1 iceberg lettuce
1 lb tomatoes
1 bag Empire apples*
1 bag spinach
2 sweet potatoes

Small Good Food Box, $12

2.5 lb new potatoes*
1 green pepper
1/2 bag oranges
1 bag bean sprouts*
1 lb tomatoes
1 bunch bananas
1 pomegranate
1 bag spinach
6 apples
1 iceberg lettuce
1 sweet potato
1 bunch green onion*
1 pink grapefruit

* Indicates locally grown produce

Source: www.goodfoodbox.com/goodfoodbox05.htm#1.

Appendix C. Sample Interview Questions

1. What are the aspects of the program that make it accessible to low income people?

2. What are the benefits to the tenants/wider community?

3. What are the characteristics that make the program successful as a food security initiative?

4. Have there been any official/academic evaluations of the program? Can you tell me some highlights of these evaluations?

5. How does the program lead to greater access to food?

6. How does the program allow participants access to culturally appropriate food?

7. How does the program allow participants access food that is nutritious and safe, or food produced in environmentally sustainable ways?

8. Do you see any benefits or disadvantages from the social housing sector taking a more proactive role in food security initiatives?

9. In what ways could social housing providers support the program? (funds, awareness, communications, etc)

10. What would be needed for the program to become included as a program at the municipal level?

11. How do you think either program could reach more people?

Appendix D. Community Gardens at Toronto Community Housing

My Community Gardens — Toronto Community Housing

Our Support

Provincial Governments

Alberta
- Alberta Advanced Education
- Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry

Nova Scotia
- Nova Scotia Youth Secretariat

Ontario
- Citizens' Assembly Secretariat
- Democratic Renewal Secretariat
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Quebec
- Institut national de santé publique du Québec

Saskatchewan
- Saskatchewan Culture, Youth and Recreation
- Saskatchewan Health

Foundations

Laidlaw Foundation
Max Bell Foundation
RBC Foundation

Associations and Other Organizations

Adult Learning Knowledge Centre
Canadian Council on Learning
Canadian Labour Congress
Canadian Medical Association
Canadian Nurses Association
Canadian Public Health Association
City of Ottawa
D-Code Inc.
Parliamentary Centre of Canada
Saskatchewan Institute of Public Policy
Social Planning Council of Ottawa
University of Saskatchewan
Work and Learning Knowledge Centre
York University