

Moving Food Policy Forward in Surrey and White Rock

Participating Organizations:



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MOVING FOOD POLICY FORWARD IN SURREY AND WHITE ROCK

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PART A

Introduction

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STORIES – HOW HEALTH, LOCAL FOOD, AND HUNGER ARE INTERCONNECTED, AND HOW THEY AFFECT OUR LIVES

Hunger

Local Food Sustainability

Healthy Eating

Have you ever thought about these issues and how they relate to your life? Have you ever thought about how these issues might be connected?

The “Moving Food Policy Forward in Surrey and White Rock” Steering Committee addresses all these issues by connecting them with each other and with the residents of Surrey and White Rock.

The following are some stories that will highlight how these elements fit together.

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“The most difficult situation I’ve had to face is the realization that I cannot afford to feed my family the foods that I know they need. Not just the foods they need for every day meals, but also special foods for each of their individual developmental stages. At times I have become very depressed and angry with myself for having three children and not being able to properly maintain the type of life they so deserve. I’ve gone through stores with \$20 knowing that this is for 2 weeks...I would have never thought that I would be in such a predicament...”

“Growing the grain in my field, on my farm...[my chickens/turkeys] are locally grown and produced and I take it to the local consumers within an hour of my farm...it’s way more sustainable for me and my farm and the consumer and the whole world in general, ‘cause it’s not diesel, diesel, diesel.”

“In spite of the productivity of the fertile fruit and vegetable farmlands in Southern Ontario, in 1994 the province spent \$1.9 billion dollars more on importing fruits and vegetables than it earned from exporting its own.”

“Most parents [living on low income] – their main goal is for their kids not to be hungry. You know, does it mean buying a bag of apples that they eat for a couple of days or the hotdogs they eat for a week. And you’re gonna be a lot fuller eating a hotdog.”

“I am always hearing about how the ozone layer is breaking up, and how we are all going to die from too much pollution. Plus horror stories like Mad Cow and SARS are constantly on the news....I just don’t know what to eat anymore. Is our water even clean enough to drink? I feel I have no control over these issues and yet they affect me and my children everyday.”

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Stories from: "Thought about Food: A Workbook on Food Security and Influencing Policy." Accessed at: <http://www.foodthoughtful.ca/>

AN INTRODUCTION TO FOOD SECURITY AND FOOD POLICY

Hunger, local food, and healthy eating - all these factors have a strong place in the communities of Surrey and White Rock; on the environment, the economy, the health of the community member, and within the family. These issues are also connected to one another. When these bonds are strong, they strengthen the community.

How do these issues affect you? Think about yourself. Do you ever:

- Have problems accessing the foods you enjoy and need for your and your family to be healthy?
- Worry about having sufficient and safe food for future generations?
- Feel stressed about whether you have enough food or about where your next meal will come from?
- Worry about the safety of your food and about what is in it?
- Find yourself eating a diet that is not healthy because you don't have the time or money to eat the way you want to?

If you are like most people, you would have answered yes to at least one of the above. These worries are all tied in with the three issues of hunger, local food, and healthy eating.

As community members, we are not powerless over such worries. One effective and practical way to begin addressing these seemingly overwhelming issues is to implement food policies at local organizations.

See PART B to learn about how Food Policies can affect hunger, local food, and healthy eating in your organization and the community.

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Adapted from: "Thought about Food: A Workbook on Food Security and Influencing Policy." Accessed at: <http://www.foodthoughtful.ca/>

HISTORY OF THE SURREY/WHITE ROCK FOOD POLICY STEERING COMMITTEE

Although food security projects and programs have been ongoing for some time in Surrey and White Rock, the first joint action originated in the late 1990's, when a group of like-minded organizations and citizens gathered together. This group brought about "Food for Kidz," a regional coalition representing the South Fraser area. With the support of United Way, Fraser Health Authority, and other community partners, this coalition initiated and completed several projects:

- 1) A community forum on child hunger in 1999.
- 2) A Community Child Hunger Assessment (2001). This assessment was unique in that it utilized participatory action research whereby those on low income helped develop and implement the research on subjects who were also on low income.
- 3) A database of low and no cost food and nutrition resources in Surrey and White Rock, created in conjunction with the Surrey Food Bank and Surrey Social Futures.

After a pause in activity, community members gathered once again in 2005 to launch the "Moving Food Policy Forward in Surrey and White Rock" *Steering Committee*. The partners at the start of this Committee included: Directorate of Agencies for School Health, Fraser Health Authority, Canadian Cancer Society, Kwantlen University College, and Peace Arch Community Services Food Bank. This Committee works toward three outcomes:

- 1) Decreased hunger.
- 2) Increased local food sustainability.
- 3) Improved nutritional health.

The first major project of this group was entitled "Moving Food Policy Forward in Surrey and White Rock." The overriding goal of this project was to move Surrey and White Rock toward integrating food policy into community decision-making. Phase 1 of this project included:

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- 1) An environmental scan of food policies in various organizations in Surrey and White Rock.
- 2) Organizations interviewed were also given the opportunity to increase their understanding of food policy via a participatory research approach.

At the conclusion of Phase 1, 15 organizations had been scanned, and 4 key recommendations came about:

- 1) Develop a plan with strategic action steps to facilitate the coordination of current and future food security initiatives.
- 2) Influence, advocate, and support the development of food policies within projects, organizations and municipalities to ensure advancement of food security in the community.
- 3) Increase public awareness about food policy and food security.
- 4) Increase capacity and membership of the Surrey and White Rock Food Policy Steering Committee.

The Committee has now started Phase 2 of the project. Phase 2 is a follow-up to the recommendations provided by Phase 1.

Vision of the Steering Committee

Food policy is integrated into decision-making in Surrey and White Rock in order to enhance community food security.

Adapted from:

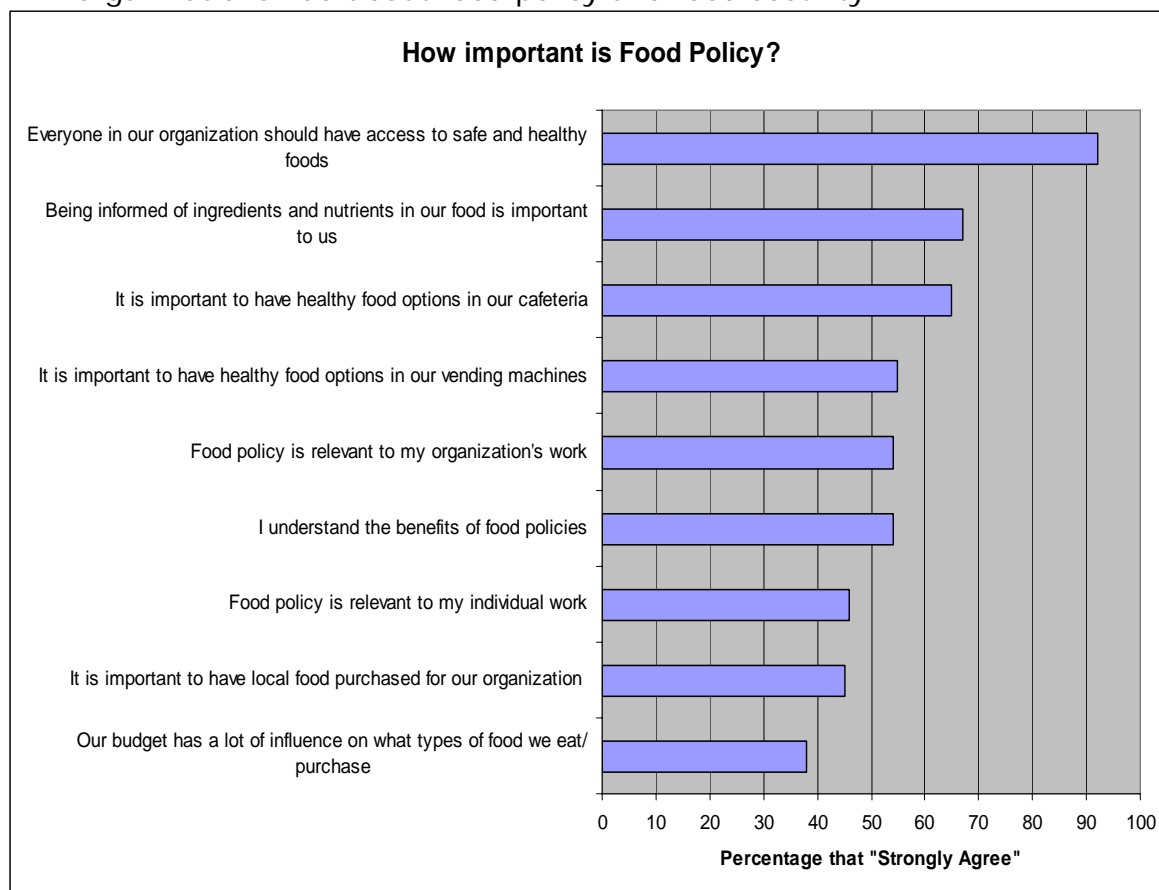
Morrison, Anne, and Cherie Enns. Food for Kidz Child Hunger Assessment South Fraser Region. :Food for Kidz Coalition, 2001

MOVING FOOD POLICY FORWARD IN SURREY AND WHITE ROCK

Raey, Natasha. Moving Food Policy Forward in Surrey and White Rock – Phase 1.: Moving Food Policy Forward in Surrey and White Rock Steering Committee, 2006.

Phase I Results: “Moving Food Policy Forward in Surrey and White Rock”

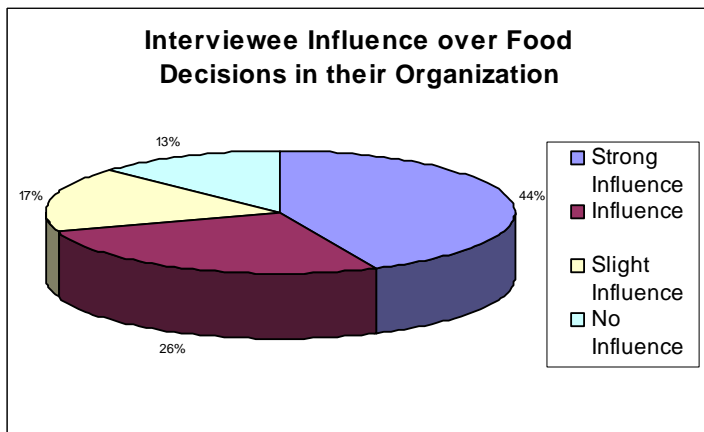
Phase I of the “Moving Food Policy Forward in Surrey and White Rock” project provided a snapshot of the food policies that were already in place at 15 organizations. These organizations covered government, health, education, not-for-profit, and charitable groups. Phase 1 also scanned the level of knowledge and awareness the organizations had about food policy and food security



The study showed that while interviewees had different personal ideas of food policy and food security, the main underlying principle of food policy was important to most interviewees as 92% of the interviewees believed that everyone in their organization should have access to safe and healthy foods.

About 54% of interviewees strongly agreed that they understood the benefits of food policies. While most interviewees were conscious of the various factors underlying food security, there is a need for greater understanding on the links between health promotion, sustainability, and access in food security.

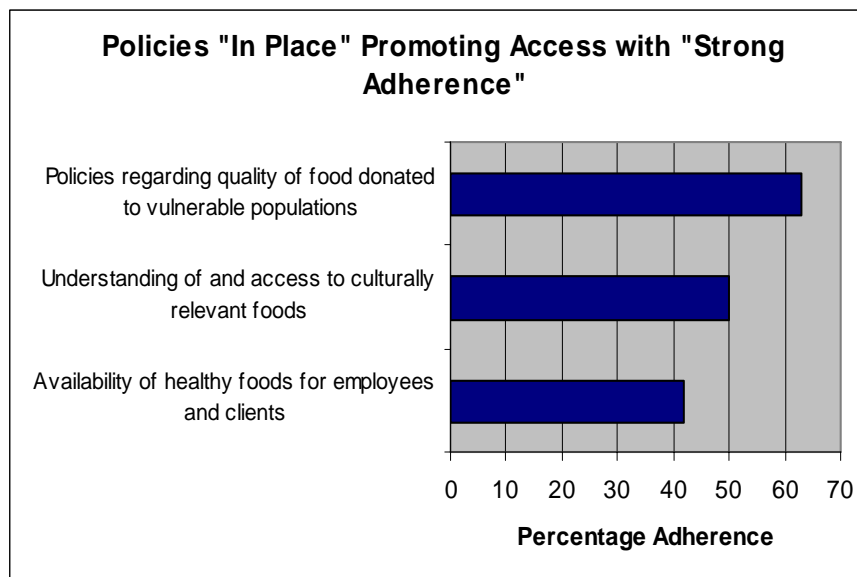
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In terms of power over food policies, 44% of respondents believed that they had a strong influence over food decisions in their organization, while 26% felt that they had influence. When referring to the level of organizational awareness, about 28% of interviewees believed that others in their organization were very aware of any policies, practices, or guidelines to further food policy. Seventy-six percent of interviewees said that their organizations already had policies in place on the areas of health promotion, food sustainability, and food access.

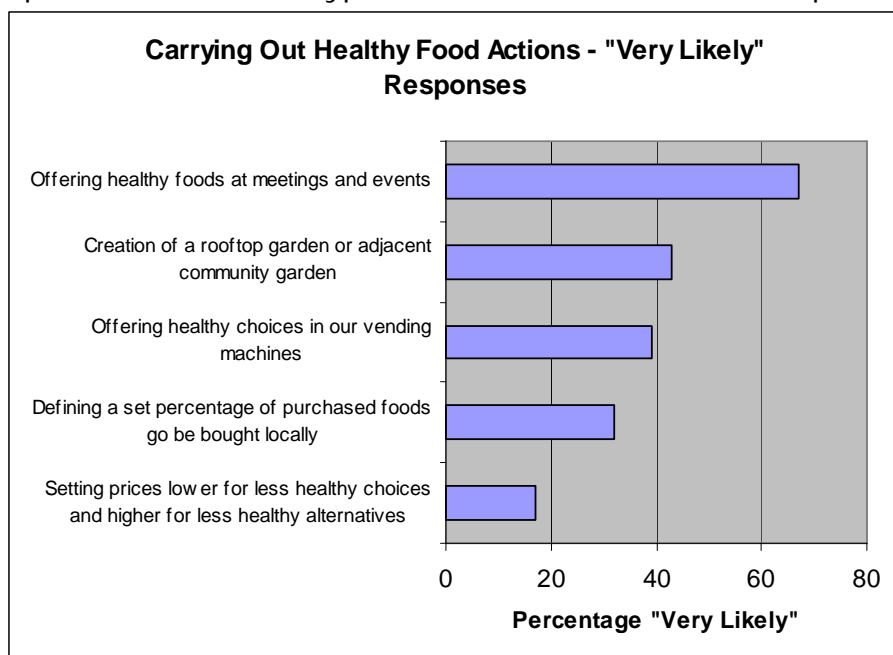
Policies in the health promotion and sustainability categories were policies around employee wellness programs, foods offered or sold at meetings and events, and community gardens. A subset of those organizations that catered to ethnic and/or vulnerable populations had community gardens which served a variety of purposes beyond food provision. One organization in particular used the gardens to provide farm/gardening work experience to new immigrants and to serve as a social gathering place for these clients. Therefore, community gardens were used not only for food system sustainability, but also for health promotion and access for vulnerable populations in the communities of Surrey and White Rock.

The interviewees also described the various ways their organizations have acted to ensure the success of their food policies, practices, and guidelines. Common themes were training and consultations with staff and volunteers plus policies written on websites, guidelines, or staff manuals.



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Policies, practices, and guidelines encouraging the understanding of and access to culturally relevant foods, and policies around the types of foods sold or offered at special events and meetings were both “strongly adhered” to by



50% of interviewees. Almost half of all interviewees had some sort of policy, practice, or guidelines which helped to promote access to quality, healthy foods for vulnerable populations. Phase I also asked interviewees if they are interested in moving forward with different aspects of food policy. The majority of the respondents were “very likely” to offer healthy foods at meetings and events.

Ninety-five percent of respondents felt that their municipality should be implementing bylaws that are related to food security. These bylaws would support food policy in areas such as social and land planning and increasing access to safe and healthy foods by vulnerable populations.

There was also a noticeable need to expand the “Moving Food Policy Forward in Surrey and White Rock” Steering Committee membership and to create a well-

defined work plan for steering committee members.

The completion of Phase I of the “Moving Food Policy Forward in Surrey and White Rock” project has allowed for a scan of the current state of food policy in these communities. The recommendations that have come forth from this phase are listed below:

- 1) Develop a plan with strategic action steps to facilitate the coordination of current and future food security initiatives.
- 2) Influence, advocate, and support the development of food policies within projects, organizations and municipalities to ensure advancement of food security in the community.
- 3) Increase public awareness about food policy and food security.
- 4) Increase capacity and membership of the Surrey and White Rock Food Policy Steering Committee.

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Implementation of these recommendations will assist with the integration of food policy in decision making in Surrey and White Rock that will help to ultimately enhance community food security.

Adapted from:

Raey, Natasha. Moving Food Policy Forward in Surrey and White Rock – Phase 1: Moving Food Policy Forward in Surrey and White Rock Steering Committee, 2006.