



# CHARTER BROADSHEET NUMBER ONE

Autumn 2010

## The Making of a Charter for Simcoe County Children and Youth

An initiative of the Simcoe County Child Youth and Family Services Coalition, the Charter has been signed by forty Coalition members, and all nineteen municipalities within Simcoe County. Formed in 1999, Coalition members work together to make life better for children and youth by increasing the effectiveness of the service delivery system in Simcoe County. Members have committed to finding collaborative solutions to three major problems for children, youth and their

**Signed by 40 coalition members, and all 19 municipalities in Simcoe County.**

families in our area: meeting basic needs such as food and shelter, enhancing access to needed services, and ensuring inclusion of Francophone, First Nations/Métis and Inuit communities. We hope to engage our signatories (community agencies and municipal governments) in a fruitful partnership to improve the lives of children and their families in Simcoe County.



Preamble: The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child affirms that all children have rights and that governments have a duty to protect and promote these rights. Furthermore, the Charter affirms the rights of indigenous Peoples to their traditional rights and needs of indigenous children with special attention to rights and cultural needs of indigenous children and youth.

All children and youth have fundamental rights and freedoms. They deserve respect and support to realize their rights and full potential. Because children and youth are the future of our community, it is in our interest to ensure that they all have the opportunity to grow into healthy, independent and contributing members of our society. Everyone in the community has a role to play in their growth and development. We have a joint responsibility to ensure that children and youth are protected and safe from exploitation and neglect. Children and youth must have access to a fair share of our community's resources.

The Simcoe County Coalition of Child, Youth and Family Services invites government and all sectors of our community to join in ensuring all children and youth enjoy life-long good health and well being through the provision of:

- Nutritious food and safe water
- A safe, affordable and comfortable place to live
- Protection from neglect, abuse, violence and exploitation
- A diverse and inclusive community
- Respect and attention for the voices of children and youth
- Love and support from caring adults in their community
- The opportunity to learn and exercise the beliefs of their family's culture, including language, traditions and religion/spirituality
- Access to quality inclusive child care and/or early education programs
- Safe places to play in their community
- Access to affordable, inclusive recreational activities
- Quality, including universal, education systems
- Governments that recognize the importance of children's needs
- Access to quality health care, mental health treatment, social programs and services that are timely, safe and effective
- Services that are delivered in the context of their family, culture, community and school

These rights apply to all children and youth without discrimination due to race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, record of offences, marital status, family status or ability

The Simcoe County Coalition of Child, Youth and Family Services invites government and all sectors of our community to join in ensuring all children and youth enjoy life-long good health and well being through the provision of:

- ✓ Nutritious food and safe drinking water

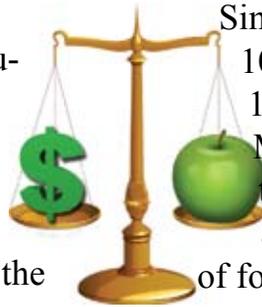
**The complete charter is available for download in three languages at:**

**[www.simcoecountycoalition.ca](http://www.simcoecountycoalition.ca)**

# Nutritious Food and Safe Drinking Water

Over 375,000 Ontarians turn to food banks every month. The number of Ontarians using food banks has increased by 19% in the past year alone. 35% of the household population served by food banks is 16 years of age or younger. 30% of persons heading households using food banks in Ontario are employed part-time or full-time or were recently employed in the last 6 months.<sup>1</sup>

Ontario had as many as half a million low-income workers in 2006. A number of trends show this figure has risen over time. In 2006, 60 % of food banks in Ontario reported an increase in the number of working poor served.<sup>2</sup>



One of the main barriers to accessing healthy nutritious food is lack of household income. In Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka, 10.2 % of all families with children aged 17 and under are considered low income.<sup>3</sup> Many individuals in households turning to food banks consume an inadequate amount of food and the nutritional quality of food that is consumed is very low.<sup>4</sup>

Families living in low income neighbourhoods and with lower levels of parental education may be trying to ward off hunger by choosing lower cost processed foods that are high in carbohydrates, fat and simple sugars.<sup>5</sup>

## The Cost of Healthy Eating in Simcoe County

The Ontario Nutritious Food Basket (ONFB) is an annual survey that estimates the cost of healthy eating for a family of four. Nothing exotic here – all foods surveyed were known to be everyday choices of budget-wise Ontario shoppers.<sup>6</sup>

The Cost of a Nutritious Food Basket in Simcoe County for a Family of Four (2010) Two adults, two children (16 & 9)

Monthly Income – Ontario Works (OW)		Monthly Net Income – Minimum Wage (2 Earners)	
Basic Allowance OW	\$438	Employment	\$2,624
Shelter OW	\$674	Child Tax Benefits	\$526
Canada Child Tax Benefit	\$224.66		
National Child Benefit Supplement	\$328		
Ontario Child Benefit	\$183.32		
<b>Total OW Income</b>	<b>\$1,847.98</b>	<b>Total Minimum Wage Income</b>	<b>\$3,150</b>
<b>Nutritious Food Basket Amount</b>	<b>\$727.18</b>	<b>Nutritious Food Basket Amount</b>	<b>\$ 727.18</b>



**9.3%**

2005 Canadian average of total household expenditures spent on food and non-alcoholic beverages.

**39.3%**

Percentage of OW Income on Nutritious Food

**23.1%**

Percentage of Minimum Wage Income on Nutritious Food

# Impact on Children and Youth

Food security is essential for healthy eating. Without consistent economic access to sufficient nutritious food, healthy eating cannot be achieved, increasing the risk of poor health. (Health Canada, 2004)

The chronic consumption of a diet low in essential nutrients can predispose individuals to compromises in nutritional status.<sup>8</sup> Children born into families experiencing food insecurity due to poverty tend to be preterm or small for gestational age.<sup>9</sup> Their future health and development is compromised by a lack of nutritious food.<sup>10</sup> Early childhood is the most intensive period of brain development during the lifespan. A stimulating home environment and nutrition are essential for development during the first 3 years of life. Therefore, the impact of food insufficiency on brain development is one factor associated with the increased occurrence of learning, behavioral and emotional problems in young children.<sup>11</sup> When children go to school hungry or are poorly nourished, their energy levels, memory, problem-solving skills, creativity, concentration and behavior are all negatively impacted. As a result of being hungry at school, these children may not reach their full academic and developmental potential – increasing their chances of lifelong poverty as adults.<sup>12</sup>

Findings on nutritional practices from the 2004 Canadian

Community Health Survey indicate that 70% of children aged 4 to 8 years do not meet the minimum recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables. Families who rely on income from social assistance and those working at minimum wage jobs have inadequate funds available to purchase food for a healthy diet including vegetables and fruit.<sup>13</sup> Foods high in fat and sugar are known to contribute to weight gain.<sup>14</sup> Processed foods also tend to be high in sodium and trans fat which are related to the risk of cardiovascular disease later in life. In 2009, 75% of children ages 1-8 in Canada had excess sodium intakes associated with negative health risks.<sup>15</sup> It has been estimated that Canadian children and youth are eating about 5 grams of trans fat per day.<sup>16</sup> The current recommendation for trans fat consumption is 0 grams.<sup>17</sup>

On average, Aboriginal families are at a higher risk of living with food insecurity.<sup>18</sup> The incidence of diabetes in aboriginal communities is 3 to 5 times higher than for non-aboriginal Canadians.<sup>19</sup>

**Obesity** is associated with chronic health conditions (such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma, heart disease and cancer). Almost all those conditions are reversible and preventable. If all Ontario residents had healthy weights, the province would save up to \$2.5 billion every year!<sup>20</sup>

## Safe Drinking Water

After decades of public control, most Canadians now benefit from one of the best public drinking water systems in the world, with the notable exception of several aboriginal and rural communities that struggle with water access and contamina-



tion problems. As of August 31, 2010, there were 117 First Nations communities across Canada under a Drinking Water Advisory.<sup>21</sup> In Ontario there are several regulatory instruments in effect that support provision of clean drinking water - The Safe Drinking Water

Act, new changes to the Health Protection and Promotion Act and the Source Water Protection initiative. At a time when corporations see the commoditization of water and privatization of water services as one of the few stable sources of investment and economic growth, it is more important than ever to improve access to communities that have been denied clean water and to maintain public control over water and water services.<sup>22</sup>

# Local Initiatives

## Find more info at 211

Simcoe County's Food Line. For 24/7, multilingual information about food resources call 211, TTY 1-888-435-6086 or online at [www.211SimcoeCounty.ca](http://www.211SimcoeCounty.ca) or through a Simcoe County Nutrition Network e-newsletter at: [www.bchc.ca/SCNN/index.html](http://www.bchc.ca/SCNN/index.html)

**Community Action Program for Children/Canada Prenatal Nutrition Programs** promote and support healthy nutrition for young families. Each month over 2000 bags of fresh produce and milk are distributed to low-income families in Simcoe County. In addition, they offer a variety of meal clubs, cooking demonstrations and interactive food-related activities throughout the year.

**Raising the Bar** program's goal is to provide high quality early learning and child care services. In Simcoe County, participating child care centres are creating an enhanced nutrition policy to encourage the purchase of locally grown vegetables and fruit and foods that are low in sodium and trans fat.<sup>23</sup>

*Below are just a few examples of how local communities and individuals have begun to address access to nutritious food.*

**School Nutrition Policy** applies to all food sold in schools and will be implemented in all publically funded schools in Ontario starting in 2011. The intent of the policy is to ensure that 80% of foods sold are lower in fat, sugar and/or sodium. Foods that are too high in fat, sugar or sodium will not be permitted to be served.



**Good Food Box** runs like a large buying club with centralized buying and co-ordination. Once a month individuals place orders for boxes and a couple of weeks later receive a box brimming with fresh fruit and vegetables. The Good Food Box makes top-quality produce available in a way that does not stigmatize people, fosters community development and promotes healthy eating.

**Simcoe County Food Partners Alliance** are volunteer community partners from agriculture, education, health and government. Including individuals or organizations that are passionate about building and safeguarding a stronger local agriculture and food system.

**Community Kitchens** are implemented by agencies, others initiated by citizens and volunteers. Community Kitchens are a great way to make new friends, benefit from group buying power, learn about new foods and recipes and access safe cooking facilities.

**Community Gardens** or allotment projects are growing all over Simcoe County. Some grow food and donate it to charitable organizations and some are set up so that families and individuals can grow their own food in their allotted space in a community garden.

**Eat Well to Excel** is a program for school-age children that support volunteer run breakfast clubs, snack and lunch programs in over 185 schools in Simcoe County. More than 500 volunteers prepare & serve nutritious meals to over 60,000 children daily (during school year).

## Implementing Best Practice Approaches

### Food procurement polices

Governments, businesses and agencies can begin to build sustainable local food systems by adopting local food procurement policies. Given the size and sustainability of these operations, buying locally can help support local agriculture by providing a large, stable market for producers.

### Use the "Nutrition for Young Children in Community Settings – Best

### Practice Guidelines"

A comprehensive set of guidelines developed for the use by community organizations/agencies serving families with children ages 1 – 6 years.<sup>24</sup>

### Ban bottled water

Stop the unnecessary consumption of bottled water when tap water is subject to more checks & testing than the regulations demand of bottled water. Bottled water produces up to 1.5

million tons of plastic waste per year with the majority thrown away.<sup>25</sup>

### Healthy behaviors and policies for everyone

Implement a healthy eating policy at your workplace, for both staff and clients. Ensure only nutritious local foods and snacks are served at meetings, groups or gatherings in support of everyone's overall health.

**For All** - Take opportunities to advocate for smart use of resources and better policies to encourage eating healthy.

## Footnotes

1. Ontario Hunger Report 2009: Living with Hunger – Ontario Association of Food Banks
2. Spence, A. (September 2007). Discussion Paper: Towards A New Perspective on Hunger & Poverty in Ontario. Ontario Association of Food Banks: Toronto. pg. 4
3. Statistics Canada 2010
4. OAFB (Ontario Association of Food Banks) 2009
5. Drewnowski & Darmon, 2005
6. How Affordable is Healthy Eating in Simcoe and Muskoka? 2010 Edition <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/HealthyEating/FoodSecurity/CostofHealthyEating.aspx>
7. Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada <http://agr.gc.ca/>
8. Social Determinants of Health – Dennis Raphael
9. Public Health Agency of Canada, 2009
10. Canadian Pediatric Society, 2009
11. Pascal, 2009
12. Canadian Pediatric Society, 2009

13. Power, 2005
14. World Health Organization, 2006, Dietitians of Canada, 2007
15. Health Canada, 2009
16. Canadian Pediatric Society, 2010
17. Institute of Medicine, 2002
18. Willows, ND. (2005). Determinants of healthy eating in Aboriginal peoples in Canada. Canadian Journal of Public Health, 96(3): S32-S36.
19. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/activit/marketsoc/camp/adi-ida-eng.php>
20. Community Action Program for Children <http://realhelp.ca>
21. Health Canada [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/promotion/public-publique/water-eau-eng.php#how\\_many](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fniah-spnia/promotion/public-publique/water-eau-eng.php#how_many)
22. The Council of Canadians [www.canadians.org](http://www.canadians.org)
23. Affiliated Services for Children & Youth [http://www.ascy.ca/raising\\_intro.htm](http://www.ascy.ca/raising_intro.htm)
24. <http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/JFY/ChildcareWorkers/nutritionphysicalactivity/healthyeating/NutritionforYoungChildrenGuidelines.aspx>
25. Food and Water Watch [www.foodandwaterwatch.org](http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org)