



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Christopher Mackie, Medical Officer of Health/CEO

DATE: 2019 March 21

BOARD OF HEALTH REPRESENTATION ON THE FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Board of Health:

- 1) *Receive Report No. 022-19 re: “Board of Health Representation on the Food Policy Council” for information; and*
- 2) *Appoint a Board of Health representative to the Middlesex-London Food Policy Council as a voting member.*

Key Points

- The Middlesex-London Food Policy Council (MLFPC) has been operational since 2016 and has made steady progress toward providing food system leadership, as outlined in [Report No. 037-18](#).
- A Health Unit Registered Dietitian, who is also an MLFPC Executive member, provides coordination and administrative support to the MLFPC as a non-voting member, and supports implementation of certain MLFPC activities where they align with the Health Unit’s Healthy Eating Behaviour program.
- Per the MLFPC Terms of Reference ([attached as Appendix A](#)), Council membership includes a voting member position for a Board of Health representative. This position is currently vacant.
- The MLFPC is developing an on-line food directory to inform residents about where to buy local food and to serve as a repository of information about food literacy programs in the Middlesex-London area.

A Shared Vision for a Healthy and Sustainable Local Food System

The food system is a complex set of activities and relationships related to every aspect of the food cycle, including production, processing, distribution, retail, preparation, consumption, and disposal. A healthy, local food system is essential to a vibrant and healthy community. A food systems approach to healthy eating is required to address the inter-connected environmental, economic, social, and nutritional factors that are increasing the number of local food-related problems, including food insecurity, increased consumption of nutrient-poor foods, and rising rates of unhealthy weights and related chronic diseases.

Momentum for developing of a healthy, sustainable local food system in Middlesex-London has been growing since 2011, as outlined in Board of Health [Report No. 052-15](#) and [Report No. 043-16](#). On June 16, 2016, a collaborative team of the London Community Foundation, the City of London, Middlesex County, and the Health Unit proudly unveiled the [Community Food Assessment](#) and announced the formation of the Middlesex-London Food Policy Council, with an open call for applications. The inaugural meeting of the MLFPC took place on November 29, 2016. Since its formation, the MLFPC has made steady progress in providing food system leadership through its strategic partnerships and member expertise, the [MLFPC website](#), communications and social media activities, and community engagement activities.

The [MLFPC Strategic Plan for 2018–21](#) includes priorities to empower citizens to engage in local food system change and to enhance coordination between all food system sectors.

MLFPC Membership

In the fall of 2018, following a call for applications, the MLFPC selected a new group of volunteer Directors for 2018–22. As outlined in the Terms of Reference ([attached as Appendix A](#)), the MLFPC is comprised of a combination of elected and appointed members who represent diverse interests from across the entire food system. The Council’s membership reflects Middlesex-London’s diverse population. Members must endorse the mission, goals, and values of the Council.

Council membership includes a voting position for a Board of Health member, to be appointed by the Board of Health. Board of Health representation is critical for providing a public health lens to support the Council’s policy, research, and action group activities. The Board of Health member can also provide insight and information related to local data, food insecurity considerations, food literacy initiatives, and food safety programs supported by the Health Unit in our community. The appointed Board of Health representative does not commit program resources or funding; however, the Board of Health member contributes an understanding of the mandate of public health and the Health Unit’s values, important considerations for supporting MLFPC decision-making. The Health Unit Registered Dietitian, who provides coordination and administrative support to the MLFPC, provides briefings and tools to assist in the orientation of the Board of Health member who accepts the appointment.

Middlesex-London Food Policy Council Progress

As outlined in [Report No. 037-18](#), the MLFPC Strategic Plan 2018–21 identifies four priorities:

1. Building Council strength;
2. Defining shared language and metrics;
3. Developing an information repository; and
4. Building pathways to affect food policy change.

These priorities align with the Health Unit’s mission to promote and protect community health through values of collaboration, empowering citizens, excellence, and equity. Over the course of 2019, the MLFPC will be creating an on-line food directory, to be hosted on the MLFPC website, to strengthen local food system partnerships. This directory will inform Middlesex-London residents about where to buy and eat local food and how to learn about the importance of healthy eating and a strong local food economy. The directory will include information about farms, farmers’ markets, food literacy programs, food recovery, food waste avoidance, and growing your own food. It will become a place where residents can find out where to access local, healthy foods, and an information sharing platform and local data collection opportunity enabling the local food system players to collaborate more efficiently. Having a Board of Health representative in place at the Council table will help to maintain the MLFPC as a community organization rooted in health with a commitment to food system sustainability.

This report was prepared by the Healthy Living Division.



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