Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
Office régional de la santé de Winnipeg
Caring for Health
À l'écoute de notre santé

490 Hargrave Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba
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February 8, 2017

Executive Policy Committee
c/o Carlos Gameiro, Manager of the Decision Making Process
City Clerk's Department
510 Main Street
Winnipeg, MB R3B 1B9

Dear Executive Policy Committee Members:

Thank-you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Winnipeg Food Council. The food we eat is critical to our health. Food systems determine how we choose food and what food we have access to. Healthy food systems rely on land use decisions that influence food production, which can impact the accessibility, quality and variety of food available to us. Interventions to support healthy food systems are particularly important for our disadvantaged populations who may be food insecure.

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority (WRHA), led primarily by its Population and Public Health Program, has a long standing history of supporting healthy food systems and food security within the Winnipeg Health Region. In 2014, the WRHA became a signatory to the Manitoba Food Charter and developed a position statement on food security[i]. The WRHA Food Security Working Group has supported the concept of a municipal food council, including endorsing the document *Accommodating the Interests of Winnipeg's Agricultural Community* at the City of Winnipeg's Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development meeting in June 2015. Within the report, three specific recommendations were outlined, including the formation of a Winnipeg Food Policy Council.

Municipal food councils are either well established or emergent in the majority of Canada's largest urban centres (e.g. Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Edmonton). Municipal food councils that are embedded within municipal governance structures are seen as the most effective structure to create meaningful and lasting policy change. This has been echoed in other municipalities, such as Montreal, where they are just now trying to get their grassroots led food policy council embedded within the municipal governance structure. Further, municipal food council can play an important role in ensuring that the priorities of Winnipeggers are well understood, documented, and used to inform food strategies at other levels of government.

We support a Winnipeg Food Council membership that is adequately representative of the variety of stakeholders and their viewpoints. In particular, we support representation to reflect Winnipeg's diverse population, including those with lived experience of food insecurity, Indigenous communities, newcomers/refugees, and people with disabilities.

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A safe space to share can only be achieved with a critical mass of community members, so the size of the committee should be sufficient to achieve this. We recommend that a stipend be considered to overcome barriers to participation for community members.

We also support the roles and priority areas identified during the stakeholder consultations, especially those leading to enhanced public health through local food security and healthy food environments, as well as increased food literacy and access to food by encouraging multi-sector strategic approaches through greater coordination and networking.

We commend the City of Winnipeg for taking leadership for developing the proposed Winnipeg Food Council, and we look forward to having a representative on this group.

Regards,



Dr. Lisa Richards
Medical Officer of Health, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
Co-Chair WRHA Food Security Working Group



Lavonne Harms
Public Health Dietitian, WRHA Downtown Community Area
Co-Chair WRHA Food Security Working Group

cc: Dr. Catherine Cook, VP Aboriginal and Population Health
Lawrence Elliott, Medical Director of Population and Public Health
Carolyn Perchuk, Director of Population and Public Health
WRHA Food Security Working Group

[i] http://www.wrha.mb.ca/community/publichealth/files/FoodSecurityPosStatFinal.pdf