



A Food Charter for HRM

Community Conversation Guide

Thank you for agreeing to host a discussion about the draft Food Charter for HRM. This conversation guide will provide you with information to support you in leading that discussion.

(NOTE: If this guide is not suitable for use with your community members (i.e. if language is a barrier), please contact hfpalliance@gmail.com to discuss options for customizing a discussion session.)

Introduction

Purpose: Why host a community discussion?

- Share information about what a food charter is and how a food charter can be used as a step in engaging community members and decision-makers to improve a community's food security;
- Introduce the draft Food Charter for HRM; and
- Gather feedback about actions under the Charter's principles which could make your community more food secure.

How the information will be used?

The Halifax Food Policy Alliance (HFPA) wants to ensure that Halifax citizens are aware of the draft Food Charter for HRM and that they have the opportunity to have their voices heard as we move towards developing a food strategy for our region. We know that there are many different voices in communities across Halifax that have not yet been heard and we would like to increase opportunities to hear specific actions each community would like to see to enhance food security in their region.

Overview

In 2013, HFPA was formed with the goal of creating a Food Charter for HRM. The charter would be a first step in the development of a food strategy to help Halifax Regional Municipality become a more food-secure place to live.

The HFPA wants to share the draft Food Charter for HRM widely, while gathering community input about actions which could be included in a food strategy for Halifax.

At this point, the HFPA has:

- Drafted a Food Charter for HRM by reviewing six food charters from across Canada and gathering feedback for our draft;
- Created a survey about the Charter and gathered feedback online; and
- Hosted two public engagement events on October 30, 2017 – both of which provided an opportunity to gather feedback while sharing information about a Food Charter for HRM.

We are now distributing this toolkit and encouraging organizations and community members to host additional conversations.

What is the Halifax Food Policy Alliance?

The HFPA is a partnership of individuals and organizations that represent different sectors related to the food system. Together we are working to support program and policy initiatives that have potential to achieve our collective vision of a healthy, just and sustainable food system for the Halifax Region.

What is a Food Charter?

A food charter is a shared statement of values and principles used to guide the governance of a municipality's food system. Governance of the food system—from production through processing and distribution to consumption and waste management of food—is complex, involving the work and collaboration of many people, organizations, governments and communities in creating strategies, policies, programs and laws to ensure that the system is sustainable and flourishing. Food charters sometimes contain broad outcomes or priorities, but they are generally intended as a starting point and as a guide for developing the actions necessary for good food system governance.

Why does the Halifax Regional Municipality Need a Food Charter?

Municipal governments and local communities have taken on a growing role in governing modern food systems, especially in areas such as land use planning, urban agriculture, economic development, emergency food distribution, access to food retail, community health, and waste management. But because food systems are so complicated, coordinating all of the planning, implementation and monitoring necessary for governing that system requires a strong, clear vision of what “good governance” means—one that is shared and supported by all participants.

A food charter typically serves as an entry point to a municipal food strategy. Charters have been created and implemented across Canada, in regions such as: Toronto, Thunder Bay, Vancouver, Edmonton and many others. A food strategy can guide policy-makers, community groups and citizens in creating a just and sustainable food system for our region. Food strategies can help communities to improve access to affordable, healthy food while reducing waste, creating opportunities to grow our own food and for community food celebrations. A food strategy typically includes proposed actions (short and long term) to improve/enhance a region's food system.

Who is Responsible for Creating a Food Charter?

Food charters have been adopted in several municipalities across Canada, but there is no one model for how those charters were developed. In some cases, a leading organization or a specialized body—sometimes called a “food council”—is tasked with designing the food charter in consultation with citizens and community groups. In other municipalities, citizens themselves have taken the lead. In still others, municipal governments or certain agencies, such as the public health department, have been mainly responsible for developing their food charter. Most importantly, the process of developing a food charter involves community and stakeholder engagement, resulting in a statement that is broadly endorsed by those who participate in governing the food system and widely regarded as an accurate reflection of their shared vision.

In this kit, you will find:

- The draft Food Charter for HRM;
- Suggested activities to frame the discussion and feedback collection.

To host a community discussion, you will need to find a suitable meeting space and invite community members. You may require tools such as flipcharts, sticky notes, and pens/markers. You may wish to print copies of the draft Food Charter for HRM for participants to reference. If possible, you could also send the document to participants for their review before the event.

An approximate timeframe for the discussion session could range from 1 hour to 2 hours, depending on the length of time that participants are given to complete each of the suggested questions below. Different facilitation techniques can be used to shorten or lengthen the time for the session.

Thank you again for your work in hosting a community conversation about a Food Charter for HRM. We greatly appreciate your efforts to engage and capture input from your community members.



Script with questions and facilitation suggestions

This script is prepared with the assumption that community dialogues will be taking place in a space with tables. These suggestions could be adapted for a small group discussion with a few participants or an individual discussion with a single participant.

Using the information provided in the first few pages of this document, the first part of the session should introduce participants to the HFPA and Food Charters in general, followed by introducing and exploring the vision and five principles in the draft Food Charter for HRM created by the HFPA.

Event Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

Begin the event by welcoming the participants and by acknowledging the Indigenous lands on which your event is taking place.

Sample script: “Welcome to our Food Charter for HRM discussion event! Before we begin, we/I would like to begin by acknowledging that we are hosting this discussion on the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi’kmaq People. Thank you everyone for taking time to come together to discuss the draft Food Charter for HRM.”

Facilitator/Discussion Leader Introduction

Provide your name, your organization’s name (if applicable) and share why you are interested in a Food Charter for HRM.

Group Introductions

Depending on the number of participants, you can enable time for group introductions in a few different ways. If the group is small (less than 10 participants), you might ask participants to share their names, organization names (if applicable) and the food issues that matter to them. Less formally, you could ask them to share their one of their favourite food dishes, their favourite vegetable or a similar food-related ‘ice breaker’. If the group is more than 10 participants, you could allow time for participants to introduce themselves to their table mates, sharing the same information (name, organization name and an ice breaker).

Overview/Purpose of the Event

Outline the purpose of the event, using the information in the introduction of this document. You can adjust the depth of information provided to accommodate your event schedule. Essential elements for introduction are:

- Mention the HFPA as the body that has created the draft Food Charter for HRM and the purpose of gathering feedback from community members
- Outline ‘What is a food charter?’(see above page 2) ; and
- Ensure that participants have the draft Food Charter in hand.

Display Elements in Meeting Space:

Posting the vision for the draft Food Charter for HRM on the wall or on a flipchart in the room would be helpful for referencing during the discussion.

Discussion Questions:

Guide participants through the following two questions, capturing their responses/comments using flipchart paper, volunteer note-takers, post-it notes etc.

FOOD CHARTER VISION

A just and sustainable food system in HRM is rooted in healthy and resilient communities where no one is hungry and everyone can access nutritious and culturally preferred food. It is an economically viable, diverse, and ecologically sustainable system for growing, catching, harvesting, processing, distributing, accessing and preparing food.

QUESTION 1: What improvements would you suggest for the vision, if any?

Possible discussion techniques:

- Small table discussion, followed by collection of the responses, either by:
 - Sharing with the whole group – table by table, top 2-3 suggestions;
 - Posting notes by the vision. The facilitator could group the suggestions and give an overview of key themes, followed by the opportunity for group discussion on some of the suggestions.
- Individual reflection period, followed by round table discussion (or whole group if a small group) of suggestions.

To capture suggestions, asking a volunteer to harvest feedback on a flipchart paper or note-sheet would be effective. A photograph of posted notes by the Vision would be an excellent technique to capture suggestions as well.

The following is an excerpt from the draft Food Charter, outlining the five stated principles and providing an explanation for each principle:

PRINCIPLES

To create a just and sustainable food system, we commit to:

Community Economic Development

Actively supporting locally based food systems which are pillars of sustainable and resilient economies be they urban, suburban, rural or coastal. Promoting entrepreneurship in food and ensuring farmers, fishers, harvesters, distributors and processors are able to generate adequate incomes and create employment opportunities.

Social Justice

Upholding food as a basic human right and ensuring that food is obtained in a manner that maintains dignity, reflects cultural diversity and challenges inequities experienced by systemically disadvantaged communities, including those who work in food production regardless of the nature of their residency in Canada. A just food system ensures that residents have opportunities to produce their own food and the resources to participate fully in the food system.

Ecological Health

Adopting a whole-systems approach to food that protects and enhances our natural resources, reduces and re-integrates food waste and builds resilient ecosystems. This approach supports the natural integrity of farmlands, fisheries and watersheds and the species diversity of animals, fish, plants and seed stocks.

Individual and Community Health

We recognize that nutritious and safe food is a fundamental component of health and well-being at every age. We value supportive environments that promote adequate access, education, and community agency in all aspects of the food system from production to consumption.

Celebration

Encouraging the sharing and celebratory nature of food, which is a fundamental human experience. Food brings people together, in a celebration of community, culture, and diversity.



QUESTION 2: What are some of the actions you would suggest, under each of these five principles, to improve food security in your community?

Facilitation suggestions for this question:

Use a flipchart page on the wall to indicate the five principles, with space for notes. Hand out 5 different coloured post-it note pads to each group. Ask them to discuss their action suggestions at their table for 5-10 minutes and then capture them on the pads. Have each table report back on a few highlighted suggestions and then stick their notes on the flipchart page under the relevant principles.

For the flipchart page, simple principle headings could be used, or a hand-drawn graphic such as a flower with 5 petals or five-sided star, with each one labeled with a principle title and indicating the corresponding sticky-note colour for suggested actions.

Once the group has finished the report-back and placed their notes on the flipchart page, the facilitator can comment about themes, most populated principles, etc.

Session Wrap-up

If time allows, wrap-up the session with general comments from the group on what they learned and discussed. The facilitator can offer thanks for participation. Facilitators could also gather contact information from participants and offer to send updates regarding the Charter, or offer contact information for the HFPA (see below) and encourage participants to connect for updates.

Website: <https://halifaxfoodpolicy.ca/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/halifaxfoodpolicyalliance/>

Other resources:

[Thought About Food](#): A workbook on food security and influencing policy

[Dig-in! Some common food terms](#)

APPENDIX I -DRAFT HRM FOOD CHARTER

CURRENT SITUATION

The strength of our local food system is directly linked to quality of life, the vibrancy of our communities, and the sustainability of our urban and rural landscapes. Across Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), the unceded traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq, there is growing awareness of, and concern about, our food system and our collective ability to ensure that all people, at all times, have an adequate supply of nutritious and sustainably produced food. These concerns are reflected in high rates of chronic disease and food insecurity, lack of food sovereignty for Indigenous Peoples, environmental degradation and challenges preventing many local farmers and fishers from earning a living. Despite this, we are also a region with immense natural resources, a rich cultural fabric and a long history of fishing, farming and community self-reliance. Creating a food system that will serve everyone – where all residents can access foods that enhance health, where individual dignity and community self-reliance are assured, and where our agricultural and fishing communities thrive – will require leadership and coordination across sectors, organizations and governments. Our health and the health of future generations depends on it.

The HRM Food Charter presents a vision for a food system that will strengthen the health of our people, our communities, and our land and water ecosystems. It is a declaration, and a call to action, for a coordinated effort to revitalize and strengthen a locally-based, sustainable food system for HRM.

VISION

A just and sustainable food system in HRM is rooted in healthy and resilient communities where no one is hungry and everyone can access nutritious and culturally preferred food. It is an economically viable, diverse, and ecologically sustainable system for growing, catching, harvesting, processing, distributing, accessing and preparing food.

PRINCIPLES

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Ecological Health

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Individual and Community Health

We recognize that nutritious and safe food is a fundamental component of health and well-being at every age. We value supportive environments that promote adequate access, education, and community agency in all aspects of the food system from production to consumption.

Celebration

Encouraging the sharing and celebratory nature of food, which is a fundamental human experience. Food brings people together, in a celebration of community, culture and diversity.

We therefore declare our commitment and intent to work in partnership with individuals, communities, organizations, businesses, institutions and governments towards achieving a just and sustainable food system across HRM. We recognize that this commitment has real implications for our policies, programs and practices and we commit to realizing the vision and principles set out in this document by supporting the development of a coordinated food strategy.

Signature: _____

