

Growing Green: Project Priorities
Interim Backgrounder March 31 2003

Contributing to provincial public health legislation

A *Public Health Act* for BC (new legislation) is being drafted. Some characteristics of the work so far:

- the approach is based on population health/determinants of health; chronic disease prevention is a key focus
- food security is seen as both an initiative and an outcome
- the Community Nutritionists Council of BC has been asked to make a case for Community Nutritionists' contribution to food security and food security's contribution to public health
- the current thinking is that under the Act there will be a set of performance expectations, rather than regulations.
- The drafting of this Act presents significant opportunities for *Growing Green*:
- to marshal arguments and evidence connecting local food systems, community food security, and public health
- to explore what a provincial Food Security Initiative could look like
- to make links and build relationships between agriculture, health and environment issues, agencies, policy and personnel
- to voice our concerns about legislation that may be short on duties and obligations.

Goals

- Negotiate for the new *Public Health Act*, regulations and related discussion papers to include more food and food systems examples, and new linkages, e.g.:
- between food security, public health, and increased community economic activity in local farm and food businesses
- between food safety, public health, and environmental factors (e.g., diet as major pathway for exposure to pollutants, and concerns about food-borne antibiotic resistance)
- between food, nutrition and health in hospital settings (iatrogenic effects of the health care system).
- Provide policy recommendations for the new Act related to:
- core programs under the Act, especially healthy eating
- performance expectations for key programs, strategies and health professionals' roles
- critical duties and obligations
- Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment section (impacts on other legislation).
- Provide an appendix to the Act regarding a BC Food Security Initiative.

Results

By the time *Growing Green* ends in 2004 we want to see:

- BC Public Health legislation that:
- has healthy eating as a core program
- demonstrates an understanding of food systems from seed to plate
- facilitates linkages with a range of BC government and non-government agencies involved in food systems (e.g. agriculture, health and environment)
- includes duties and obligations critical to the maintenance of community-based food security as a basic component of public health.
- A BC Food Council (to implement a BC Food Security Initiative) including membership from community grassroots, linked with Medical Health Officers, with ongoing input to provincial and regional/local public health policy.