TAKING ACTION TO CREATE A HEALTHIER FOOD ENVIRONMENT

WORKSHOP eBOOK

- A PUBLICATION OF THE NUTRITION RESOURCE CENTRE -
This e-book summarizes the proceedings from NRC’s 2015 workshop Taking Action to Create a Healthier Food Environment, including presentation summaries, key take-away messages, a selection of presentation slides, resources and tools developed for the workshop, and a summary of knowledge generated from participants in the interactive sessions.

Funded by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, the Nutrition Resource Centre (NRC) has operated under the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) since 1999. We are one of 14 health promotion resource centres operating in Ontario.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Workshop – What we did.
2. Pearls of Wisdom – What we learned.
3. Post-Workshop – Where do we go from here?
4. Appendix – Where do we access resources and tools?

Acknowledgement: The Nutrition Resource Centre would like to thank the Government of Ontario for its generous support to enable opportunities to strengthen the capacity of those involved with healthy eating and nutrition promotion activities across the health continuum.
WORKSHOP ONE
Introduction

**Why is the food environment important to public health?**

The physical environment - in which we live, work, and eat - has long been recognized as a critical determinant of health.(1) More recently, however, there has been a greater focus on the food environment as a key determinant of healthy eating and priority area for research, policy and initiatives to improve population health by increasing access to healthy and affordable food.(2) The concept of “food environment” includes the physical environments where food choices are influenced by the types of food available and the cost of food, such as retail food outlets, community food programs, homes, schools, workplaces and recreation centres.(3) Additionally, researchers have identified social dimensions of the food environment which influence food choice, such as food marketing and availability of nutrition information for consumers.(3)

Part of the [Transforming the Food Environment: Capacity Building Series](http://opha.on.ca/Nutrition-Resource-Centre/NRC-Navigator/Resources/Transforming-the-Food-Environment-in-Canada.aspx), the Nutrition Resource Centre recently hosted a number of Canada’s leading experts in food environments research and initiatives to facilitate a hands-on, interactive and participatory workshop in Toronto on October 30th. This action-packed workshop, entitled [Taking Action to Create a Healthier Food Environment](http://opha.on.ca/Nutrition-Resource-Centre/NRC-Navigator/Resources/Taking-Action-to-Create-a-Healthier-Food-Environment.aspx), brought together an assortment of individuals from across Ontario who are involved in food environment work in various ways, including community food programs; school, workplace and recreation food environments; retail food outlets and healthy supermarket initiatives; food and land use planning/policy; research and improving access to healthy food. Workshop participants included public health professionals, Registered Dietitians/Nutritionists, urban planners/geographers, faculty from a number of Canadian universities, scientists, as well as representatives from food and nutrition networks, organizations, NGOs and government. Such broad representation provided diverse perspectives and experiences, which laid the groundwork for engaged and reflective dialogue about the food environment, its importance to public health and the potential to create healthier food environments across Ontario.

---

Taking Action to Create a Healthier FOOD ENVIRONMENT

AGENDA

8:30 – 8:45  WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

8:45 – 10:15  Plenary 1 - Concepts, Measures and Interventions Related to the Retail Food Environment

10:15 – 10:30  BREAK

10:30 –12:00  Large Group Activity - Field Trip to Assess the Food Environment and Facilitated Group Discussion

12:00 – 1:00  LUNCH

1:00 – 1:45  Plenary 2 – Partnerships and Planning to Create Healthy Food Environments

1:45 – 2:30  Overview of Strategies and Tools to Influence Municipal Decision Makers

2:30 – 2:45  BREAK

2:45 – 3:00  Report Back to Large Group

3:00 – 3:45  Small Group Activity: Thinking Stations

3:45 – 4:00  CLOSING

Did You Know? This workshop is part of the NRC’s Transforming the Food Environment Capacity Building Series. You can learn more about it here.
Dr. Leia Minaker is a Scientist at the Propel Centre for Population Health Impact. Leia’s research focuses on tobacco control in Canada and on retail food environment assessment and intervention. Leia completed her PhD at the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta in early 2013. During her studies, Leia examined environmental determinants of diets and obesity at a population level, working with urban planners and public health practitioners to develop policies supportive of healthy built environments. She wrote the Measuring the Food Environments in Canada report for Health Canada and has been working with Health Canada on creating a manual for communities to assess their retail food environments.

Dr. Rachel Engler-Stringer is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Community Health and Epidemiology in the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan. She has a doctorate in Nutrition and her research interests include community food security, food environments and food access, food system sustainability, health promotion, and community-based and participatory research. Dr. Engler-Stringer is Principal Investigator on several studies including two studies funded by the Canadian Institutes for Health Research called Smart Cities, Healthy Kids: Food Environment and Good Food, Healthy Families. The first has characterized the food environment in Saskatoon and the second is examining the impacts of the opening of a full-service cooperative grocery store (the Good Food Junction) in a former food desert. She is also an avid cook and takes great satisfaction from growing some of her own food.
Dr. Jason Gilliland is Director of the Urban Development Program and Full Professor in the Department of Geography at Western University. He is also cross-appointed to Western’s School of Health Studies (Faculty of Health Sciences) and Department of Paediatrics (Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry), and is a Scientist with the Children's Health Research Institute and the Lawson Health Research Institute based in London, Ontario. Dr. Gilliland is an award-winning teacher and researcher who is known internationally for his research on urban planning and public health issues.

Dr. Kim Bergeron is a Health Promotion Consultant in By-law and Policy Development at Health Promotion Capacity Building, Public Health Ontario. She holds a Masters of Health Studies from Athabasca University and a PhD in kinesiology and health studies, with a focus on health and the built environment, from Queen’s University. Kim provides training and support services to Ontario’s public health and health care stakeholders with a special focus on policy and by-law development. She works with clients to provide an overview of policy and by-laws, and develops strategies for ensuring collaborative efforts to create healthy communities. Kim has worked alongside the Ontario public health system to facilitate multidisciplinary partnerships to create healthy, sustainable communities for over twenty years.
Dr. Leia Minaker, food environments research expert and author of Health Canada’s report entitled *Measuring the Food Environment in Canada*, opened the workshop providing a “Food Environments 101.” Defining the retail food environment and exploring relevant food environment concepts and measures, Dr. Minaker described food environments research in Canada to date and explained media representation and common understandings of food deserts and food swamps. Minaker also described tools to assess the food environment, including a tool developed specifically for the Canadian context.

“Telling people to eat healthy is like telling them to walk a straight line on a winding road; it’s possible, but hard.”

Dr. Leia Minaker
Concepts, Measures and Interventions Related to the Retail Food Environment

Key Learnings

- The conceptual model of community nutrition environments describes the potential for policy to affect a range of environmental factors known to influence eating patterns and health.
- The research suggests - “food swamps” (areas with an abundance of unhealthy foods) seem to be more of a problem in Canada's urban centres, whereas, “food deserts” (areas where there is limited access to healthy foods) are more of an issue in rural and remote Canadian regions.
- It is still unclear which aspects of the food environment are the most influential (price, promotion, quality, availability, proximity, density or type of food outlets) in food purchasing and, ultimately, food consumption.
- The consumer retail environment – inside the retail food outlet – is designed to entice customers to impulsively purchase low cost foods that maximize profits for retailers, but are also likely to be of poorer dietary quality. This aspect of the food environment appears to be a promising area of action to maximize impact of healthy consumer purchasing.
- The public appears to favour initiatives that provide “healthy food” to the poor but tends to reject a “nanny state” or perceived limits on personal food choice among the non-poor.
- Media messaging should be interpreted with caution. The ultimate headline is the story that the public hears but it doesn’t necessarily convey public health’s message; obesity is a “wicked problem” that cannot be solved with any one single intervention.
- Poorly designed policy and initiatives may not lead to a healthier food environment.
- Changing the food environment in the most beneficial way may require reframing the issue to better understand its complexity and to reconceive the potential solutions.
- Health Canada has an upcoming module for practitioners to assess the food environment which will include:
  o Foundations for assessments - resources, relevance to health, and possible response(s).
  o Key steps in food environment assessments - map it, layer it, and act on it.
Dr. Rachel Engler-Stringer is a leading Canadian researcher in food environments research and co-principal researcher in the Smart Cities Healthy Kids initiative—a research project which aimed to map, characterize, and qualify the perceptions of the food environment for the entire city (all 60+ neighborhoods) as well as to link these measures to the dietary intake of children in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. In this session, Dr. Engler-Stringer provided an overview of existing food environments research evidence, including evidence from systematic reviews, a primer reading list, and findings from her own research and food environments projects.

Unhealthy food sources were found to be more accessible to schools as well as children’s neighbourhoods of residence.”

Dr. Rachel Engler-Stringer
Concepts, Measures and Interventions Related to the Retail Food Environment

Key Learnings

- **Smart Cities: Healthy Kids** is a multi-phase, large scale obesity intervention research project that aimed to examine how the built environments and food environments may impact the health behaviours of children in the community.
- The project highlighted the importance of improving access to healthier food environments for children, particularly those from lower socio-economic neighborhoods (LSEN) in Saskatoon. Some key findings were:
  - Children attending schools in LSEN had more access to unhealthy food options compared to children attending schools in higher socio-economic neighborhoods (HSEN)
  - LSEN had higher density of unhealthy outlets (coffee and fast food outlets) vs. HSEN
  - LSEN had less access to healthy food outlets and documented food deserts vs. HSEN
- The Good Food Junction (GFJ) is a social enterprise (with minimized profit margins for fruits and vegetables) and food environment initiative aimed to address a food desert in one of Saskatoon’s core neighborhoods and improve the dietary intake of residents. Researchers surveyed the neighborhood following the grocery store intervention and preliminary findings showed:
  - Households in the neighborhood had extreme poverty, food insecurity, and higher prevalence of marginalized and vulnerable populations.
  - 95% of residents were aware of GFJ, 75% have shopped there, but 72% still rely on community food programs and alternative food networks to meet household needs.
  - Distribution of food purchases at GFJ, by level of household income, showed that those residing in LSEN purchased more vegetables than meat/prepared foods (potentially cost-related)
- “If you build it, they will come” may not be the magic solution to such a complex problem.
- Evidence suggests that foods with higher nutrient densities are associated with a higher cost; and a reduction in the cost of fruits and vegetables leads to increased consumption.
- Food desert interventions, which subsidize the price of healthier foods, can have positive outcomes for individuals of lower socio-economic status, but may not be sufficient to address extreme poverty and other socially determined barriers to healthy eating.
**Field Trip to Assess the Food Environment and Facilitated Group Discussion**

Participants “sleuthed the food environment” by taking a field trip to a nearby retail food outlet to assess the health of the local food environment. Groups were asked to consider the following questions while exploring the various retail outlets in Toronto, ON. See Appendix for additional materials.

The questions they were asked to consider included:

1. What type of business is it?
2. How did it appear visually?
3. What was the most appealing aspect of the business?
4. What types of foods are placed near the cash?
5. What healthy food or snack options are available?
6. What is the most common food available?
7. What are three foods that you would buy and their price and quality?
Morning Group Activity

Group Discussion

- Many retail food outlets had high calorie deserts and sugar-sweetened beverages prominently placed by cash check-outs.
- Some outlets used marketing messages to influence the perception of food as natural and healthful, such as “hormone-free,” “gluten-free,” “organic,” and “grass-fed.”
- Many outlets used competitive pricing in their marketing with advertisements prominently placed, both inside and outside the retail food outlet, to influence consumers to purchase marketed meals.
- Ethnic outlets were perceived to be healthier by offering whole foods, lentils, and vegetables/vegetarian options, despite that preparation methods were unknown and nutrition information was not available.
- Some outlets did not have nutrition information available, while others had nutrition information but it was very difficult to obtain or interpret.
- In Dr. Minaker’s experience assessing the food environment in numerous retail outlets, managers and staff often comment on the healthfulness of food, stating that it is healthy “because we prepare it here.” They do not describe healthfulness in relationship to sugar, salt, fat, fibre, calcium or other nutrients that impact health.

Key Points

- It is important to provide prominent and easy-to-use nutrition information and messaging to help consumers make healthier choices; to support individuals’ right to know; and to ensure food security, particularly for individuals’ special dietary needs.
- When public health communicates healthfulness in terms of nutrients, there may be a disconnect between messaging and public understanding.
- Public health may need to reframe its messaging and/or focus on education about healthy and unhealthy food preparation methods used in retail food outlets.
Part 1: Lessons of a Community Geographer: Building Effective Cross-Sector Collaborations around Healthy Food Environments

Dr. Gilliland is the Director of the Human Environments Analysis Laboratory (HEAL) – an interdisciplinary research unit focused on examining the social and physical environments of communities across Ontario. For more than a decade, Dr. Gilliland and his team have studied the various environmental factors that may be contributing to obesity, with a focus on children’s health.

Shifting gears to community planning and action, Dr. Gilliland’s session presented his experience building effective cross-sector partnerships to create healthy food environments across Ontario, including: how to engage your community and create multi-stakeholder, cross-sector collaborations/partnerships; how to work with municipal players, planners, and local community decision-makers to change the food environment/food system; and practical examples from his applied research with different cross-sector stakeholders.

“Engagement provides research questions, improves recruitment, provides co-learning opportunities, and supports true [knowledge translation].”

Dr. Jason Gilliland
Partnerships and Planning to Create Healthy Food Environments

Key Learnings

• Complexity of today’s “wicked” problems – such as childhood obesity or strengthening the local food system – demands collaboration as these issues are too compounded for one single researcher.

• Community geography is “research involving collaboration and the participation of those of an area affected by an issue for purposes of education and action toward affecting positive (social, economic or environmental) change.”

• Key to this process is integrated knowledge exchange – the two-way flow of information between researchers and subjects before, throughout, and after research is complete.

• Successful collaborative partnerships include: relevance of work to all stakeholders; engagement, trust and long-term relationships; well-defined scope, expectations and value propositions; a sustainability and exit plan; and time to celebrate the successes.

• To drive change in retail geography and address poverty, make the economic argument to municipal players – linking work/projects/policy to economic development is a win-win.

• Consider non-related health outcomes that can be entry points to health – multi-strategic community initiatives can have increased access to healthy food as a secondary outcome.

“Community geography is not standing outside the community and looking at the people like a fishbowl...it’s about diving in feet-first and submersing yourself in the work.”

Dr. Jason Gilliland
Part 2: Creating healthier food environments: Overview of strategies and tools to influence municipal decision makers

With decades of community-based experience and expertise in projects, planning and policy development in municipalities across Ontario, Dr. Kim Bergeron’s final sessions of the day aimed to share key learnings; to facilitate co-learning from participants’ own experiences across the province; and to build capacity among participants’ to enable immediate action in their own communities.

"Public health has a role to provide a voice for marginalized populations, including on issues related to food."

Dr. Kim Bergeron
Partnerships and Planning to Create Healthy Food Environments

Key Learnings

Dr. Kim Bergeron delivered a practical presentation that provided participants with an overview of the municipal structure, including the legislation that governs decision-makers, the types of policy levers that can be influenced to create healthier communities, the types of municipal decision makers, their role in government and policy processes and ways we can engage them to influence municipal decisions/plans. The session was supported with a summary handout with Bergeron’s highlighted strategies and tools to influence municipal decision makers, including, ways to conduct document reviews; to assess readiness; and to impact municipal zoning by-laws.

Dr. Bergeron’s key points included the following insights about strategies to influence municipal players:

- Reach out and engage with municipal staff;
- Align your objectives with what is happening at the municipality; and
- Weigh in on zoning by-law discussions, decisions and enactments.
- Focus action on changing the built environment, developing infrastructure and policies in the societies we create to enable community members to sustain themselves within supportive structural and systemic determinants.

"You want to develop strong relationships with civil servants...they’re the ones who can give you inside knowledge about elected officials and internal bureaucratic happenings."

Dr. Kim Bergeron
Afternoon Group Activity

Facilitated Discussion: Strategies to Influence Municipal Decision-Makers and Building and Sustaining Cross-Sectoral Partnerships

Closing the day, Dr. Kim Bergeron used strategies such as “think 1,2,4” and thinking stations to facilitate participants’ discussions on the following series of questions to generate knowledge and a menu of strategies to influence municipal decision makers and foster cross-sector partnerships to improve the food environment.

1. What are the challenges and/or barriers to develop and/or sustain cross-sectoral partnerships?
2. What are the challenges and/or barriers to influence municipal decision-makers?
3. What do you need to take action?
4. What strategies have you have used or considered using to influence municipal decision makers?

The collected responses to these questions have been summarized on the following pages.
### Afternoon Group Activity

**Question 1: What are the challenges and/or barriers to develop and/or sustain cross-sectoral partnerships?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Differing Priorities and Objectives:</th>
<th>Staffing Challenges:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Competing or changing priorities and mandates</td>
<td>• Finding the right person – gate keeper (needs knowledge about the community)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Not considered a priority/side project</td>
<td>• Finding a leader willing to carry out task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Different agenda, process, or mandate</td>
<td>• Staff changes, turnover, having the right people at the table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Different funding objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources and Capacity:</th>
<th>Vision, Goals and Roles:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Resources (time, people, money)</td>
<td>• Lack of shared vision or goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Budget constraints – human resources/scheduling conflicts</td>
<td>• Understanding roles, unclear roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of capacity, feeling overwhelmed</td>
<td>• Accountabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Hard to keep on top of who is doing what</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Working in silos (public health, transport, etc.)</td>
<td>• Willingness to collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Structure of health unit – Municipal/Regional vs. Board of Health</td>
<td>• Competitive attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Members without political capital</td>
<td>• Transparency, trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Jurisdiction</td>
<td>• Establishing networks between sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Establishing networks between sectors</td>
<td>• Different knowledge base, different language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trying to sustain momentum</td>
<td>• Data sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Venues (comfort, ease, rural vs. urban, farms)</td>
<td>• Seasonality (scheduling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of understanding</td>
<td>• Lack of acknowledging positive outcomes as a result of the partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Getting buy-in from members, decision makers, or senior management</td>
<td>• Lack of outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of communication plan</td>
<td>• Lack of partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• External influences</td>
<td>• Lack of successful cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Building/maintaining rapport based on past history</td>
<td>• Engagement challenges/access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Apathy</td>
<td>• Lack of champion from different sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Redundancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Achieve common “low hanging fruits”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Afternoon Group Activity

**Question 2: What are the challenges and/or barriers to influence municipal decision-makers?**

## Resources and Capacity:
- Limited knowledge/awareness about issue
- Not enough evidence or skills to support decisions or implement the intervention
- Resources - human, monetary, infrastructure
- Differing priorities for resource allocation

## Communication:
- Initiating conversations with councillors
- Policy preventing direct communication
- Differences in the type of language used
- Misinterpretation, miscommunication

## Power and Politics:
- Lack of understanding of the system
- Unable to get issue on the political agenda
- Power of constituents (NIMBYism)
- Politics and bureaucracy
- Leadership – collaborative vs. autocratic

## Vision, Values and Perspectives:
- Values, beliefs, attitudes, political will
- Opposing lobby groups
- Personal biases
- Priorities - competing, changing
- Political ideologies, culture, social norms

## Other:
- Lack of community involvement
- Complacency
- Not my role to influence
- Timing, term in office
- Past history or challenges working together
- Convincing that it is a municipal issue
- Convincing that they play a role or have responsibility
- Difficulty to obtain proof or evidence of benefits and outcomes – especially related to cost-effectiveness
- Not having a champion
- Large health unit, difficult to coordinate work
- Increasing the level of commitment
- Influence of peers
- Working in silos
- Policy accepted but not acted on
- Trust and long-term relationships
- Fear of change or consequences
- Liability
- Lack of cooperation between tiers
- Aligning with other sectors, departments or issues
- Personal background, history and experience of decision makers
Question 3: What do you need to take action?

Resources and Capacity:
- Funding, infrastructure, human resources
- Knowledge, skills, experience, confidence
- Evidence (health, economics) & access to data
- Organizational support, mentorship

Communication:
- Advocacy and persuasion skills
- Open, transparent channels of communication

Power and Politics:
- Political climate and political will
- Community activism, support and buy-in
- Public health professionals to run for office and hold political positions
- Political savvy – knowing angles to emphasize

Vision, Values and Perspectives:
- Shared vision, goals and understanding
- Willingness to change, take action
- Good scope – realistic expectations and time frames
- Willingness to take risks, push the envelope

Other:
- Safe, consistent & routine community forum
- Support for community organizations doing the work
- Partnerships and collaborations
- Action plans
- Strong sustainability plan for initiatives
- Understanding of the system

- Educate councillors about public health
- Task forces and committees
- “How-to” guides on common food work
- Networking
- Time to celebrate the small successes
- Champions who are trusted and respected
Afternoon Group Activity

Question 4: What strategies have you have used or considered using to influence municipal decision makers?

Personalize:
- Constituents to tell personal stories & analogies in delegations to council meetings
- Align with what the decision maker cares about
- Invite municipal staff to see the work underway in the community

Communication:
- Letters to editor in local newspaper
- Understand the audience and reframe the message using their language
- Call them directly to start a conversation

Power and Politics:
- Complete deputations that share residents’ support for health-related policies
- Input into the official plan
- Have citizens (voters) deliver the message

Partnerships and Collaboration:
- Align with municipal strategic plans, priorities and mandates
- Develop relationships, personal connections
- Invite city planners to join committees

Other:
- Gather supportive research (case studies, best practice, policy briefs)
- Invite mayors to public health community team meetings
- Make the case for ‘Health in All Policies’
- Provide year in review report to document number of participants in program visits
- Speak to council members about issues prior to making a change
- Engage and educate city staff
- Develop the relationship with civil servants

If you would like to share your story about a strategy used with municipal decision makers in your region or submit a blog post, email us at dsmith@opha.on.ca.
Afternoon Group Activity

Question 4 – Follow Up Discussion

The following examples of strategies that were used to overcome challenges or barriers were provided by participants in response to Question 4.

Grey Bruce Health Unit (GBHU)

At GBHU, four teams were created to represent the four regions of the health unit’s geographic catchment area. Each team included health professionals like nurses, dietitians, health inspectors, etc. Quad teams invited all the mayors of the towns within their respective areas to their meetings and to watch “Let’s start a conversation about health … and not talk about health at all,” a social media video that portrays and describes the social and economic conditions influencing the health of the community. The video was used as a spring board for discussions about the social determinants of health and shares the voices of marginalized or disempowered community members that are often silent. GBHU asked municipal staff how the public health unit staff could help them with what they are working on at the municipality. One big win of this strategy was gaining public health support for the development of a safe trail for walking and biking.

York Region

York region is a two-tiered system with nine municipalities in the health unit. To work towards a healthier food environment, the region has been working on creating a deputation to present to each of the municipalities. The deputation is seeking endorsement of the values inscribed in the York Region Food Charter. Once endorsed, they plan to ask municipalities how they are working towards achieving the vision set-forth in the Food Charter to continue influence municipal planning and decision-making around healthy food access.

Saskatoon

In Saskatoon, the Food Policy Council organized a local food tour where they purposely invited local decision-makers to give them a sense of what is going on in terms of healthy food initiatives. The tour brought the mayor to a peri-urban farm which has been receiving pressure for urban development opportunities. Not surprisingly, the mayor was very charmed by the farmer and it provided the opportunity for a conversation around peri-urban land and agricultural development to support the local food economy.
TWO

PEARLS OF WISDOM
Dr. Bergeron provided a poignant recap of the day, with a discussion of some emergent themes and principles of practice. Key themes and take-home messages included:

- **Economics are important for not only the retailer but for the public** – poverty and the high cost of healthy food are the major barriers to healthy eating for low-income families.
- Nutrition education and food skills are important interventions to promote healthy eating but may not be needed as urgently as structural and systemic change:
  - Systemic changes can ensure a livable wage for low-income families and economic access to healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate foods for all.
  - Structural changes to the built environment can increase physical access to healthy foods and strengthen local food systems and community economies.
- **Opportunities and resources for health are not equally distributed among society** and contribute to social disparities in health - Health equity is the principle of practice that must drive the work of public health.
- **Power is not equally distributed in society** and public health has a role in recognizing the imbalance of power in relationships with community members and decision-makers; engaging marginalized populations whose voices are often silent; and being the voice for those often excluded from discussions and decision-making processes.

We can educate people on the benefits of drinking milk but if they have no economic base or if they walk out the door and they have no where to purchase [milk], then it doesn’t matter if they have that knowledge.”

Dr. Kim Bergeron
THREE

POST-WORKSHOP
POST-WORKSHOP EVENTS & RESOURCES

Social Media

• NRC’s Knowledge Management and Communications Coordinator, Barb Prud’homme BScH, captures the engaging Twitter conversation and photos from the day in the Storify summary of the 'Taking Action to Create a Healthier Food Environment' Workshop.
• Follow @nutritionrc and #nrc_foodenv for upcoming NRC Food Environment-related events and posts.

Articles and Blog Posts

• Courtney O’Neill, RD, MPH, shares her workshop experience in her guest blog post: “The food environment - The current state and creatively thinking about the future.”
• NRC’s Policy and Program Coordinator Donna Smith, RD, MPH, provides glimpses of the NRC’s 'Taking Action to Create a Healthier Food Environment" capacity-building workshop in this article.
• Donna Smith, RD, MPH, also writes about what the NRC is doing to support the creation of healthier food environments across Ontario in her article “NRC Kicks-off its Food Environment Series with a Spotlight on York Region’s Healthy School Food Zones Project

NRC Forum

• Join the Nutrition Resource Centre on May 11, 2016 for our NRC Forum 'Healthy Eating in Today's Food Environment . . . Is It Possible?', as we explore together how we can help the public navigate the current food environment and transform it to support healthy eating. More details to come.
FOUR

APPENDIX
**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

➢ **“Food Environments 101”**
   Dr. Leia Minaker

   **Presentation Slides:**
   • The Retail Food Environment: Concepts, Measures, and Interventions

   **Supporting Resources:**
   • Brief: Food Environments: An Introduction for Public Health Practice
   • Article: Healthy Nutrition Environments: Concepts and Measures
   • Report: Measuring the Food Environment in Canada
   • Report: Working with Grocers to Support Healthy Eating
   • Article: “The Downside of Farmers Markets”
   • Article: “Is Walmart the Answer to ‘Food Deserts’”

➢ **“Reflections of Where, How and What in Characterizing Food Environments”**
   *Research to assess the health of children living in urban environments*
   Dr. Rachel Engler-Stringer

   **Supporting Resources:**
   • Website: Smart Cities, Healthy Kids
   • Fact Sheet: SCHK Food Environment
   • Video: Study Examines Saskatoon’s Food Environment
   • Report: The Role of the Dietitian in the Built Environment
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Group Activity Resources:

- Assessing the Food Environment: Letter to Establishment
- Assessing the Food Environment: Activity Description
- Assessing the Food Environment: Participant Worksheet

“Lessons of a Community Geographer: Building Effective Cross-Sector Collaborations around Healthy Food Environments”
Dr. Jason Gilliland

Supporting Resources:

- Resource – Children’s Health Atlas
- Lesson - Is Your Community a Food Desert?
- Video - Smart APPetite Program
- Video - Revitalizing London’s Old East Village
- Website - Human Environments Analysis Laboratory – Projects to improve the social and physical environments across Ontario

“Partnerships and Planning to Create Healthy Food Environments”
Dr. Kim Bergeron

Presentation Slides:

- Creating healthier food environments: Overview of strategies and tools to influence municipal decision makers
- Built environment elements supportive of healthy eating in rural, remote and northern communities: A scoping review

Supporting Resources and Tools:

- Toolkit - Strategies and resources to influence municipal decision makers
STAY CONNECTED WITH THE NRC

Don’t miss our upcoming workshops, webinars, or events – subscribe now to the daily News in Brief and the monthly NRC Insider newsletter!