

A Food Charter

The citizens of the city of Prince Albert, through their elected Council, declare these actions to be necessary for the welfare and food security of all citizens:

The community of the city of Prince Albert will encourage and facilitate:

The community of Prince Albert has shown itself to be an aware, caring and responsive community. Citizens, encouraged and facilitated by the City Council and Administration, along with community-based organizations and other government agencies, have taken significant steps to meet the social and food needs of its weakest members. Because we are all vulnerable to food insecurity, it is time for this community to adopt a clear vision for the future of the kind of food security we need and deserve.

Community-based Responses

☐ the **fostering of a civic culture** that inspires all city residents and city departments to support food programs that encourage a greater degree of self sufficiency by its citizens.

This is already evident in programs such as Smart Families Food Co-op and Community Kitchens.

☐ **access to programs by seniors** that support health and independence.

Seniors health and independence in the community depends on their access to sufficient and nutritious food. Community Kitchen or other food programs focussed to Senior needs will improve quality of life for Seniors and so reduce community costs.

☐ **city and community facilities that will welcome breast-feeding families.**

Breastfeeding provides the best possible nutrition for infants and provides it at almost no cost. Breastfeeding benefits women's health by lowering the risk of many diseases.

☐ **conditions that ensure that each child of our community has access to nutritious food that enables effective learning.**

Realizing this goal will require :

- appropriate nutrition for expectant mothers that support unborn children,
- community and inter-generational cooking programs that create awareness of the need for balanced eating, and the skills to follow through.
- awareness of the need for breakfast and lunch programs in schools and child care centres
- developing habits of regular, nutritious meals that promote healthy bodies and brains
- creating an awareness of the need for consuming enough water.

☐ **access to nutrition and active living programs and services that will help citizens prevent and manage diet-related disease.**

Healthy eating and active living are major determinants of health.

☐ **practical nutrition education programs** that promote healthy eating, food shopping, budgeting, gardening and cooking skills, and programs which enhance our community's knowledge of purchasing, handling, preparing, consuming and storing of nutritious, affordable and safe food.

Real food security for citizens requires good information and practical skills. Many of the skills required for good food and nutrition practices in our urban settings have not been learned from previous generations, and must be taught to adults in the community as well as to school-aged young people.

<input type="checkbox"/> transportation policies that sustain safe and dignified access to food that people need.	<p>This basic requirement for food security for many citizens might be met by plans to provide free bussing for people to assure access to reasonably-priced healthy food in retail outlets. Accessible and affordable day care for single parents would often alleviate transportation difficulties.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> the use of vacant urban lands with high potential for food production, to be used for the production of fruit and vegetables.	<p>Successful community garden undertakings require access to fertile and secure land, as well as water and cultivation services at low or no cost to non-profit gardeners. Civic-owned machinery and watering capacity are a cost effective way of meeting these needs.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> cooperative training and income-generating ventures with area farmers to grow, store and make wholesome food available to all citizens.	<p>Both the urban and rural economy can be supported by cooperative ventures between food distribution or food retail operations in the city and food producers in the rural areas. Frequently the capacity to grow, process and store food until needed is greater in an area already equipped for agriculture.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> year-round ‘farmers markets’ especially in neighbourhoods not served by retail food outlets	<p>This is another area of cooperation between urban and rural interests. The need for year-round access, and access into neighbourhoods without retail food outlets is great. Existing civic and other community facilities can be used for use as “farmers markets” on a year-round basis.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> the construction and operation of food storage facilities within city neighbourhoods and in central locations.	<p>Local food production in and around Prince Albert will be very seasonal in nature unless accompanied by storage and distribution facilities. The need for access to cold and frozen storage space is especially critical for families without freezer or root-cellar options. Neighbourhood “locker plant” facilities could be attached to existing community or commercial sites in residential areas.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> inter-municipal agreements that promote a viable and sustainable agricultural economy generating adequate incomes for all.	<p>The urban centre of Prince Albert both serves and is dependent on the surrounding rural areas, making mutually beneficial agreements most appropriate.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> city and community organizations to provide an affordable range of healthy food within their facilities .	<p>Civic facilities, community clubs and schools should strive to provide healthy and affordable food for users of these facilities.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> links between diverse cultures and between urban and rural communities by hosting or supporting events which emphasize the city’s distinctive multi-cultural food customs and which bring together rural and urban people.	<p>Recognition that food plays a very important role in a community’s social and cultural life leads the community of Prince Albert and its education systems to respond to the cultural diversity found within its citizenry, and also the many close ties between the urban and surrounding rural cultures. These connections are the source of great benefit to all, and the cause for community celebration.</p>

Canada , through the Canada Action Plan for Food Security, aims “to ensure a safe and nutritious food supply for all, finding economically and environmentally sustainable ways to increase food production, and promoting health and education.” A 2002 United Nations declaration adds that “Governments have a legal obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill the right to food.”

Observations:

- Almost one-quarter of families in Prince Albert have a yearly income of less than \$20,000 (\$45,700 is the Canadian average)
- About 22% of all family units and 45% of unattached individuals in Prince Albert are classified as low income, compared to 14% and 38% respectively in the rest of the province.
- Many low income families spend more than 30% of their income on rent, leaving too little for food and other essentials.
- Low income urban residents often are required to provide hospitality to friends and family from out of town, increasing the stress on food budgets.
- Efficient food purchasing, preparation and storage is often not possible for persons with small food budgets.
- The centralization of retail food facilities seriously disadvantages those with limited means of transportation and child care.
- In most cases when adults in the community, because of unhealthy behaviours, create food insecurity, children and other dependents also go hungry.
- Citizens in our society, who are denied food, are denied the ability to participate fully in society.
- A significant increase of “children at risk” creates real costs for people’s lives and for the economy of Prince Albert.



We,
Citizens of the City of Prince Albert,
have considered issues of “food
security” as it affects our lives and
the future of our whole community.
Knowing that Canada supports the
fundamental right of everyone to safe
and nutritious food, we propose the
adoption of a

PRINCE ALBERT FOOD CHARTER

Considerations

Yesterday , Today and Tomorrow.....

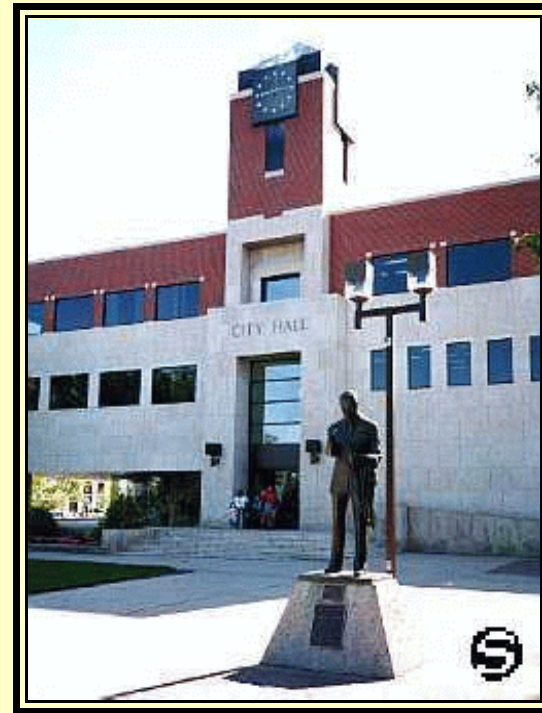
In days past most Saskatchewan citizens lived on farms or on the land and were essentially self-sustaining with regard to food. Increased urbanization still was accompanied by a significant level of family based food production or food preparation and preservation. What was not produced locally was purchased and stored, and what could not be effectively stored domestically, was often warehoused within the larger community. As a result food security for citizens was largely under control of those same local citizens.

This is no longer the case. Most food consumed by our citizens is produced and processed many miles and even continents away. The local food retailers now rely on rapid and secure transportation to move food to retail shelves. The “local” food retailer is now likely to be a large corporate operation located half a city away from where we live. Domestic back yard gardens are virtually extinct, and the connection between rural food producer and urban consumer exists only by way of very complex and remote connections.

The food security citizens knew in the past no longer exists, creating ***hardship for many and a threat to all of our citizens***. We trust that our world with low cost and efficient transportation and low cost foods will continue without interruption. The events of September 11, 2001, the restrictions on travel, transportation and global economies has proven just how easily this system is disrupted and how quickly food insecurity could be an issue for every citizen of our community. Having economic means will not ensure our health and food security if there is no food available or we cannot access it.

When the system fails to provide basic needs, it is always the economically disadvantaged who feel the negative effects first. We know that this is already the experience of many, and could be the experience of most if the underlying system of food production and food distribution to our community is not modified.

These concerns are real to all our citizens, and a responsible and responsive community will consider the situation and act prudently in the present to ensure the well being of our citizens into the future.



***The City of Prince Albert can be a leader
in using food security initiatives
to meet Prince Albert's economic, social
and environmental goals.***