

York Region

**Food
Network**

... the voice of hunger in York Region

December 15, 2009

Regional Council
Regional Municipality of York
17250 Yonge Street,
Newmarket, Ontario L3Y 6Z1

Chair Fisch and Members of Regional Council,

York Region Food Network is a registered charity dedicated to reducing and eliminating hunger in York Region. We raise awareness of hunger and promote policy changes that increase access to affordable nutritious food for York Region residents.

I spoke to the Finance Committee in February of this year on behalf of York Region Food Network to ask that one tenth of the GTA Pooling dollars repatriated in 2009 be directed to supporting social services in York Region. Council is to be commended for providing funds for early investment initiatives of the Community and Health Services multi-year plan through a 0.2% tax levy. As we await the Community and Health Services Departments multi-year plan due in the Spring of 2010, we request that Council set aside a further one tenth (\$1.3M or a further 0.2% tax levy) of the GTA Pooling dollars to be directed to social service infrastructure in York Region.

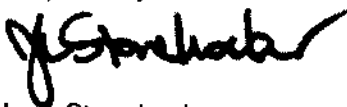
We understand that Council is about to approve a 0% tax increase for the 2010 budget. This is the ideal opportunity to support human services through a small investment in community social service infrastructure, as a zero tax increase is a situation unlikely to be repeated for several years.

The recent economic turmoil has left the social service community scrambling to meet increased needs in the community. As an example, the number of people accessing emergency food from regional food banks is up 35% over last year. It is vital that we address these needs with strategic, collaborative solutions based on solid social infrastructure. Simply maintaining people in poverty will ultimately weaken the fibre of our community. Unfortunately, many social service agencies are struggling for financial survival, chasing after a limited pool of donors and funders, and are left unable to effectively participate in building an effective social infrastructure. We need to commit financially to improved infrastructure and support of facilitated collaborative solutions.

York Region Food Network has been positioning itself to take on a stronger and more vibrant facilitating role in addressing food security issues in York Region, which have been identified as a key component in York Region's sustainability and public health plans. Unfortunately, erratic funding is compromising our ability to participate in these important strategic initiatives.

We need to have the **courage** to invest now so that we can avoid the high future cost of ignoring poverty.

Respectfully,



Joan Stonehocker
Executive Director

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