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Council*

**AHPRC**  
Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre

*A National Environmental Scan of Strategies for  
Influencing Policy to Build Food Security*

*Final Report*

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*Prepared by:*

*Nova Scotia Nutrition Council /  
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Patricia L. Williams, PhD, RD  
Principal Investigator  
National Environmental Scan of Strategies for Influencing Policy that Build Food Security

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report highlights findings from a national environmental scan which examined past and current strategies used to influence policy related to food security. It is recognized that policies at multiple levels influence root causes of food insecurity and therefore a scan to examine the strategy of using policy to influence the issue is important. The scan was conducted by the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council/Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre Food Security Projects under the guidance of a National Advisory Committee, representing organizations across Canada concerned about food security. Although not inclusive of all initiatives in Canada, this report begins to paint the landscape of **strategies** used by community, government, and professional groups to influence policy at various levels to build food security.

Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain access to, or availability of safe, nutritionally adequate, culturally or personally acceptable foods, or the limited ability to acquire such foods in a socially acceptable manner (Davis et al., 1991; McIntyre, 2003; Smilek & Bidgood, 2001). Alternatively, food security is defined as a "situation in which all people at all times can acquire safe, nutritionally adequate, and personally acceptable foods that are accessible in a manner that maintains human dignity" (Canadian Dietetic Association, 1991, p.139). Food security also means that people are able to earn a living wage by growing, producing, processing, handling, retailing and serving food, as well as when the quality of the land, air and water are maintained and enhanced for future generations (BC Food Systems Network, 2001). Also part of food security is that food is celebrated as central to community and cultural integrity (BC Food Systems Network, 2001).

Two key approaches have been used to understand and address food insecurity: an antipoverty approach, which views poverty as the underlying issue that needs to be addressed; and a sustainable food systems approach, which views issues within the current system of food production, processing, and retailing as the root problems (Power, 1999). Regardless of the approach, many efforts have been and continue to be made across Canada to address the mounting problem of food insecurity. These strategies have been organized along a continuum referred to as the Food Security Continuum (Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC), 1994; Houghton, 1998; Kalina, 2001). The Food Security Continuum is comprised of three main stages: efficiency or short-term relief strategies; substitution or capacity building strategies; and redesign strategies. Despite the differences between the anti-poverty and sustainable food systems approaches there seems to be some consensus that in order to build food security there must be movement along the continuum toward redesign strategies that have the power to affect fundamental changes to how food is viewed.

Actions that fall within the efficiency stage of the continuum offer temporary solutions to food insecurity. These strategies are commonly referred to as "Band-Aid" solutions because while they do offer short-term support, they do little to address the root causes of food insecurity or affect the problems in the long term. At this time, food banks, as an "efficiency strategy", are the most common response to food insecurity in Canada (Riches, 1997).

Substitution strategies attempt to replace or act as a substitute for short-term strategies (TFPC, 1994). Such strategies may be more costly than short-term relief strategies in terms of labour and

time, and may require more overall commitment from those involved (Kalina, 2001). However, substitution strategies also often attempt to build capacity among those individuals who are experiencing food insecurity to improve their situation through skill development, increased access to resources, increased awareness, and community mobilization. An example of such initiatives would be community kitchens, which have been used to successfully build knowledge and skill around food preparation and nutrition, as well as to develop support networks and community action among participants (Crawford & Kalina, 1997).

Redesign strategies aim to affect policies that will result in long-term changes to address the root causes of food insecurity (TFPC, 1994). Actions at this level are more costly and require a large amount of commitment from representatives of the entire food, health, social, and economic sectors as well as those who may be marginalized by these systems (Kalina, 2001). Redesign strategies may be directed toward various levels of policy, including personal, organizational, or public policy. Many experts have argued that public policy is in need of considerable change in order to build food security (MacRae, 1999; McIntyre, 2003; Riches, 1986; 1997). Public policies are those implemented by governments to address a certain public issue or problem, and can have a positive or negative impact on people and communities.

According to the food security continuum redesign strategies are the most effective means of building food security because they recognize and focus on policy change to affect the underlying social, political and economic structures that perpetuate food insecurity (Houghton, 1998; Kalina, 2001; TFPC, 1994). Changes in public policy are considered the most effective and direct route to ensuring that Canadian households and communities can be more food secure (TFPC, 1994). Building capacities among individuals, communities, and systems may be an important step toward this end.

Capacity building within communities affected by social policy issues is increasingly being viewed as a powerful strategy for bridging the gap between communities and public policy, and enabling a greater degree of participation in the policy process, particularly among communities typically excluded from such participation (Devon Dodd & Hébert Boyd, 2000; Restrepo, 2000). Traditionally public policy has been developed from a top-down approach, however the current social and political climate has moved toward an increasingly bottom-up approach to policy development that involves the participation and input of stakeholders and communities (Devon Dodd & Hébert Boyd, 2000).

Community capacity refers to a community's ability to identify, mobilize and address social and health issues that impact on the lived experiences, and is often viewed as both a means and end to building healthier communities (Devon Dodd & Hébert Boyd, 2000). Strengthened community capacity is considered an investment in long-term success as it may increase the potential of the community to address not only a current problem, but others that may be identified in the future (Hawe et al., 1997).

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN METHODS**

The national environmental scan began in December 2001 with a literature review, followed by the compilation of a database of over 300 initiatives involved in food security related work. A

food security initiative questionnaire was developed and widely distributed to obtain detailed information on tools and strategies used by initiatives to influence policy related to building food security. The questionnaire was also used to as a screening technique to gather information about each initiative's relevance to food security and activities pertaining to policy change. In all, 123 questionnaires were completed and returned. The questionnaires were coded and analyzed using statistical software to generate descriptive statistics regarding the respondents and the activities of their initiatives. Based on the screening technique, 26 key informants were selected for interviewing. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. The interview data were qualitatively analyzed using content analysis.

A broad range of respondents participated, including coordinators, health professionals, administrators, advocates (particularly around the issue of poverty), consultants, volunteers/community members, and researchers. A Respondent was identified by the contact for the initiative as the person most knowledgeable about their policy-related work.

### **STRATEGIES AND INSIGHTS**

A number of strategies and insights for influencing policy to build food security emerged from the key informant interviews. Collaborating with other groups and individuals involved in the same issue was seen as a key strategy that could result in a louder message and could allow for resources and efforts to be pooled rather than inefficiently duplicated. Community development and capacity building also appeared to be essential strategies for raising awareness and building skills for specific communities, the general public and themselves to become involved in and support the efforts to build food security through policy. Several of the key informants discussed the importance of framing food security as a health issue, as a way to both increase support for the issue and to make a necessary connection between health and social environments. Most of the informants indicated that lobbying and advocacy were essential to influencing policy, as well as garnering public support. A final strategy used by key informants was to conduct research and collect information. This strategy appeared essential to ensuring that clear and accurate messages could be developed and shared, and that policy decisions and changes were evidence-based.

#### ***KEY STRATEGY: Collaboration***

*“There is really a lot of committed and dedicated people out there with some wonderful ideas”*  
Working in partnership with other initiatives and creating opportunities for collaboration through the establishment of networks and coalitions was reported as a strategy used for strengthening efforts to influence policy. Collaboration appeared to be an effective way to pool resources and efforts, share ideas, and learn from others. Working collaboratively could also help to ensure that efforts were not being duplicated, and could avoid situations where initiatives working on similar issues might “tread on each others’ toes” by competing for the same funding source.

#### ***KEY STRATEGY: Community Development and Capacity Building***

*“Participants are given the chance to make choices and get involved”*  
Many of the informants discussed the importance of “empowering the community” by “working together” or “with” communities affected by food insecurity. Building individual level skills was not necessarily the main objective, rather programs and skill building were seen as a way to bring individuals together and strengthen the community as a whole. Many informants discussed

the use of participatory approaches within their initiative to provide opportunities for and encourage active involvement. Efforts were taken to facilitate participation and involvement, recognizing that there may be significant barriers for some individuals to become involved. Informants discussed the need to create a safe and comfortable environment, and to provide support for participation such as childcare, transportation and food.

*“We developed a lot... There were skills that we did not have that we had when this was over”*  
Many informants also discussed their own need to develop capacity within their organization in the realm of policy. This entailed building an understanding of what health public policy is and how to be involved in influencing public policy.

*“People learning from each other”*  
Educating the public about food security and insecurity was also an objective of community development and capacity building efforts. Some informants discussed the importance of having the general public not only aware of the issues, but to develop “strong support and momentum” to see change happen. Some appeared to feel that policy change, particularly at the level of public policy, cannot occur unless the public is aware of the issues and supports a direction of change toward policies that build food security.

#### ***KEY STRATEGY: Food Security as a Health Priority***

*“Where healthier choices are easier choices”*  
Several of the informants discussed the importance of considering food insecurity ultimately as a health issue. Direct changes within health departments were seen as a necessary means of addressing food insecurity. Reorienting health services to focus on health promotion and disease prevention appeared to be the main focus. Building healthy public policy appeared to be seen as an essential element of also building food security. In this way, highlighting the connection between good health and well-being and food security seemed to be a priority. In addition to raising awareness of the health implications and connections, a need was identified to connect different departments within governments to create intersectoral partnerships as a step towards the development of healthier public policies.

#### ***KEY STRATEGY: Advocacy and Lobbying***

*“Viewing ourselves as social advocates”*  
Advocacy and lobbying occurred all levels and were directed at individuals, organizations, and governments. Advocacy tools most commonly used included meetings with policy makers, letter-writing campaigns, and using the media. Some advocacy appeared to be used internally by government departments to gain the attention and support of their key divisions, government officials, or policy makers. More commonly advocacy was an external activity targeted at other initiatives or governments.

#### ***KEY STRATEGY: Research and Collecting Information***

*“Putting it together”*  
To ensure clear and accurate messages many of the informants discussed the need to conduct research and/or collect information from other reliable sources in order to base key messages presented to others, and policy decisions on sound evidence. In keeping with the emphasis on

community development and capacity building, some of the informants indicated that participatory research approaches were used to involve different stakeholders. Research activities included literature reviews, needs assessments and asset mapping, surveys and questionnaires, interviews, and food costing studies to monitor the cost of food.

### **Key Challenges**

Several key challenges were identified that those attempting to influence policy to build food security need to think about in the process of attempting to influence policy:

#### *“It can be a bit of a hodgepodge”*

The complexity of concept of food security appears to present a significant challenge to those working to address the problems. Many informants indicated the “hodgepodge” of issues related to food insecurity present a challenge to working together and developing strong and unified messages.

#### *“What’s your point of view?”*

Informants reported challenges to building buy-in and support outside of an initiative, as well as among partners within the initiative. This was particularly the case for building support for broader changes focused on redesign strategies rather than more typical “band-aid” solutions like food banks. Within initiatives it was often difficult to create sustained or involved support, such that most of the work was left up to only a few key players.

#### *“Burn-out”*

Achieving a balance between the time and effort required for doing policy work with available resources was seen as key challenge. Informants repeatedly referred to the enormous volume of work and the high-profile, fast paced nature of the work. Resources were often not adequate to support their needs and this often led to “burn out”.

### **TIPS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR INFLUENCING POLICY**

- ✓ Celebrate the small things - it can be a long and arduous process to influence policy.
- ✓ Think big but stay focused - there are so many issues to be dealt with.
- ✓ Know the political process – know how government works.
- ✓ Meet with policy makers – don’t be afraid of politicians.
- ✓ Hit the media - it can be prime driving force for shaping public opinion and political agendas, but seek assistance from others who have experience with media and be sure to communicate clear and accurate information.

*“It is like the drip of water and it is going to eventually create a hole in the rock.”*

*“You can’t be all things to all people... keep the same message... be aware of what your focus is.”*

*“the process, the structure and how government works, that is really important.”*

*“the Minister, at the end of the day, needs to know that the work is supported on the outside.”*

- ✓ Build public support - there needs to be pressure from outside the political system too.
- ✓ Identify a champion – someone either within the political system, or someone outside of it who can work the system and move the issue.
- ✓ Develop clear and palatable messages - avoid an adversarial approach that blames or attacks certain stakeholders.
- ✓ Take action - be timely and specific, let your audience know what they can do to address the issues, develop action steps, and follow through on your efforts.

*“In the end that is what clinched the deal for us, was that one councillor became very excited about what we were doing and really moved for us.”*

*“I don’t think bra burning gets anybody anywhere.”*

*“if you’re going to be an activist, you have to act.”*

## CONCLUSIONS

This research has revealed some commonly used and effective strategies for influencing policy to build food security, along with some tips for success and challenges to think about in the process of attempting to influence policy. The findings suggest that developing food policy councils (FPCs) may be an effective way to incorporate the strategies presented here, and to address some of the challenges. FPCs have been created to address food security issues holistically, rather than disjointedly through various municipal level departments. They are usually made up of voluntary members representing a diversity stakeholders. Diversity creates an opportunity for more creative solutions, and research has shown that FPCs with more narrow membership and focus are not as successful as broader and more divers councils (Borron, 2003). FPCs have been successful in building awareness of food security, and momentum for action at various levels of government and within the general public (Community Food Security Coalition, 2002). Many councils are community-based and work to involve communities in meaningful ways in order to build capacity and food security (Community Food Security Coalition, 2002). Finally, they have been effectively used to bridge the diversity of issues related to food security and the often-dichotomized anti-poverty and sustainable food systems approaches (Borron, 2003; Community Food Security Coalition, 2002). Unfortunately, FPCs often still face challenges related to limited resources, but many are moving toward having staff support (Borron, 2003).

The research also suggests that social inclusion is a fundamental component of food security, and that food security cannot be built without consideration for and inclusion of those impacted by food insecurity. Social inclusion aims to remove the barriers and risks that may prevent meaningful inclusion and participation in decision-making, developing social policy, employment, and cultural and social activities (Raphael, 2002; Wotherspoon, 2002). Social inclusion is about social justice, equity, valued recognition, human development and capacity building, and is particularly important to the development of healthy social policy (Wotherspoon,

2002). Many of the initiatives involved in this research emphasized social inclusion through community development, capacity building, and participatory research. It is important to note that while it is important to engage and include communities in building food security, it is equally important to consider the potential to overburden communities or assume that they must be involved. Facilitating empowered communities and developing capacities is no substitute for supporting communities through healthy public policy. That is, moving toward policy change and redesign strategies should remain the ultimate goal of food security efforts; building community capacity is an important process to move toward this end.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In addition to continued development and support for food policy councils and the use of a social inclusion framework for addressing food security, further work is also needed to build on this National Environmental Scan:

- ✓ Build upon the database of initiatives compiled for this research to gain a bigger picture of the initiatives across Canada, including details of their programs and efforts.
- ✓ Evaluate the actual success of policies that have been developed or adapted to build food security.
- ✓ Conduct analyses of the political, economic, social, and health implications of different policy options for addressing food security.
- ✓ Develop a stronger network of food security initiatives across the country to build on national and provincial efforts and solutions.
- ✓ Explore the feasibility of National and/or Provincial Food Policy Council and determine the assets and needs for the development of such an initiative.
- ✓ Explore strategies for bringing food security advocates from differing perspectives (i.e. antipoverty and sustainable food systems) by gathering information on success stories, learnings through lack of success, and examples from other issues involving multi-disciplinary topics.

## INTRODUCTION

Food insecurity is a growing issue in Canada, evidenced by growing food bank lines and farming crises like mad cow disease. This report presents findings from a national environmental scan that examined past and current strategies used by food security initiatives across Canada to influence policy related to food security. Section 1 provides an overview the issues, including what food insecurity means, why it is a problem, the rates of food insecurity in Canada, and different approaches to addressing food insecurity. Finally, the purpose of the research is presented, situating it within a framework for understanding and approaching food insecurity.

In Section 2, both quantitative and qualitative research methods are presented. The section outlines how the data collection tools were developed and administered, as well as the methods used for analyzing the data. Section 3 follows with a detailed overview of the food security initiatives that participated in this research.

Section 4 presents the research findings beginning with the key strategies reported by the research participants. The strategies range from concrete activities such as lobbying with letters or the media, to more theoretical approaches such as collaboration and community development. This is followed by the successes reported by participants and how success was defined based on different strategies used. Finally, some key challenges to influencing policy emerged from the research along with tips for overcoming some of the challenges. Section 5 summarizes the findings and presents resulting points of discussion for consideration. Recommendations for future research and action are presented.

### SECTION 1: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### *1.1 Food Insecurity in Canada*

Hunger in ‘developed’ countries such as Canada is not generally believed to be the result of food shortages, droughts or floods, but rather to poverty, inequality, and social injustice<sup>1,2,3</sup>. This has lead to a discourse centred on the concept of “food insecurity” as opposed to “hunger”<sup>1</sup>. Food insecurity goes beyond just the feeling of hunger and refers to the limited or uncertain access to, or availability of safe, nutritionally adequate, culturally or personally acceptable foods, or the limited ability to acquire such foods in a socially acceptable manner<sup>1,4,5</sup>. Food insecurity can occur at the individual, household and community/population levels<sup>1</sup>.

The opposite of food insecurity, or ideal, is food security, defined as a “situation in which all people at all times can acquire safe, nutritionally adequate, and personally acceptable foods that are accessible in a manner that maintains human dignity” (p. 139)<sup>6</sup>. Food security also exists when people are able to earn a living wage by growing, producing, processing, handling, retailing and serving food, as well as when the quality of land, air and water are maintained and enhanced for future generations<sup>7</sup>. Also part of food security is that food is celebrated as central to community and cultural integrity<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, by definition food security is multifaceted and is related to the ability to access, purchase, grow and produce, and enjoy food. If one of these elements is threatened then one may be considered food insecure.

Food insecurity first emerged as an issue in Canada in the 1980s, corresponding with the emergence of food banks and children’s feeding programs<sup>1</sup>. The problem has been closely

linked with poverty and the rise of child poverty, the restructuring of social programming, and cuts to social spending<sup>1, 2, 8</sup>. Food insecurity is also closely associated with agricultural, and food production and retailing practices<sup>9</sup>. That is, current practices within our food system may not be sustainable and could threaten long-term availability and accessibility of foods, as well as the environment<sup>10, 11</sup>. Furthermore, the uncertainty regarding the genetic modification of foods and the use of hormones, pesticides, excessive fortification, and so on, may threaten the safety of food and pose a general threat to food security<sup>11</sup>.

### *Rates of Food Insecurity in Canada*

A coordinated system for monitoring levels of food insecurity currently does not exist in Canada<sup>12</sup> and few studies have documented levels either provincially or nationally. The 1998/99 National Population Health Survey (NPHS) included 3 screening questions to assess household food insecurity, and found that 10.2%, or approximately 3 million Canadians, reported experiencing some degree of food insecurity in their household in the previous year<sup>13, 14</sup>. The rate is even higher among children under 18 years of age, with about 14% living in food insecure households<sup>13</sup>. The Canadian Community Health Survey showed that 14.7% of Canadians experienced food insecurity in 2000/01<sup>15</sup>. Vozoris and Tarasuk (2003) found that 4% of Canadian households reported that they “sometimes” or “often” do not have enough food to eat, and argue that this represents a more severe form of food insecurity<sup>16</sup>.

The duration and extent of food insecurity being experienced by some Canadians is also of concern. Canadian data is lacking on the persistence of food insecurity but the cohort data from the NLSCY suggests that almost one in five families reported hunger in both 1994 and 1996<sup>17</sup>. Consistent with this US data indicate that the condition of food insecurity is frequent or chronic in one out of five US households while it is reoccurring among two thirds<sup>18</sup>. Data from the 1998-99 NPHS show that 80% of food insecure households had a standardized gross household income of \$20,000 or less, and 50% had a standardized income of \$11,000 or less<sup>14</sup>.

The rate of food bank use is often used as a marker of severe food insecurity. According to the Canadian Association of Food Banks (CAFB) 747,665 people, or 2.4% of the Canadian population, used food banks in March of 2002, nearly double the number in 1989<sup>19</sup>. However, the rates may actually grossly underestimate the true incidence of food insecurity<sup>3, 19</sup>. Indeed, research shows that less than one third of Canadians who report that they have experienced food insecurity have actually accessed a food bank or other charitable food organization<sup>13, 16, 14, 20, 21</sup> while all of those who do use a food bank have experienced food insecurity in the previous year<sup>22</sup>.

It should be noted that the available evidence likely significantly underestimates the prevalence and extent of the problem as surveys miss the most vulnerable groups, including the homeless, aboriginals living on reserve, those without telephones and who are transient. In addition, current measures of food insecurity only give us estimates of income related food insecurity and ignore other aspects of the phenomenon of food insecurity related to the food system.

### *Impact of Food Insecurity*

There is little research on the direct health impact of food insecurity, and it is difficult to entangle this from the impact of the other determinants of health, most notably poverty. Food

insecurity is intimately associated with health and all determinants of health. Available evidence suggests that those who are food insecure experience poorer health status<sup>23</sup>, including a range of mental and physical health problems<sup>4,19</sup>. Income and social status, considered the most important determinant of health in that it has the potential to influence all others<sup>24</sup>, is the primary determinant of food insecurity<sup>1,25</sup>. Other determinants of health that are associated with food insecurity include healthy child development, gender, social environments, and physical environments. The following is a brief look at each of these determinants.

### *Income and Social Status*

Low-income Canadians experience poorer health outcomes than others<sup>26</sup>, such as increased risk of chronic disease and decreased life expectancy<sup>23</sup>. The nutritional adequacy of individuals' diets is compromised when they cannot afford to purchase enough food to eat<sup>22,27,28</sup>. The inability to obtain a nutritious diet has both short and long-term effects<sup>28</sup>. Short-term effects include decreased nutrient intake and increased risk of nutrient deficiencies in correspondence with limited consumption from important staple foods such as fruits and vegetables, milk, and meat<sup>27</sup>. Long-term effects include increased risk of chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease (CVD) and obesity.

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is a major health concern for those living on a low income and evidence supporting a causal link between the two even after controlling for other risk factors<sup>29</sup>. Although individual lifestyle risk factors contribute to risk for CVD, they actually account for very little variation in whether people will develop associated problems. Additionally, among low-income individuals, including children, the rate of obesity has been shown to increase with the rate of food insecurity<sup>30,31</sup>. Obesity in turn has the potential to increase the risk for other chronic diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and hypertension<sup>30,32</sup>. Furthermore, food insecurity may interfere with the management of chronic disease where dietary modifications are required<sup>33</sup>.

### *Healthy Child Development*

Alarming, one in five Canadian children live in poverty, or about 1,139,000 children<sup>34</sup>. Growing up in poor households is related to an increased risk for ill health, poor nutrition, inadequate development, and poor school readiness, all of which have compounding influences on child development<sup>20</sup>. The effects of child development last throughout the lifetime and impact on health and well-being as an adult<sup>23</sup>.

The National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth indicated that 1.2% of Canadian households with children reported that their children had experienced hunger because there was not enough food in their home<sup>20</sup>. Such households were 8 times more likely to be lead by lone-mothers<sup>20</sup>. Between 1980 and 1999 the rates of poverty among female-headed lone parent families has fluctuated between 51.8% and 61.8%<sup>35</sup>. This relates to impact that gender has on health.

### *Gender*

Poverty and food insecurity are not gender neutral. Women consistently experience higher rates of poverty than men, particularly unattached women<sup>36</sup>. In fact, 42.3% of unattached women under the age 65, and 48.5% of those over 65, live in poverty<sup>36</sup>. This is compared to 33.2% of

men under the age 65, and 31.9% of those over<sup>37</sup>. Especially vulnerable are single mothers with children under 18 years of age, 41.3% of whom live in poverty, which represents the highest poverty rate of all family types<sup>35</sup>. Women may also experience greater threats to food security and subsequent ill health, as they tend to offset their children's needs for food by depriving themselves<sup>17, 20, 22, 27, 37</sup>.

There is no evidence to suggest that the higher rate of poverty experienced by women is related to biological factors<sup>38</sup>. Rather, it seems more related to the continued experience of inequality, discrimination, and disadvantage experienced in the daily lives of women<sup>38</sup>, particularly with regard to unequal wages and the failure to recognize the value of unwaged labour and care giving<sup>39</sup>.

### *Physical Environments*

Aspects of the physical environment impact significantly on health, as well as food security<sup>24</sup>. Current food production practices may be contributing to increased levels of environmental toxins, which may not only have adverse consequences for environmental health, but also for the sustainability of our food supply<sup>40</sup>. Contaminants in the air, water, food and soil can contribute to a variety of health effects, including cancer, birth defects, respiratory illness and gastrointestinal ailments<sup>24</sup>.

Physical environments such as living conditions and the design of communities also impact on health, which again is associated with income and social status. Children living in poverty are more likely to grow up in neighbourhoods near to industrial areas or heavy traffic corridors, as well as in poorly designed neighbourhoods with inadequate access to transportation and grocery stores<sup>41</sup>. Furthermore, the compromised nutritional status of children living in food insecure homes is such that they are often deficient of nutrients, which are thought to work protectively against exposure to environmental contaminants<sup>41</sup>. Research has also shown that grocery stores in lower-income neighbourhoods may have less variety and higher prices, contributing further to the food insecurity of low-income households<sup>42</sup>.

## *1.2 Strategies to Build Food Security*

Two key approaches have been used to understand and address food insecurity: an antipoverty approach, which views poverty as the underlying issue that needs to be addressed; and a sustainable food systems approach, which views issues within the current system of food production, processing, and retailing as the root problems<sup>43</sup>. The differing approaches to food security prescribe a different set of solutions and changes, which can often create conflict and controversy regarding how resources should be allocated for building food security<sup>43</sup>. Regardless of the approach, many efforts have been and continue to be made across Canada to address the problem of food insecurity and hunger. Quite often, a number of different strategies are employed within a community, or even a single organization to work towards addressing food insecurity. These strategies have been organized along a continuum referred to as the Food Security Continuum<sup>11, 44, 45</sup>. The Food Security Continuum is comprised of three main stages: Efficiency/Short-term Relief, Substitution/Capacity Building; and Redesign strategies.

Despite the differences, there seems to be some consensus that in order to build food security there must be movement along the continuum toward redesign strategies that have the power to affect fundamental changes to how food is viewed. It has been argued that changes that impact on both poverty and the sustainability of food systems are needed to build food security, and that parties to the two approaches need to come together to understand how they are really working towards the same end and overcome the conflicting and dichotomized approaches<sup>43</sup>. Clearly given the multifaceted nature of food security – our ability to access, purchase, grow and produce, and enjoy food – approaches to achieve both social justice and improvements in our food systems are necessary to truly address the problem.

### The Food Security Continuum

<b>Stage 1</b> <b>Efficiency</b> <b>Strategies</b>	<b>Stage 2</b> <b>Substitution</b> <b>Strategies</b>	<b>Stage 3</b> <b>Redesign</b> <b>Strategies</b>	<b>Food</b> <b>Security</b>
<b>Short –term relief</b> e.g. <b>food banks, soup</b> <b>kitchens, and other</b> <b>emergency food</b> <b>assistance programs</b>	<b>Move beyond</b> <b>emergency food;</b> <b>focus on capacity</b> <b>building</b> e.g. <b>community</b> <b>kitchens, gardens &amp;</b> <b>buying clubs, etc.</b>	<b>Structural change to</b> <b>food, social, and</b> <b>economic systems</b> e.g. <b>food policy and</b> <b>social justice networks,</b> <b>coalitions &amp; councils;</b> <b>participatory food</b> <b>costing</b>	

**Figure 1. The Food Security Continuum**

Source: Adapted from TFPC, 1994<sup>11</sup>; Houghton, J. 1998<sup>44</sup>; Kalina, L 2001<sup>45</sup>

#### *Efficiency Strategies*

Efficiency strategies emerged to address food insecurity in the early 1980’s, with the emergence of food banks in response to an increased awareness that an increasing proportion of Canadians were experiencing hunger<sup>1</sup>. Actions that fall within this first stage of the continuum offer temporary solutions to food insecurity. These strategies are commonly referred to as “Band-Aid” solutions because, while they do offer short-term support, they do little to address the root causes of food insecurity or affect the problem in the long term. Common examples of short-term relief strategies are programs such as food banks, soup kitchens, children’s feeding programs, and relief aid for farmers<sup>45</sup>.

Food banks continue to be the most common response to food insecurity in Canada<sup>2</sup>.

Unfortunately they may do little to actually ensure food security. Indeed, the food available has been found to be inadequate in terms of the safety, nutritional quality, and personal acceptability of what is available for food bank recipients<sup>46, 47</sup>. The food may be damaged or expired and may not meet the requirements of a nutritious diet<sup>46, 47</sup>. The food distributed at food banks is usually based on the choices of donors rather than consumers of food banks and therefore, the food may not meet the cultural and taste preferences of users<sup>48</sup>. Attending food banks may also be an embarrassing and uncomfortable experience for those who need to use them, and may not provide food in a socially acceptable manner that maintains human dignity<sup>1, 5, 22, 49, 49, 50</sup>.

Although short-term or efficiency strategies can provide some assistance to those in need, such strategies are unable to respond adequately and to sustain the level of assistance needed<sup>11</sup>. While the reasons are not clear the demand for assistance from food banks has been increasing steadily since the 1980s; the Canadian Association of Food Banks' (CAFB) estimate of food bank use from 2002 represents a 4.1% increase in use since 2001, a 12.5% increase since 1997, and an alarming 97.8% since 1989<sup>19</sup>.

It has also been argued that short-term relief strategies create a 'depoliticization' of the issue of food insecurity<sup>8, 2</sup>, essentially making it seem as though there is not a problem. By providing short-term assistance it seems as though the problem has been dealt with because those who need assistance have some food<sup>2, 8, 11</sup>. However, the fact that an individual or family cannot afford or access the food that they need without assistance in a dignified manner has not been addressed. That is, the broader structural conditions that contribute to the cause of food insecurity remain, such as policies that impact on household incomes, cost of living, and agricultural production<sup>2, 8, 11</sup>.

### *Substitution Strategies*

Other strategies, referred to as substitution strategies, attempt to replace or act as substitutes for short-term strategies<sup>11</sup>. One example would be to replace food banks with community kitchens and community gardens, or to offer them in tandem. Other examples of substitution actions and programs in Canada include food and agriculture-related job creation and training programs, participant managed food banks, co-op buying clubs, and initiatives that support breast-feeding.

Substitution strategies may be limited in that they are often supported on a short-term, project based, ad hoc basis disallowing them to serve a systematic or sustainable role<sup>51</sup>. Furthermore, the concept of teaching people to cope with their current situations may suggest a belief that the situation will never change and serve only to unload the responsibility for change onto individuals and communities rather than upon governments and systems that may contribute to the problem. Substitution strategies may also be more costly than short-term relief strategies in terms of labour and time, and may require more overall commitment from those involved<sup>45</sup>. However, such strategies also often attempt to build capacity among those individuals who are experiencing food insecurity to improve their situation through skill development, increased access to resources, increased awareness and community mobilization.

Participation in community kitchen programs has been found to increase participants' coping skills and self efficacy with regard to preparing cost-efficient nutritious meals and purchasing the lowest cost food through comparative shopping<sup>52, 53</sup>. Another positive outcome of such strategies has been to increase participants' social support networks and mutual aid among participants by bringing people together with others who are experiencing similar difficulties and allowing them to share their experiences as well as resources that can be offered or shared among the participants<sup>52, 53</sup>. Finally, capacity building programs such as community kitchens have been found to increase participants' awareness of community food insecurity issues and public participation to address the issues<sup>52</sup>. Indeed, the use of capacity building approaches, which are theoretically linked to community development and adult or empowerment education approaches, have been used to build awareness around the social conditions that impact on health and community, and affect community mobilization around those social conditions<sup>54, 55, 56</sup>.

### *Redesign Strategies*

Redesign strategies involve a review or development of solutions for food security based on recognition of the structural causes of food insecurity<sup>11</sup>. Such strategies aim to affect policies that will result in long-term changes to address the root causes of food insecurity<sup>11</sup>. Actions at this level are often more costly and require a large amount of commitment from representatives of the entire food, health, social, and economic sectors as well as those who may be marginalized by these systems<sup>45</sup>. However, actions at this level are likely to offer substantial, long-term improvements to the issues they are directed at affecting and are hoping to change<sup>57</sup>.

Redesign strategies may be directed toward various levels of policy, including organizational or public policy and even personal policy. Organizational policies are those employed by public, private and non-profit organizations and businesses<sup>58</sup>. For instance, some schools and/or school districts are implementing policies to purchase food locally to support local economies and to provide healthier food options to their students. Public policies are those implemented by governments to address a certain public issue or problem<sup>58</sup>. Public policies are usually targeted at whole populations or specific groups, and can have a positive or negative impact on people and communities<sup>58</sup>. Many experts have argued that public policy is in need of considerable change in order to build food security<sup>1, 8, 2, 59</sup>. Personal policy can be thought of as the rules and guides by which individuals make decisions. A personal policy that has the potential to impact on food security may be to purchase organic foods in order to support more sustainable food production practices.

In Canada, few public policies are actually directly labelled as “food and nutrition policy”, yet there are a variety of policies that may have an impact on food security<sup>11</sup>. For example, policies that decrease income within low-income households in turn increase food insecurity<sup>60</sup>. Therefore, the devolution of welfare policy has, and continues to have, a direct and negative impact on levels of food security<sup>61</sup>. Furthermore, other policies may impact on the price and availability of food, and contribute to food insecurity. One example relates more to the *lack* of policy in Canada to regulate concentration within various sectors of the economy and prevent corporate mergers<sup>9</sup>. As a result, the food-retailing sector is one of the most highly concentrated and oligopolistic sectors of the Canadian economy<sup>9</sup>. This gives the few food-retailing corporations in Canada a considerable amount of control and power in setting food prices and driving food-retail practices<sup>9</sup>. Barriers and constraints to the development of comprehensive food policy exist at all levels of government and have been described by Riches, 1995<sup>61</sup> as:

- ✓ A poor understanding of the nature, incidence, and cause of food insecurity in Canada
  - ✓ Lack of one commonly accepted definition of hunger and food insecurity
  - ✓ Food as commodity rather than food as an essential human right
  - ✓ Concentration of capital within the food industry
  - ✓ Distancing of people from their food
  - ✓ Exclusion of marginalized groups from shaping food security policy and programs
- (see Riches 1995 for further discussion of these issues<sup>61</sup>).

An additional barrier has been described by Lang & Caraher (1998) regarding the emphasis on an individualist understanding of health that tends to base the entire burden of healthfulness on individual choices and lifestyle practices. Such an approach seriously under-emphasizes the

impact of social, political and environmental issues<sup>32, 62</sup>. It is argued that policies and strategies must take into consideration the broader social and structural determinants of health in order to create those that redesign the systemic causes of food insecurity<sup>2, 8, 62</sup>.

Redesign type initiatives may attempt to overcome, address, or raise awareness of the issues listed above. They may involve influencing food policy development and implementation to increase individual access to food and support sustainable development<sup>45</sup>, or policy on issues of social justice, economics, agriculture, poverty, income, and so on. Redesign strategies tend to involve food policy councils, food security networks and coalitions, and other programs that embrace notions of participatory methods, social inclusion, and health promotion<sup>11, 44, 45</sup>.

### *1.3 Community Capacity Building and Food Security Related Policy*

Changes in public policy are the most effective and direct route in ensuring that Canadian households and communities can be more food secure<sup>11</sup>. According to the food security continuum (see Figure 1), redesign strategies are the most effective means of building food security because they recognize and focus on policy change to affect the underlying social, political and economic structures that perpetuate food insecurity<sup>11, 44, 45</sup>. Building capacity among individuals, communities, and systems is an important step toward such redesign.

Traditionally, policy has been developed from a top-down approach, whereby policy makers and legislatures determine priorities, research possible policy actions, and develop and implement policies<sup>58</sup>. However, the current social and political climate has moved toward an increasingly bottom-up approach to policy development that involves the participation and input, to varying degrees, of stakeholders and communities<sup>58</sup>. Capacity building within communities affected by social policy issues is increasingly being viewed as a powerful strategy for bridging the gap between communities and public policy, and enabling a greater degree of participation in the policy process, particularly among communities typically excluded from such participation<sup>58, 63</sup>. Typically, socially excluded communities (i.e. low income groups, women, cultural minorities) have limited political clout making it difficult to suggest that they should influence policy<sup>64, 65</sup>. However, participatory approaches, capacity building and social inclusion are considered valuable and effective methods for overcoming this imbalance of power<sup>66, 67</sup>.

Devon Dodd & Boyd (2000) describe capacity building as a process that can occur at different levels, including personal, community, and systems levels. Personal capacity is the development of attitudes, skills, and knowledge as personal resources to be used to achieve goals<sup>58</sup>. Community capacity refers to a community's ability to identify, mobilize, and address social and health issues that impact on their lived experiences<sup>58</sup>. Community capacity is linked to a community's ability to effectively influence change and to engage policy makers in dialogue<sup>58</sup>. Capacity can also be built within broader systems, such as governments and organizations, and is seen as the ability of an entire system to plan, monitor, and address public problems in a healthy and sustainable manner<sup>58</sup>. The development of healthy public policy is often the intended outcome of strengthening community capacity<sup>58, 63</sup>.

Capacity building is often thought of as both a means and an end to building healthier communities. Conceptualized as a means, capacity building can be viewed as a part of

community development and empowerment processes<sup>58</sup>. Not exclusive from its role as a means, capacity building is often an outcome of health promotion programs with strengthened individual and organizational capacities being considered an end in itself<sup>54, 63, 68</sup>. Partnering with communities to identify and implement solutions to the issues that affect them may not only build capacity, but can also prolong and multiply health gains in the long term<sup>54</sup>. That is, strengthened community capacity is considered an investment in long-term success as it may increase the potential of the community to address not only a current problem, but others that may be encountered in the future as well<sup>54</sup>.

#### *1.4 Overview and Research Objectives*

An environmental scan of strategies used by organizations across Canada to influence policy to build food security was conducted in order to build an understanding of what has been done and also what is effective for influencing policy. The National Environmental Scan was conducted through the guidance and partnership of two advisory groups: the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council (NSNC) Research Working Group and a National Advisory Committee (NAC). The Research Working Group consists of members of the NSNC and representatives from partnering Family Resource Centres/Programs in Nova Scotia (see Appendix A). The NAC consists of representatives of organizations concerned about food security throughout the country (see Appendix B).

The purpose of the National Environmental Scan was to *identify strategies and processes used to influence policy in order to build food security*. The research was guided by a framework for examining policy at multiple levels, including personal, organizational, and governmental policy, in order to include a broad range of efforts that can have an influence on food security. The specific objectives of the environmental scan were to:

- ✓ Identify initiatives from across Canada involved in food security issues.
- ✓ Gather information on the relevance of the identified initiatives to food security and policy change (i.e. building food security through healthy public policy).
- ✓ Explore the strategies and processes for influencing policy used by initiatives that have attempted to affect policy change.

In order to address the research objectives, a database of greater than 300 initiatives involved in food security or related work was established beginning in December 2001. A Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire was distributed to all entries in the database to identify initiatives for participation in in-depth interviews, which were subsequently conducted with key informants from 26 different initiatives aiming to influence food security related policy across Canada. The interviews focused primarily on the strategies and processes used by each initiative during their efforts to affect policy, as well as the level of success obtained.

#### *1.5 Research Framework*

The social, political, and economic climate in Nova Scotia emphasizes an anti-poverty approach to understanding food security. The framework used to guide this National Scan, however, recognized that the sustainability of food systems is also integral to building food security and that redesign strategies aimed at improving food systems are equally important and necessary as

those aimed at addressing the issue of poverty. A broad definition of food security adapted by the NAC guided this research (see p.1). A diversity of initiatives including those aimed at both anti-poverty and food systems related policies were sought under the guidance of NAC.

This research was also grounded in a framework of population health promotion and the social determinants of health and in the belief that social, environmental and economic circumstances have a direct and profound influence on health. Population health promotion is a model designed to guide actions to improve the health of whole communities, groups or populations<sup>69</sup>. This model combines the elements of a population health approach and a health promotion approach to allow for a discussion of what the health issue is, how it can be addressed, and who should be involved in the process<sup>69</sup>. Population health promotion views health based on the determinants of health, which are a set of key factors that are interconnected and determine a person's health status<sup>24</sup>. There are ten key determinants of health: income and social status, education, healthy child development, biology and genetic endowment, personal health practices and coping skills, employment and working conditions, gender, culture, social support networks, social environments, physical environments, and health services<sup>24</sup>. Within the population health promotion framework, food security is intimately connected with the other determinants of health and is therefore primarily viewed as a health concern. Recent discourse has also named food security as a health determinant<sup>1</sup>.

The population health promotion framework suggests 5 strategies for building healthier individuals and communities. The first is to build healthy public policy, which is based in the notion that healthy communities can only be achieved through sound social and health policies that support communities and promote equality<sup>69,70</sup>. The second is to create supportive environments, which refers to the need to increase people's access the resources for health, such as food, and fostering the ability of communities to address their health concerns<sup>69,70</sup>. Third, there is a call to strengthen community action to allow communities to take control of their determinants of health<sup>69,70</sup>. Fourth, there is a concurrent need to develop personal skills so that individuals and communities are aware of healthful behaviours and are more able to make positive choices<sup>69,70</sup>. Finally, there is a need to reorient health services to emphasize health promotion and prevention, rather than focus primarily on dealing with illness<sup>69,70</sup>.

It is important to note that building healthy public policy reflects the far end of the food security continuum with regards to the importance of public policy for addressing health issues. This framework also emphasizes the importance of capacity building and community development with the call for the creation of supportive environments, strengthening of community action, and development of personal skills. Therefore, the situation of this research within the framework of population health promotion means that there is a strong belief that individuals and communities must be involved in building food security, and that to achieve meaningful involvement in strategies toward the middle of the food security continuum that focus on building capacity within communities are equally important, and in fact necessary, for reaching the redesign phase.

## SECTION 2. METHODS

### 2.1 Data Collection Methods

#### *Literature Search*

An extensive literature search was conducted in order to provide a basis for the development of the Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire and key informant interview guide, as well as to identify initiatives to include in the scan. Traditional library searches were used to locate relevant journal articles and books, while Internet document searches located reports and other information from online sources. The search strategy for all literature (library, internet or otherwise) included the following key terms: “food security/insecurity,” “poverty/hunger,” “sustainable agriculture,” “policy,” “capacity building,” “social inclusion,” and “food and nutrition policy”. Unfinished manuscripts and other unpublished documents were also obtained through personal communication with members of the NAC, the NSNC Research Working Group, and key informants.

A standardized “Article Review Sheet” (see Appendix C) was used to give a quick summary of documents, with a concentration on relevance to policy and strategies that may have been used to affect it.

#### *Recruitment and Identification of Initiatives*

A database of over 300 initiatives was compiled through a review of available literature, Internet searches, and personal communication with members of the NSNC Research Working Group and the NAC. Snowball sampling was also used to identify potential contacts<sup>71</sup>. That is, each individual participating in the scan was asked to contribute names of others who may have been interested in participating, and potentially relevant initiatives referred to in the literature were pursued. All initiatives were classified as provincial or territorial, national, or international level organizations, or as an academically affiliated individuals. Information listed for each contact included the name of the initiative, the name of the contact person, phone/fax/email (if available), website address (if applicable) and relevant associated literature and/or publications.

Contacts from each of the identified initiatives were asked to participate by completing the short Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire. This was designed to gather information about the initiative’s relevance to food security and activities pertaining to policy change in order to identify those to invite to participate in a key informant interview.

#### *Criteria Development*

A set of five criteria was developed to guide the selection of initiatives to include in key informant interviews. The criteria were also used as a reference in the development of the Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire, which was used to select initiatives to include in the scan. Matching each initiative to the criteria ensured that those selected for an interview had food security as a key mandate, and that the initiative had either attempted to or effected some level of policy. Only the initiatives that fit all five criteria were invited to participate in a key informant interview. The five criteria were:

- ✓ Initiatives whose primary mandate or objective encompassed food security/insecurity and/or poverty, including:

- Social justice/inequality/inclusion issues;
  - Sustainable agriculture/food production/environmental protection/harvesting of traditional food issues;
  - Policy issues; or
  - Community development/capacity building issues.
- ✓ Initiatives classed, with respect to the continuum of food security strategies as:
    - “Redesign” and were either ongoing or completed;
    - “Capacity Building” and were either ongoing or completed, and either intentionally or unintentionally affected policy;
    - “Short-term Relief”, and were either ongoing or completed, and either intentionally or unintentionally affected policy.
- ✓ Initiatives that were local/community-based, provincial/territorial, national, or international in scope. Those that identified as international in scope had to be from developed nations with governmental and policy-making systems similar to Canada’s (e.g. North America, Europe and Australia).
- ✓ Initiatives that involved non-profit organizations, government agencies, academic institutions, or any other group active in the areas indicated above.
- ✓ Only initiatives that had their start in 1985 or later were included. This corresponds roughly to the time when food security began to be recognized as an issue with the emergence of food banks in Canada<sup>19</sup> and the release of a formally defined position statement on food security from the Canadian Dietetic Association (now the Dietitians of Canada)<sup>6</sup>. Also released at this time were key documents focusing on the social and environmental determinants of health, including the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion<sup>70</sup> and Achieving Health for All<sup>72</sup>.

### *Tool Development*

#### *Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire*

The Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire (see Appendix D) was designed to elicit specific details concerning the initiatives’ food security and policy-related activities. It was based upon the Scan Criteria outlined above, and focused on the mandate of the initiative, policy-related strategies in which they might have been engaged (if any), and other descriptive elements of the program such as contact names, dates, and target populations. This information was used to select potential initiatives to be included in key informant interviews.

The initial contact phase began in mid-February 2002 and used a variety of methods. Contacts were either faxed or emailed a copy of the Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire, along with a brief overview of the project and an instruction sheet. If neither of these options were available, participants were contacted by telephone. Microsoft Word and Adobe Acrobat PDF versions of the Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire, both in English and French, were also made available on the NSNC’s website for interested individuals to download and complete. French-speaking participants were either emailed a French version of the Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire and instructions, or contacted by a French-speaking translator. Finally, copies of

the Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire and instructions on where it could be found were distributed with the newsletters, listserves, and websites of relevant groups (e.g. Dietitians of Canada Nutrition and Food Security Network, NSNC, Development Gateway, Community Health Promotion Network Atlantic, Toronto Food Policy Council, Food Democracy Network, etc.).

Members of both the NSNC Research Working Group and the NAC were also asked to encourage personal contacts in their regions to complete the Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire. The returned questionnaires were used to select possible participants for the key informant interviews based on the selection criteria outlined above.

#### *Key Informant Interview*

An interview guide (see Appendix E) was developed for the purpose of obtaining specific details of the resources, methods and strategies used by initiatives to influence policy related to building food security. Interview questions were exploratory, open-ended and accompanied by probes. Questions were developed based on the goals and objectives of the environmental scan, as well as literature on best practices in health promotion<sup>73</sup>. Questions were reviewed by members of the NSNC Research Working Group and the NAC to help ensure face and content validity. The questions focused on several key areas:

- ✓ Background and personal information - training and experience, position/role in the initiative, and goals and objectives;
- ✓ Resources - funding, personnel, equipment and in-kind contributions;
- ✓ Methods - identifying needs/problems and community assets, advocacy/community mobilization, other strategies used, and the process by which decisions are made;
- ✓ Effect on policy - specific policies targeted, specific outcome(s) achieved, reasons for success of failure and key learnings from the process; and
- ✓ Evaluation, including process and indicators used, and any other strengths or weaknesses of initiatives unrelated to policy

Interview questions were piloted and revised initially. After five interviews were conducted, preliminary results were synthesized and presented at a workshop of the NAC. Interview questions were then reviewed and NAC members provided input for their revision.

Initiatives that met all five the criteria were selected as candidates for the key informant interviews. If the selected initiative had indicated on their Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire that they would be willing to participate in a key informant interview, they were contacted again and an interview was scheduled. At that time, arrangements were also made for them to read, understand, sign and return an informed consent form (see Appendix F) in accordance with Ethical Approval received from Dalhousie University's Social Sciences and Humanities Human Research Ethics Board. In addition, key informants were asked to confirm that they read, understood the information, and that they signed and returned the informed consent form before the interview was conducted.

Two trained research assistants conducted the key informant interviews via telephone between the months of March and June 2002. During the introduction of the interview, the Research Assistant outlined objectives of the study and provided an overview of the procedure for the

purpose of clarification. Each interview took approximately 1 to 1 ½ hours to complete and was tape-recorded with consent of the participant.

To ensure confidentiality and the anonymity of key informants and the initiatives that they represented, all identifying information including the names of people or initiatives and the region where they are located were excluded from all transcripts and in the reporting of the data. Informants are identified only by the date and time, if necessary, of their interview.

## *2.2 Data Analysis*

Survey data from the Food Security Initiatives Questionnaires were coded and entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences SPSS (version 9.0 for Windows) and descriptive statistics, primarily frequencies of responses, were generated for each question on the Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire.

All interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed qualitatively using content analysis. As a form of member checking, all respondents were asked to review drafts from the tape-recorded interviews for accuracy, and if necessary to revise or include additional data. Fifteen key informants responded with approval of the transcript or changes to be made. For those who did not respond it was assumed that there were no changes to be made. A coding framework was developed (see appendix G) inductively from the key informant interview data by the investigators and research team. A research assistant initially completed the majority of the coding. Other research assistants and investigators double-checked the coding however, all transcripts were reviewed and coding modified a final time by one research assistant. All transcripts were reviewed and coded by question for content according to this framework and entered into the software 'The Ethnograph version 5.07'. Results from each question were written up and then subjected to further content analysis whereby themes that emerged throughout the responses were matched across questions.

## *2.3 Limitations*

A key limitation to this research rests in the sheer breadth and interdisciplinary nature of the issue of food security. Therefore, it is important to note that the research has been approached primarily from the background of community nutrition as the majority of NAC members have this background. However members also provided health promotion, food systems, and policy perspectives. This limitation was recognized by the NAC and an attempt is being made to bring other stakeholders to the table in their current work. NAC members assisted in contacting key informants within their regions for this research. Consequently, this may be the reason that many of the key informants also share this background.

The ability to generalize results of the environmental scan may be limited by the fact that not all provinces were represented through interviews, and as a result of the non-random distribution of the Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire. For instance, as a result of the purposeful and snowball sampling strategy used there is under-representation of initiatives in some regions, and over-representation in others. Only one Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire was completed in each of Saskatchewan (SK), North West Territories (NWT), and Nunavut (NV), and no questionnaires were completed in New Brunswick (NB) or Prince Edward Island (PEI). This

may or may not indicate a paucity of initiatives in these provinces. NB, PEI and SK were the only provinces that did not have representatives on the NAC, which may also have limited the identification and recruitment of initiatives by making it difficult to establish contacts and relationships in these areas. A few initiatives were identified in these provinces, however they did not respond to the survey.

The ability to generalize these research results is also limited by the over-representation of food security initiatives in Alberta, as this could influence how the overall results of the questionnaire are interpreted. The Alberta Food Security Network (AFSN), which provided representation on the NAC, initiated a similar scan of the initiatives and organizations in Alberta, and collaborated with the NSNC to complete their project. The NSNC/AHPRC Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire was used with the addition of questions of interest to the objectives of the AFSN scan. A coordinator hired by the AFSN to work with their project facilitated the completion of the large number of questionnaires throughout Alberta, and the questionnaires and results were shared with the NSNC/AHPRC Food Security Project.

A possible limitation when conducting key informant interviews is that it is not always the case that respondents will provide in-depth answers for all questions asked. This was the case for a few of the twenty-six interviews. Furthermore, key informants from each initiative self-reported their success in influencing policy, which limits the potential for directly identifying a set of 'best practices' of strategies for influencing policy. It is only possible to report what strategies have been or are being used. It was beyond the scope of the project to perform document analyses to assess success at the level of policy influence of the initiatives participating in key informant interviews beyond that of self-reports.

### SECTION 3: OVERVIEW OF INITIATIVES INVOLVED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

In total, 123 Food Security Initiative Questionnaires were completed. Forty-one initiatives met all 5 criteria for inclusion in an in-depth interview, and 26 of these were selected for key informant interviews. The 26 initiatives were purposefully selected in order to ensure more equal representation across different geographical regions, rather than an over abundance in certain areas, as well as to achieve a cross-section of policy areas.

Table 1. Geographic distribution of completed Food Security Initiatives Questionnaires and key informant interviews

Province/Territory	Questionnaire	Interview
British Columbia	20	8
Alberta	71	2
Saskatchewan	1	0
Manitoba	3	1
Ontario	4	3
Quebec	3	2
New Brunswick	0	0
Prince Edward Island	0	0
Nova Scotia	9	4
Newfoundland	8	4
Yukon	2	1
Northwest Territories	1	1
Nunavut	1	0

#### 3.1 Who Participated in the Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire?

The primary purpose of the Food Security Initiative Questionnaire component of the environmental scan was to identify initiatives that had aimed to influence policy, or had done so unintentionally. Through the information provided in the questionnaire, initiatives meeting the criteria for the environmental scan (listed in Section 2.3) were invited to participate in a key informant interview. In addition, the Food Security Initiative Questionnaire was used to capture a snapshot of the activities of food security initiatives across the country in terms of their focus, strategies used, and affects on policy, and a brief summary of results is presented below. Further detailed results of the Food Security Initiative Questionnaire component of the environmental scan are reported separately<sup>1</sup>.

A diversity of initiatives working at various levels such as non-governmental organizations, government initiatives, networks, and coalitions from across Canada completed the questionnaire. Most identified food security or insecurity as the focus of their mandate or objectives, and over half identified poverty and community development or capacity building as their focus. Some specific examples of initiatives completing the questionnaire included food security networks, food mail programs that subsidize the cost of transporting food to remote areas, Family Resource Centres, coalitions of community gardens, representation of specific governmental initiatives, and emergency food assistance programs.

<sup>1</sup> Available on the NSNC website at [www.nsn.ca](http://www.nsn.ca).

Questionnaire respondents were asked to classify their initiatives as Short-term Relief/Efficiency; Capacity Building/Substitution, or Redesign according to the Food Security Continuum described in Section 1. Initiatives were able to choose more than one response, so combinations of responses were given. Of the 123 initiatives that responded the majority of initiatives identified themselves as being a Substitution Stage program (75.6%), followed by Efficiency (38.2%), and then Redesign (33.3%). Some initiatives classified themselves as Efficiency and Substitution (17.2%) and Substitution and Redesign (13.9%). None of the 123 initiatives identified themselves as both Efficiency and Redesign.

Overall, 65 (52.8%) of the 123 initiatives completing the questionnaire reported that they affected policy in some way, whether they intended to or not. Initiatives identifying themselves as Redesign strategies only or a combination of Substitution and Redesign were focused primarily on affecting policy change and were more likely to report success than those initiatives classified as Efficiency or Substitution. Of the 123 initiatives, 64 indicated they had explicitly intended to affect policy, and 41 of these (65.1%) were reportedly successful. Another 56 initiatives reported that they had not intended to affect policy, but 24 of these (42.9%) reported that they had unintentionally been successful in doing so. Most often the target of policy change for initiatives intending to influence policy was at the provincial or territorial (62.3%), local level (54.7%), or organizational (43.4%), however, many organizations also indicated aspirations to impact personal (40.7%), national (34%), or regional (24.5%) levels.

The strategies used by the initiatives surveyed who were reportedly successful in influencing policy varied and there did not seem to be a preference for any specific strategy. Among those intending to influence policy meeting with policy makers was the most commonly used strategy, followed by community involvement, presentations and reports to policy makers, dissemination of research results, advocacy, and the media. Meeting with policy makers was also the most common strategy among those who affected policy without intent to do so, followed by community involvement, presentations to policy makers, and the media.

### *3.2 Who Participated in the Key Informant Interviews?*

In order to achieve a broad representation of initiatives involved in influencing policy to build food security, key informants were selected based on established criteria from initiatives that completed the Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire. Questions asked at the beginning of the key informant interviews focused on details describing initiatives. This was done to paint a picture of the types of initiatives that participated in the key informant interviews.

#### *Characteristics of Initiatives*

A variety of initiatives participated in the key informant interviews but could be grouped into two broad categories: government (N=5) or non-governmental (N=21). Nine of the NGOs described themselves as a coalition, network, or working group. Examples included community gardens, agricultural groups, farmers' organizations, school food programs, and anti-poverty groups. The collaborative groups appeared to have broad membership, including churches, government representatives, farmers and other stakeholders who came together to work on issues of common interest.

Initiatives were most frequently reported as ongoing at the time of the key informant interviews, with a few as having ended or as being time limited. The sustainability of initiatives seemed to be inextricably linked to resources available to carry out their policy related work. While most initiatives received funding from a variety of sources, 6 received no contributions outside of their particular initiative, which the key informants felt threatened to limit the work of the initiatives. Sources for direct funding and in-kind contributions discussed by the key informants included governmental, non-governmental, and private sector funds. Most received government funding in the form of core funding within departments, short-term grants, or in-kind contributions such as staff time, office space, or expertise. Non-government funding was often provided through charities, fundraisers, or cash donations, and was often time limited. In-kind contributions from non-government sources were largely made through volunteer hours, as well as space and supplies. Funding and in-kind contributions from the private sector often originated from foundations, individuals, retailers, and corporations.

While each initiative examined in the key informant interviews was involved in policy work in some way, most also offered a variety of other programs and services, intended to reach a variety of populations. The majority targeted the general population, while others focused on specific sectors of the population at the individual and family levels, particularly groups vulnerable to food insecurity, such as those living on low incomes.

#### *Initiatives' Mandates and Objectives*

Most informants indicated that their initiative's primary mandate was to focus on food security/food insecurity, poverty, community development/capacity building, or sustainable agriculture, or some combination thereof. Other mandates that were discussed included improving information exchange in order to avoid the duplication of efforts, strategizing to influence system level policy, conducting research, and engaging in disease prevention.

*"We move to put food first in the priorities"*

Many of the informants identified food security as the focus of their initiative, although there was some variation in how each initiative defined or approached the concept. Some approaches included working to put healthy food in schools, improving access to food in communities, developing and defining food policy, and linking agriculture with consumers. Initiatives mandated to work on issues of poverty indicated their work focused primarily on community level advocacy, ranging from advocating for an antipoverty strategy to looking at new and creative ways to help families and children. In addition to advocacy, many poverty initiatives also offered programs for those living in poverty, such as financial assistance for pregnant women to allow for improved nutrition. Mandates based on community development approaches focused on capacity building as a foundation for their policy work, as either a process of actively working with communities to identify existing strengths, building upon those, and mobilizing for action, or as an outcome in terms of building a certain skill or level of awareness and understanding within a community. Initiatives that identified a focus on sustainable agriculture discussed supporting local farming, as well as sharing information with communities on the agricultural issues in their area. The overall goal of all such initiatives was policy development

to support local sustainable agriculture, either organically or traditionally grown, and to decrease dependence on imported sources of food.

A wide range of specific objectives was used to work towards or achieve mandates. Table 2 describes specific objectives of initiatives as reported by key informants.

Table 2. Initiatives' Objectives

<b>Specific Objectives of Initiatives<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Number</b>
Increase food security/decrease food insecurity	11
Provide and collect information / research / resources	10
Enhance community capacity/empowerment	9
Implement/change public policy	9
Create a sustainable food system	8
Raise awareness	8
Create a support system	7
Implement projects	7
Chronic disease prevention	3
Organizational development	3
Promote healthy eating	2
Decrease poverty	2

*Past Experiences of Key Informants*

An understanding of the previous experience and role of key informants in past experiences is important to grasp the perspective that would as a result be brought to the description of strategies and processes used by these initiatives. Key informants brought a diversity of past experiences to their current role within the initiatives. The majority of respondents had previous experience with community organizations that was often rooted in a community development philosophy and included a belief in capacity building and grassroots empowerment. Community-based experiences mentioned included working with food programs such as food co-ops, community gardens, and emergency food initiatives, and such projects used a range of strategies for building food security, from providing emergency foods to enabling social support and citizen participation. Some key informants became involved with food security through their past agricultural experiences. There were also a few who indicated that their experience and interest in food security came from personal circumstances and their own struggles with food security.

Key informants were also involved with other non-governmental organizations such as working groups, advisory boards, and committees that focused on a variety of issues, including emergency food assistance programs, organic growers associations, research groups, and social planning councils. In many instances individuals were wearing several ‘hats’ as they sat on the various groups.

A large number of respondents had experience with food security issues through academic study and work. Experiences varied in setting – from community college to university – and topics of

<sup>2</sup> Key informants could indicate more than one specific objective.

study, including nutrition, policy development, media, and political science. Numerous respondents had past or present involvement in research related to food security issues such as assessing the food system, monitoring hunger, and investigating production and distribution of agricultural commodities. Methodological approaches to research and understanding included participatory research, ethnography, and social psychology.

The experiences of key informants around policy development and implementation included all policy levels from community to federal. There was however wide variation in the level of expertise and comfort with the policy process. Several key informants interviewed had experience working in government for different departments, while others had experience with advocacy and/or lobbying and felt this was an important experience to bring to their current work. A variety of past and/or present advocacy issues were reported, including women's issues, child hunger, adequate nutrition, pesticides, labour, taxation issues, and global social justice.

In addition to past experiences, key informants were also asked to describe their current or previous role in relation to the initiative being discussed. Informants from a wide range of roles participated including coordinators, health professionals, administrators, advocates (particularly around the issue of poverty), consultants, volunteers/community members, and researchers. Many of those interviewed reported that they were the coordinator of the initiative, although the duties within that position varied. Some were involved with coordinating the initiative itself, while others were coordinating the efforts of several initiatives.

#### *Initiatives' Policy-Related Work*

Across all of the initiatives involved in the scan various levels of policy were targeted (Table 3). Informants most frequently reported targeting and affecting provincial or territorial level policies, followed by municipal, national, and organizational, respectively. It did not appear as though the informants favoured a particular level of policy as having the most potential for impacting on food security. Instead, it seemed that the specific level of policy targeted was probably related more to the mandate of the particular initiative. Of the initiatives involved in the scan, 19 had intended to influence policy and were successful, 2 had not intended to but were also successful at influencing policy, and 5 aimed to influence policy but were not able to assess their success at the time of the interview.

The specific policies that were targeted by each initiative appeared to fall into 5 main areas: poverty-related policy, food and nutrition policy, structural and organizational policy, agricultural policy, and health policy. The same key policy areas, with the exception of health policy, were also identified by initiatives that intended to influence policy but were not able to determine success at the time of the interview. Structural/organizational policy and agricultural policy were also influenced by two separate initiatives that did not intentionally aim to affect policy, but had done so unintentionally.

Table 3. Level of policy target/affected by initiatives

Level of Policy Targeted	Intended to influence policy & were successful	Did not intend to influence policy but were successful anyhow	Intend to influence policy but not yet able to assess success
Provincial/territorial	8		4
Municipal	6		3
National	4		3
Organizational	2	1	2
Regional	1		1
Community	1		1
Institutional	1	1	2
International	1		1
Personal	1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>18</b>

#### *Poverty-Related Policy*

Most of the key informants identified poverty-related policy, or policy that impacts on income levels and distribution, as the primary target of their policy work. The main approach for change seemed to be to focus on the alleviation of poverty and the improvement of policies that directly impact on families' incomes and abilities to access and afford food. The main target among those addressing poverty-related policy was social assistance programs, with a focus both on overall levels of assistance and on food allowances.

*Well, I mean our intention was to raise the government's awareness about the inadequacy of income assistance. And to have income assistance raised and also to have it changed so that it wasn't just a certain amount of money for a certain, you know, for a four member family so that it would change depending upon the ages and so on. (File APR42)*

Other poverty-related policies targeted by initiatives included developing an anti-poverty strategy, policy on homelessness and affordable housing, and pre-/post-natal income assistance programs.

#### *Food and Nutrition Policy*

Many initiatives targeted food and nutrition policies, either on a broad national, provincial, or territorial level, or on a more local level. Broad level food and nutrition policy work included providing input, guidance, or impetus for development of action plans, policy statements, or documents. At the local level work was being done with different population groups to build food security. Policies that support healthy eating in schools were commonly targeted.

*...what we needed to focus on in this coming year, in terms of schools, was encouraging people to look at policy around food in schools. We've got people... who are parents, students, teachers, community members, and are very concerned about junk food in schools and about the importance about having healthy food in the place where you are trying to train children for life... during [our] advisory*

*committee teleconference the decision was made that what we need to try and do is to work out strategies to bring those people together to provide resources and ideas that support and encourage policy changes within the schools. (File MAR2011)*

#### *Structural Policy*

Structural policies that were targeted involved issues surrounding the environmental supports or infrastructure needed for program sustainability or collaboration amongst the various sectors that influence food security. Examples included policies focused on land use and intersectoral collaboration.

*...if there was a garden set up in a vacant property, either owned by the city or by some company for the municipality to recognize it as a legitimate use of that land rather than to say okay we now have use for that land, you gotta get off so that we can build a high-rise or something like that. (Lines 764 to 772 of File APRIL2)*

*What children eat and where they eat and how they eat seem not to be an educational issue and we are trying to make it and we had specifically asked for a Nutritionist within the Department of Education who will be starting to look at some of these issues. (Lines 1071 to 1078 of File MAR129)*

#### *Agricultural Policy*

Several initiatives aimed to address agricultural policy to build food security. Initiatives focused on policies that support systemic changes toward a more sustainable agricultural system, one that can meet the needs of current and future generations without compromising the integrity of the environment or food system. Specific policy areas targeted included supporting local agriculture, supporting organic farming, raising awareness and reducing the use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), improving agriculture subsidies, and increasing citizen participation in agricultural policy development.

*A group of us from the [initiative] in 1999 put out a flyer with sample issues to raise etc etc, and the result of it was at every single one of the 15 public hearings into an agri-food policy for [region], someone or ones in each community got up and talked about food security. That repaired an omission that had persisted since 1995 when they had been talking about agri-food policy for [region] and...had left out healthy communities and food security. (File MAR206)*

## SECTION 4: INFLUENCING POLICY TO BUILD FOOD SECURITY

This section reports the key findings that emerged from the environmental scan regarding how the initiatives included in the key informant interviews attempted to influence policy to build food security. This section will begin by looking at the various strategies and processes that were commonly used. This is followed by a look at the successes of the policy work, including how success was defined, what the outcomes of their efforts were, and how success was evaluated. The discussion of successes also includes tips and suggestions for influencing policy based on the experiences of the initiatives in both success and failure. Finally, this section outlines the challenges faced by the initiatives attempting to influence policy to build food security.

### *4.1 Strategies Used for Influencing Policy*

#### *Collaboration*

A key strategy used by initiatives for strengthening efforts to influence policy was to work in partnership with other initiatives and to create opportunities for collaboration through the establishment of networks and coalitions. Collaboration appeared to be an effective way to pool resources and efforts, share ideas, and learn from others.

*I think the whole intent of a lot of the work with community groups is to help them enhance their capacity you know, either through involvement through partnering. One of the ideas of having... a stakeholder forum, was to give groups an opportunity to meet each other... and find out that they might have some joint interest. Because there is really a lot of committed and dedicated people out there with some wonderful ideas. It is just a matter of matchmaking sometimes... (File MAR18830)*

Collaboration seemed to be a useful strategy not only for bringing together those working on similar issues, but also to ensure that efforts were not being duplicated. Key informants felt that this also helped them avoid situations where initiatives working on similar issues might “tread on each others’ toes” by competing for the same funding source.

Collaboration occurred between various stakeholders, such as professionals, community members, government departments, regions, community organizations, and interest groups. Groups worked together in various ways. Most commonly this occurred through seeking advice or guidance, but collaboration also took place to share resources, knowledge, and expertise, and to provide support through administrative functions, grant writing, fundraising, and information exchange.

Collaboration involving many stakeholders and multiple partners make it increasingly important to consider the structure of the network of partners working together and the process for decision-making. While most initiatives used an informal decision-making process, some key informants discussed the use of formal decision-making processes through structured committee meetings or a Boards of Directors. Some also discussed individual decision-making, where one person was responsible. This style of decision-making was usually executed by an executive director or program coordinator, but was guided by policies established by a board or governing body within the initiative.

The finding that most initiatives used an informal decision-making process reflects a more grassroots or ‘bottom-up’ organizational structure, a theme was woven through the specific strategies initiatives used to influence policy. This style of decision-making required that input be gathered from a variety of partners and stakeholders, either through meetings, teleconferences, or websites. Many informants noted that in gathering such input a certain degree of flexibility was required to achieve consensus. Informal decision-making appeared to be an important mechanism for involving the community in an initiative.

*In the past the decision-making has been vested in the hands of the Board of Directors. But we are in the process of what I would call a decentralizing process. So we are moving decision-making out to the grass roots so that all of our policies will be informed by input. (File MAR129)*

This form of decision-making and collaboration is intimately connected with a second key strategy identified by many of the initiatives involved in the environmental scan; community development and capacity building.

#### *Community Development and Capacity Building*

Consistent with an emphasis on an informal, or grassroots approach to decision making and collaboration, capacity building and community development emerged throughout the key informant interviews as common strategies used by the initiatives in their policy work. The process of attempting to influence policy appeared to require extensive personal growth and development within various communities, including the participants of focused food security programs, the staff within the initiatives, and the general public. The key element of community development and capacity building as a strategy for influencing policy to build food security appeared to be the “bottom-up” nature of this approach. Many of the informants discussed to importance of “empowering the community” by “working together” or “with” communities affected by food insecurity. The bottom-up approach appeared to be seen as a more effective and successful strategy than top-down policy work that tends to exclude those who are potentially the most affected by the policy.

*What we want to do is to create awareness about the importance of nutrition so that there will be a ground swell of grassroots movement to... ensure that it is a good policy. We’ re building on the experience of other [regions] where policy was developed and implemented from the top down and it was very unsuccessful and so they restructured to develop policy from the bottom up. (File MAR129)*

#### *Individual Level Capacity Building with Program Participants*

Capacity building among program participants often focused on individual level skills that could help to build both individual and community food security. Some common skills that the initiatives focused on were food-related skills, such as cooking or gardening, or life skills, such as literacy upgrading or communication. For many of the initiatives, building such individual level skills was not necessarily the main objective, rather programs and skill building activities were seen as a way to bring individuals together and strengthen the community as a whole towards increasing capacity to influence policy.

*One of the things that I personally find in [region] is that there seems to be a reluctance, not just in food issues, but in many issues for the players involved in that arena to come together and actually talk. So that is something we really try to encourage. (MAR19130)*

Informants discussed the importance of being aware of the uniqueness of each community and of respecting sensitivities with community members. There seemed to be a struggle between trying to strengthen a community to help to mobilize for action and being sure not to over-burden the community at the same time.

*...there is that fine line between mobilizing people to take action and scaring them away. That is a dance we will continue to work out the music for as the project continues because clearly we need for our communities to take action. But we need to encourage it in a way that we don't lose allies and don't draw lines in the sand. It is a fine line and it is different in each community... (File MAR2011)*

In order to build capacities and strengthen communities there seemed to a common recognition among the initiatives that community members need to be actively involved in the initiative. Many of the informants discussed the use of participatory approaches within their initiative to provide opportunities for and encourage active involvement.

*I think that what gives this group its strength...is the fact that participants are given the chance to make choices and get involved. This is what allows the group to be strong and really advance. We have respected the initial philosophy, which was to let participants take an active role. Then, there was room for democracy and empowerment. Therefore, people have always had their place... The power has remained in the hands of the participants. (File JUNE13)*

Efforts were taken to facilitate participation and involvement, recognizing that that there may be significant barriers for some individuals to become involved. Informants discussed the need for creating safe and comfortable environments to encourage active participation. Some ways that such environments were created were by having program participants not only on boards, but chairing the meetings, consulting with program participants about their needs and resources, and employing program participants as assistants on research projects to interview others about sensitive issues. Fostering participation also required the initiatives to provide some supports and services to allow people to participate, such as childcare, transportation, and food.

*All of our meetings have childcare available, refreshments, transportation if anybody needs it...meals and food all prepared and available, that's just, you know, simple things. (File MAY21)*

#### *Developing Organizational Capacity*

Many informants spoke of their own need to develop capacity specifically in the realm of policy, including building an understanding of what healthy public policy is and how community members can be involved in influencing public policy. Educational events were used to bring

people together with the purpose of enhancing the understanding of policy development as it relates to food security. Such events were not necessarily just intended for staff or volunteers within the initiative, rather multiple audiences, including program participants and community members, were usually involved as well.

*Personal skills, boy we developed a lot. I mean it was an example of the researching developing us so there were skills that we did not have that we had when this thing was over. I think a level of understanding of how policy connects with the real [residents in region] who need the policy. (File APRIL293)*

#### *Raising Public Awareness*

Educating the public about food security and food insecurity, including the many different issues and underlying contributing factors, was also an objective of community development and capacity building efforts. Various strategies were reported such as writing newsletter and magazine articles, social marketing campaigns, and holding public forums where priority issues were highlighted. Public education strategies were targeted at the general public or more specific communities, such as nutritionists, children, youth, or the media.

*I think that we would hope to raise a discussion within the public around what the whole issue of feeding children in school and the use of for-profit caterers and the use of you know Coke machines and all of those issues. (File MAR129)*

Some of the informants talked about the importance of having the general public not only aware of the issues, but also the necessity of this for developing “strong support and momentum” to see change happen. Some appeared to feel that policy change, particularly at the level of public policy, cannot occur unless the public is aware of the issues and supports a direction of change toward policies that will build food security.

#### *Food Insecurity as a Health Priority*

Several informants discussed the importance of considering food security and food insecurity ultimately as health issues. Direct changes within health departments were suggested as a necessary means of addressing food insecurity, with a reorientation of health services to focus on health promotion and disease prevention as the main focus. Consistent with the emphasis on community development and capacity building, many of the informants discussed the need to work within the health care system with health professionals and bureaucrats to bring awareness of the issue of food insecurity and create change within the system. Presentations were commonly used to address this effort.

*Well, [prevention's] where we've been from the get go...I've been at meetings where, you know, with physicians that have said... you know, 'why are we doing anything about hunger? What does the health system have to do with hunger?' So, that's actually my little pet project right now is to try to, you know, do some convincing about why health personnel should be involved in the hunger issue. (Lines 1110 to 1121 of File MAY9)*

Building healthy public policy appeared to be seen as an essential element of also building food security. In this way, highlighting the connection between good health and well-being and food security seemed to be a priority for many. In addition to raising awareness of the health implications of and connections between food security and health, informants also reported the need to connect different departments within government to create inter-sectoral partnerships and a broader awareness of the interconnectedness of the issues. Such inter-departmental collaboration appeared to be seen as a key step towards the development of healthier public policies.

*I think it was one of the first times that people who were working in health really took on what was considered a social service...and kind of crossed the line in some ways between health and social services, and said, you know... what's happening in social services is affecting health, and made some statements about how making changes in policy and social services would affect health. (File APR42)*

#### *Advocacy and Lobbying*

As can be expected, advocacy and lobbying were common strategies used by most of the initiatives to influence policy to build food security. Advocacy and lobbying occurred at all levels and were directed at individuals, organizations, and governments. Advocacy tools most commonly used included letter-writing campaigns, meetings with policy makers, and using the media. Although most advocacy and lobbying efforts were directed toward government and legislative bodies by non-governmental and community-based initiatives, some advocacy appeared to be used internally by government departments to gain the attention and support of other key departments, government officials, or policy makers. There appeared to be some hesitancy by key informants, however, in using the terms lobbying or advocacy within this context.

*It seems to me that I have been given a fair bit of leeway to do advocating and take ideas up to the ministerial level and have had success with it but whether that is a term that is used internally in government I doubt it, probably not what I am supposed to do. (File MAR6330)*

More commonly, advocacy was an external activity targeted at other initiatives or governments. Most of the informants discussed advocacy work as being essential to their initiative's success in influencing policy. While most did not hesitate to engage in such activities, some informants indicated that advocacy and lobbying efforts were detached from their particular initiative to avoid any negative consequences that could be associated with engaging in such activities. This appeared to be tied to the political nature of funding arrangements for many non-profit and community-based initiatives.

*Some people get worried when we say advocacy is really key. In our visioning session we talked about the importance of everything we do as viewing ourselves as social advocates. But you know how it is. There are sometimes consequences attached to it. If an organization is perceived to be advocating, then they can find*

*their funding yanked or they can find themselves in a difficult position (File MAR2011).*

#### *Non-adversarial Messages*

From writing letters, to meeting with politicians, to getting on the news, the informants indicated that the messages that they were trying to send needed to be posed in a non-adversarial manner. Many considered it best to make their messages positive and “palatable” for the intended audience. In particular, when working with governments, informants felt the approach had to be one of “working with” the government, not opposing or “attacking” them. Moreover, it was felt that portraying the human impact of food security should be done in a respectful way so as to avoid blaming or accusing your audience.

*There is a respectful way to do the education...here is what families are facing and to talk about, I guess bravely about, those issues. Again, not whining because I think sometimes people close down when they think you are accusing them. So rather than [say] “you should be doing something”, it is a way of presenting it, so here is the situation and really keep to the facts...Maybe the human impact is something to highlight but again in a professional way. (File APRIL293)*

Many informants stressed that presentations and messages need to be direct and clear, and carry an articulated request for action that informs people of how they can act on the information being shared. Some informants suggested that if some of the barriers or challenges to taking action are considered ahead of time and addressed through a plan of action, then buy-in from the audience, and perhaps even partnership, is more likely to emerge.

*If a child asked for a dog and his mom says no, instead of him saying I have met with my brothers and sisters and we want to have a dog. This is our schedule for taking care of the dog and this is how we are going to pay for the vet bills and all you have to do is actually pay for the dog food, and if we go on vacation Grandma will take care of him for two weeks. So if somebody comes to the table and has worked out a lot of the barriers already, you are more likely to emerge in a partnership than if you just say I want something. (File MAR18830)*

#### *Interact with Policy Makers*

Most of the informants suggested that working with policy makers, including both bureaucrats and politicians at various levels of decision-making, and getting them involved early in the process was a proactive strategy to influence policy. Although the experience of key informants was that advocacy and lobbying efforts targeted at policy makers could be a lengthy process, they suggested that perseverance is key.

*We worked with parliamentarians and government too. We asked many times to be heard. It was a long and difficult process because the government tended to side step what we were doing. But we constantly brought the issues back and we got allies... This year intermediary structures or the regional development councils have started to tell government it can no longer avoid our issues. (File JUNE13)*

The most commonly used strategies for interacting with policy makers appeared to be letter writing, face-to-face meetings, and consultations and/or submissions to commissions.

#### *Identify a Champion*

Many of the informants discussed the benefit of identifying a champion, or someone within the system of government and/or policy arena, to bring the issue forward. Although only a few informants indicated that they had successfully identified a champion who had helped to influence policy to build food security, many others indicated that this was a strategy that in retrospect would have been helpful and that they would use in future efforts.

*But unless there is personal buy-ins they have got no reason to bring it up in council or vote one way or the other. In the end that was what clinched the deal for us, was that one councilor became very excited about what we were doing and really moved for us (File MAR19130).*

There appeared to be two approaches used by the initiatives to gain the support and enthusiasm of a champion; “let them come to you” or “go to them”. Although these appear to be different approaches, the most appropriate one to use may be dictated by the situation, initiative, and potential champion. To have a champion come to you, informants indicated that a “safe environment” must be established for them so that they will not be concerned about consequences of working with the initiative. This would require doing positive work, referring back to the strategy of sending non-adversarial messages. The same rules seemed to apply when going to a potential champion to try to gain their support.

#### *Hit All the Media Sources*

The media appeared to be seen as a prime driving force for shaping public opinion and political agendas, and was therefore seen as a means of influencing policy. Using the media was seen as a method to increase the awareness of the public and of policy makers regarding food insecurity, which could then spark a public discourse on the issue and eventually lead to policy change.

*Well we had all our information and we sent out a press release...Not expecting the huge tidal-wave of interest that we got afterwards (File APR42).*

Media was also used to garner public support for an issue, or to celebrate successes within an initiative. Despite its effectiveness, two important messages or warnings emerged from the informants’ discussions of using the media as a tool: first, seek assistance from others who have experience with the media, or from the media itself, to find out the process and determine if the story and messages are “news-worthy”; and second, be sure to communicate clear and accurate information. Choosing the right person as a spokesperson also seemed to be key to undertaking successful media activities.

*You needed a media friendly face, you needed a dynamic speaker, and you needed someone who whether by experience or just natural talent could really handle themselves.*

A wide range of media was reportedly used, including newspapers, newsletters, websites, television and radio broadcasts, videos, brochures and publications, and press conferences.

### *Research and Collecting Information*

To ensure clear and accurate message many of the informants discussed the need to conduct research and/or collect information from other reliable sources. The importance of research and gathering information was stressed also in terms of the need to base policies and decisions on sound evidence. Many initiatives had set up working groups and committees to guide their research efforts. In keeping with the emphasis on community development and capacity building, some of the informants indicated that participatory approaches to research were used to involve different stakeholders. Other research activities included literature reviews, needs assessments and asset mapping, surveys and questionnaires, interviews, and food costing surveys to monitor the cost of food. The research findings and information gathered through these processes were used to develop clear messages to present to the public, policy-makers, potential champions, and the media.

### *Summary of Strategies Used to Influence Policy*

Five key strategies for influencing policy to build food security emerged from the key informant interviews. Collaborating and partnering with other groups and individuals involved in the same issue was seen as a key strategy that could result in a louder message and could allow for resources and efforts to be pooled rather than inefficiently duplicated. Community development and capacity building also appeared to be essential strategies for raising awareness and building skills for others to become involved in and support the efforts to influence policy to build food security. Several of the key informants discussed the importance of framing food security as a health issue, as a way to both increase support for the issue and to make a necessary connection between health and social environments in policy arenas. Most of the informants indicated that lobbying and advocacy were essential to influencing policy, as well as garnering support. Key advocacy strategies included taking a non-adversarial approach, interacting with policy-makers, identifying a champion, and hitting the media. A final strategy used by key informants was to conduct research and collect information to support their policy efforts. This strategy appeared to be essential for ensuring that clear and accurate messages could be developed and shared, and that policy decisions and changes were evidence-based.

## *4.2 Successes*

While limited to self-reported success, key informants described elements of success in their initiatives in terms of how they defined success, what successes were achieved through their work, how they evaluated their work, and the key evaluation results. Given the goal of influencing policy, success was obviously defined as having an actual impact on policy through seeing a particular policy implemented or changed.

### *Policy-Related Outcomes*

Successes were reported at the level of impacting public policy. Many initiatives reported impacting on the creation of new policy or on changes to existing policy. Some successes were also reported in relation to increasing the awareness of policy-makers, receiving funding from a policy group, getting an issue on the government agenda, and providing input during policy

development. Table 4 outlines the number of specific policy outcomes or potential outcomes reported by key informants.

*Creation of New Policy*

Those involved in or whose efforts impacted the creation of new policy did so at various levels, with some individual initiatives having an impact on more than one level, such as on both provincial and national level policies. Given the variety of initiatives involved in the scan the various policies created span issues related to poverty, food and nutrition, and agriculture. Even if an initiative was not the direct impetus for the creation of a new policy, providing input during the development phase was considered as having a policy outcome. In many cases the initiatives worked with government officials and policy-makers to draft policy statements and commitments to guide, or ensure, future actions.

*Well, I think you know the experience with the cross-sectoral group at the national level was certainly healthy public policy development... Well that was the development of the Canadian Action Plan right (File APR184).*

In other cases, initiatives worked with governments to develop policies that led to more concrete policy work. This included leveraging funding for new programs, the writing and enactment of new legislation, and the implementation of new programs to help build food security.

*...We got the policy makers in Parks and Rec. to say ‘well yes may be we could grow food in a park.’ Now we have a dedicated Parks and Rec. staff member, at least one, sometimes up to two a year assigned to help community groups grow food in community gardens in city owned parks. We have a commitment that there will be at least one community garden in every ward and district of the city (File June7).*

Table 4. Policy-related successes reported by key informants

Specific Policy Outcome	Intended to influence policy and were successful	Did not intend to influence policy but were successful anyhow	Intend to influence policy but not yet able to assess success
New policy created	8		
Existing policy changed	7	1	1
Increase awareness of the issue	3		
Funding received from policy group	2		
Input during policy development	2		
Issue now on government agenda	1		
Other effect/outcome			3

*Changes to Existing Policy*

Many initiatives had an impact on existing policies that lead to changes intended to build food security. Most often the changes were related to increased or improved benefits for recipients of social assistance and other income support programs.

*So at the Municipal level, through health unit funding and Social Services, we have been able to direct more money to services that are being requested by people living in poverty, like a more expansive dental fund for example, and attempt to get the NCB [National Child Tax Benefit] dollars back in peoples' hands. (File MAR1112)*

In some cases, changes were made to existing policy in order to expand the focus of the policy or to frame it within the lens of healthy public policy. Affecting such changes to existing policy appeared to take a considerable amount of lobbying effort.

*A group of us from the [initiative] put out a flyer with sample issues to raise etc etc, and the result of it was at every single one of the 15 public hearings into an agri-food policy for [province], someone or ones in each community got up and talked about food security. That repaired an omission that had persisted since 1995 when they had been talking about agri-food policy for [region] and when they picked it up again in 1998, they had left out healthy communities and food security... [We] went to the deputy and said this will not do... You cannot just talk about economics. You know, words fell on deaf ears until the Minister thought of reactivating the [committee]. When it toured the province it got the message straight between the eyes (File MAR206).*

#### *Other Definitions of Success*

Although influencing policy was the goal of most of the initiatives, other success indicators emerged that appeared to reflect what were seen as important steps toward that end.

*I would define success as something that makes an immediate difference to an individual, group or community. Or something that builds towards an eventual success, you know, somewhere in the future... (File APRIL10).*

Evidence of capacity building emerged as a key success indicator, as did evidence of sharing information and gaining program sustainability. Most key informants suggested that capacity built within communities was a key success, and that this occurred when individuals were empowered to speak out and become involved in addressing the issues and working with the initiative. Many of the informants spoke of “community mobilization” as a success, when communities were committed to “moving ahead” or “moving forward” on the issue on their own, or with the guidance or assistance of the others involved in the initiative.

*But really I feel that if the community, the people who are experiencing the problems, the issues day-to-day, the realities of food insecurity and problems with our food system... [if] their voices and their needs have been brought forward and they've found a way to address these issues themselves... that's success for me (File JUNE12).*

The notion of successful capacity building also seemed to entail concepts of participation and inclusion. To that end, an indicator of such success included being able to bring together a

“diversity” of people, particularly those who may typically be excluded or “exiled from community” happenings. Providing an environment where people were comfortable to “participate and talk” about the issues was also a success indicator.

Several key informants appeared to define success in terms of sharing information around their policy work and efforts. Evidence of such success appeared to occur when the initiative was able to generate knowledge through its work, and when information gathered allowed the initiative to develop effective tools and processes that others can use and learn from in their policy work. In this way, there seemed to be a sense that the work had been valuable in some way, rather than work that is filed away on a shelf.

*I guess success is that if you have gone through all of this effort of collecting this information that you actually put it to good use. That would be success. (File MAR1120)*

Generating knowledge, or raising awareness, among community members and stakeholders was also an indicator of success in sharing information and getting the messages out there. Many of the informants indicated that this was an important step along the way to change, as awareness raising can get more people involved, bring people together, and build momentum toward change.

*I see it as not only a success for our organization but what we are doing is building a greater awareness, hopefully across the country, that there are alternatives and other pieces that we can put in place that will build a stronger food security network. To me that is a great success when people change their thinking (File MAR19130).*

Securing funding for the continuation of an initiative or program was also a key definition of success, as this is tied to the sustainability of the initiative and the continuation of efforts to build food security and influence policy. Additional funding or contributions, and funding for new programs (within an initiative), were also indicators of success. Receiving financial support appeared to be viewed as an indication of broader support for the initiative and their efforts to build food security, and once again was seen as an important step toward broader policy change.

*I think that the biggest thing that we have been able to get our council to do was to grant us a large amount of money that would assist us with the purchase of this building, which in fact was owned by the city. So although that is not directly, you know they haven't come up with a food policy or they haven't appointed a food policy advisory council, they are aware of what we are doing and they have indirectly supported our work (File MAR19130).*

### *Evaluating Success*

Most key informants indicated that their initiative engaged in some form of evaluation, including both process and outcome. Three of the 26 key informants stated that they do not use any specific evaluation method within their initiative. The majority of key informants indicated

that the evaluations were conducted internally, however, external and combinations of internal and external evaluations were also conducted.

Almost half of the key informants reported that they used process evaluation to examine the progress of their initiative and “learn along the way”. Methods for process evaluation included the use of reflections, reports, surveys, and meetings and interviews. For example, many initiatives used reflection to evaluate meetings and monitor the effectiveness of tools and processes used to achieve their goals and objectives.

Outcome evaluation also included reflections, reports and surveys. Key informants stated that surveys were commonly used for evaluating outcomes such as changes among participants at the completion of the project.

### *4.3 Challenges to Influencing Policy to Build Food Security*

Key informants reflected on many challenges that they faced in trying to influence policy to build food security. The complex process of influencing policy, and the possible complications due to the complexity of the concept of food insecurity, make it necessary to be aware of challenges faced by the initiatives to help others prepare to deal with these issues. Many lessons were shared and will prove to be valuable for others who are working to influence policy for the purpose of addressing issues of food insecurity. Most of the challenges are closely related with the tips and suggestions provided in the previous section, as the tips reflect what the informants reportedly learned in the process of their work. The challenges include issues related to differing perspectives and approaches to food security, building buy-in and support for change, the time consuming nature of the work, and limited resources available to invest in policy work, which can lead to burnout.

#### *Differing Perspectives and Approaches*

The “complexity” of the concept of food security, including interactions among health, environmental, economic, and social issues, appears to present a significant challenge to those working to address the problems. The various components involved in food security appear to lead to differing priorities placed on what the key issues are and how food insecurity should be approached. As a result, it can become “so complicated” and difficult to remain broad in understanding and addressing food insecurity when there are so many different issues to consider. Furthermore, it can become challenging to reconcile the different perspectives, particularly when considering ways to build food security through policy change and development. Many informants indicated the “hodgepodge” of issues related to food insecurity present a major challenge to working together and developing a strong and unified movement to build food security.

*But if you can create this understanding, that the very things that are hurting the farmers, [are the same for] the low-income person, or the things that are making us obese as teenagers, and lack of healthy food for a senior, then we could build this broader movement. (File JUNE7)*

Some informants even spoke of “hurtful” conflicts between or within groups because of differing perspectives and approaches. It seemed that some felt that this challenge could be overcome, or at least diminished, if groups or initiatives focused on their particular issue, but also remained open to the other issues and worked to provide opportunities for open honest dialogue between different groups to facilitate collaboration.

✓TIP: Think big but stay focused, form small working groups to focus on different issues.

### *Building Buy-in and Support for Change*

Informants reported challenges to building buy-in and support outside of an initiative, as well as among partners within an initiative. Creating awareness of the issues of food insecurity among various groups, such as the public, champions, and policy-makers, was viewed as a strategy for building support to work toward influencing policy. However, many initiatives reported difficulty in building awareness and support that appeared to be closely associated with the complexity of the issue of food insecurity. Building support for broader change focused on redesign strategies for building food security as opposed to the more common short-term relief, or “band-aid” strategies, was also identified as a challenge.

*I think more research [is needed] on why the general public does not understand how critical it is for our community to be well supported so that they can be healthy... But they feel fine throwing a can into the food bank and think that solves the problem, and no matter how many different ways you say that it is just a band-aid... that is our biggest problem, trying to convince people of that (File MAR1112).*

✓TIP: Develop positive, “palatable” messages, and share real-life stories to demonstrate the human impact of food insecurity.

Several of the informants discussed the challenges associated with building buy-in and sustained support for working toward the goals and objectives of the initiative, particularly when a collaborative approach was used. Many seemed to feel that there was often strong commitment from a few members, who would end up taking on most of the responsibility for the work. Other partners and collaborators were at the table to support the work, but most of the work fell to only a few key players.

*When we first met... there was probably roughly 60 agencies represented. Everyone saying ‘yes’, they wanted to be a part of this, they wanted to be involved. It actually came down to about four individuals and one of them who actually did the work (File APRIL12100).*

✓TIP: Consider using participatory approaches, learn about ways to involve people in the issues and build the skills and momentum needed for action.

Keeping those who are involved in the initiative up-to-date and informed of activities and events was also seen as a challenge, particularly because this level of communication appeared to be required to build buy-in and sustain support. Although computers were seen as a great asset to enable communication and information sharing, many partners had limited or no access to computers. Furthermore, the informants recognized that the increased pace of communication with computers added other constraints on time.

*The challenge is mainly to keep everyone informed over time. Often the time granted to react is very short, and... not everyone has access to the Internet (File JUNE13).*

#### *Limited Resources*

Respondents viewed achieving balance between the time and effort required for doing policy work, particularly collaboratively or using participatory approaches, with the available resources as a challenge to their progress. Participants repeatedly referred to the enormous volume of work, and the high profile, fast-paced nature of their work, and stressed the need for adequate resources to support their efforts. Most of the informants indicated that the lack of adequate resources had led to “burn out” among many individuals involved with their initiative. This clearly presents a challenge to building healthy public policy and food security, as informants discussed the difficulty in continuing “at that pace”.

The lack of resources often included inadequate organizational infrastructure, such as space and personnel, and technology, including telephones and computers. In such cases, the limited resources presented further challenges to communication and to keeping partners involved and up-to-date.

✓TIP: Celebrate small successes throughout the process.

#### *Tips and Suggestions for Influencing Policy*

The key informants’ discussions regarding their initiatives efforts to influence policy revealed several tips and suggestions based on their own learning process. These tips and suggestions were complementary to overcoming many of the challenges presented in the work of initiatives trying to influence policy.

✓ Celebrate small successes throughout the process  
Informants indicated that aiming to influence policy could be a long and arduous process. To avoid the sense that nothing is being accomplished, and burn out among key players in the initiative, the informants had learned to celebrate small successes along the way and acknowledge people’s contributions and hard work.

*“It is like the drip of water and it is eventually going to create a hole in a rock.”*

✓ Think big, but stay focused

*“You can’t be all things to all people...keep the same message...be aware of what your focus is...”*

Respondents recognized the importance of keeping focused and on track as a key learning to their work in trying to influence policy. Often this meant focusing on particular issue related to food security, or creating small working groups to focus on individual issues rather attempting to address all of the issues at once.

✓ Know the political process

Knowing government structure and how the process of policy development works was critical for many key informants. Of particular importance was knowing the process of government, not being afraid of politicians, realizing they may not all understand the issues, and being direct when dealing with government. Even for those who worked directly in government initiatives, learning government functions was a significant undertaking.

*“ We have forgotten the process, the structure and how government works. That is really important.”*

✓ Build public support for the issue

*“...the Minister, at the end of the day, needs to know that the work is supported on the outside.”*

In order to move policy forward there must be broad public support for an issue. Even if there is a committed policy person inside the system working to push an issue onto the agenda it was felt that the issue needed support and pressure from outside the system as well. A crucial step in the process of gaining public support was to gauge what level of support existed and then follow up with activities and targeted messages to garner further support.

✓ Develop positive, “palatable” messages

The informants indicated that it was important to send positive and palatable messages and avoid adversarial messages that blame or attack certain stakeholders.

*“I don’t think that bra burning gets anybody anywhere.”*

✓ Take action that is timely and specific

*“if you’re going to be an activist, you need to act.”*

The informants pointed to action, both timely and specific to the issue, as a necessary step for successful policy work. This included getting the messages out there and articulating how to address the issues. Particularly when attempting to convince policy makers to listen to the message and move forward with policy development, action steps had to be defined, including why the action is necessary, what impact it could have, who would be responsible for development and implementation, who would take the lead, and how it will be assessed.

The tips and suggestions provided here are closely related to some of the challenges that the initiatives faced in attempting to influence policy to build food security, and many of these can be used to address these challenges.

## SECTION 5. DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

This National Environmental Scan is an examination of strategies and processes used to influence policy in order to build food security. Influencing policy is complex at the best of times, and this complexity may be amplified in such a highly politicized, multi-sectoral policy area such as food security. The findings of this research have been structured within the conceptual framework described in Section 1.5 and are depicted in a *model for influencing public policy to build food security* (Figure 2). This way of framing our discussion draws heavily on conceptual models developed by Hamilton and Bhatti (1996), Power (1999), MacRae (1994), Houghton (1998), and Kalina (2001).

Despite limitations with regard to some under- and over-representation of different regions of Canada, the Food Security Initiatives Questionnaire revealed that there is a diversity of initiatives addressing food security. The initiatives are aimed at all different levels of policy impact and range from governmental to non-governmental to multi-sectoral coalitions, and represent the range of strategies for addressing food security that fall along the continuum of food security. More than one third classified themselves as efficiency stage (i.e. short-term relief) initiatives, and not surprisingly this group engaged in little, if any, policy work. Three quarters of initiatives classified themselves as Substitution, and one-third as Redesign<sup>3</sup>, suggesting that among initiatives surveyed there may be significant momentum to involve communities and build capacity in the process of influencing policy to build food security. Indeed, the initiatives that later took part in in-depth interviews indicated that community capacity building, a strategy combining elements of Substitution and Redesign strategies on the food security continuum, played a major role in their efforts to influence policy. Interestingly, the most common tool for influencing policy among those initiatives that responded to the initial survey and had intentionally or unintentionally influenced policy was meeting with policy makers. This indicates a potentially powerful tool for those intending to affect policy.

Building community capacity through community development approaches has been identified by Health Canada as an important strategy for developing healthy public policy<sup>58</sup>. Figure 2 illustrates how the concepts of community development and capacity building were a thread that ran through a variety of topics throughout the key informant interviews. Most initiatives reported community capacity building as a mandate or a specific objective, as well as an intended outcome of the initiative or a process used to achieve other objectives and mandates. Many initiatives also indicated that they defined success as having built community capacity, and that this was an important outcome of their work aside from influencing policy.

In addition to community development and capacity building, the 26 key informants reported a wide range of other strategies for influencing policy as outlined in Figure 2, including collaboration, focusing on health, advocacy and lobbying activities, and research. Intersectoral collaboration among all those affected and involved in the issue of food insecurity was recognised by key informants as a fundamental strategy for influencing policy. This reflects the literature, which suggests that if healthy public policy is going to be developed to address food insecurity there is a need for collaboration among intersectoral partners<sup>32, 70, 69</sup>. The complex and

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<sup>3</sup> Initiatives were able to choose more than one response.

multifaceted issue of food security suggests a need for involvement of many different and sometimes competing interest groups including but not limited to all levels of governments, civil society groups, the food industry, the private sector, health workers, the agricultural sector, and the education system<sup>74, 75, 76, 77</sup>. To ensure inclusiveness and meaningful participation in the process, this collaboration must also be inclusive of those most affected by the issue of food insecurity<sup>61, 78</sup>. Collaboration must also take place within an overarching framework and with the declaration of different values and agendas of all collaborators.

Another key theme that emerged from the key informant interviews as shown in Figure 2 is the need to define food security holistically and avoid breaking it down into its component parts, which is inextricably related to the strategy of involving a diversity of sectors in policy development work. It has been suggested that food security policy must be framed in terms of health, nutrition, food, agriculture, environmental sustainability, education, community economic development, community capacity building and its other related components<sup>61, 76, 77, 79</sup>. The findings of this study revealed that informants tended to frame food insecurity in terms of its implications for health and well-being and suggested this was a key strategy for gaining the attention of policy makers and the public.

Not surprisingly, many initiatives engaged in advocacy/lobbying activities in their efforts to influence policy. Advocacy and lobbying are attempts to create a shift in public opinion and agendas and to mobilize necessary resources needed to support the issue. Advocacy seeks to increase the power of people and groups to make institutions more responsive to their needs<sup>80</sup>. A purposeful strategy that was either used or recommended by key informants for any advocacy and lobbying efforts was identifying a champion. Many viewed securing a champion as a key learning for achieving success at influencing policy. Having someone inside the system to support the issue was seen as an instrumental process to all stages of influencing policy; from getting an issue on the agenda to legislating policy. This is consistent with the literature which has shown that the existence of a champion with power and influence is a key factor in the success of food and nutrition policy<sup>81, 82</sup>.

Key informants repeatedly mentioned the use of research to collect and distribute information as an essential activity for influencing policy. Research was seen as necessary to document the magnitude of the issue, and to ensure that policies and decisions are based on sound evidence. The types of research varied, such as surveys and participatory action research. Participatory action research was used by some initiatives because of the opportunity for capacity building and social inclusion in the policy making process. The literature suggests that applied health research, such as participatory action methods, can significantly influence and help inform healthy public policy<sup>83</sup>. While in the past there has been difficulty translating research results into policy, it is suggested that researchers themselves must accept an obligation to become actively involved in the policy process<sup>83, 84</sup>.

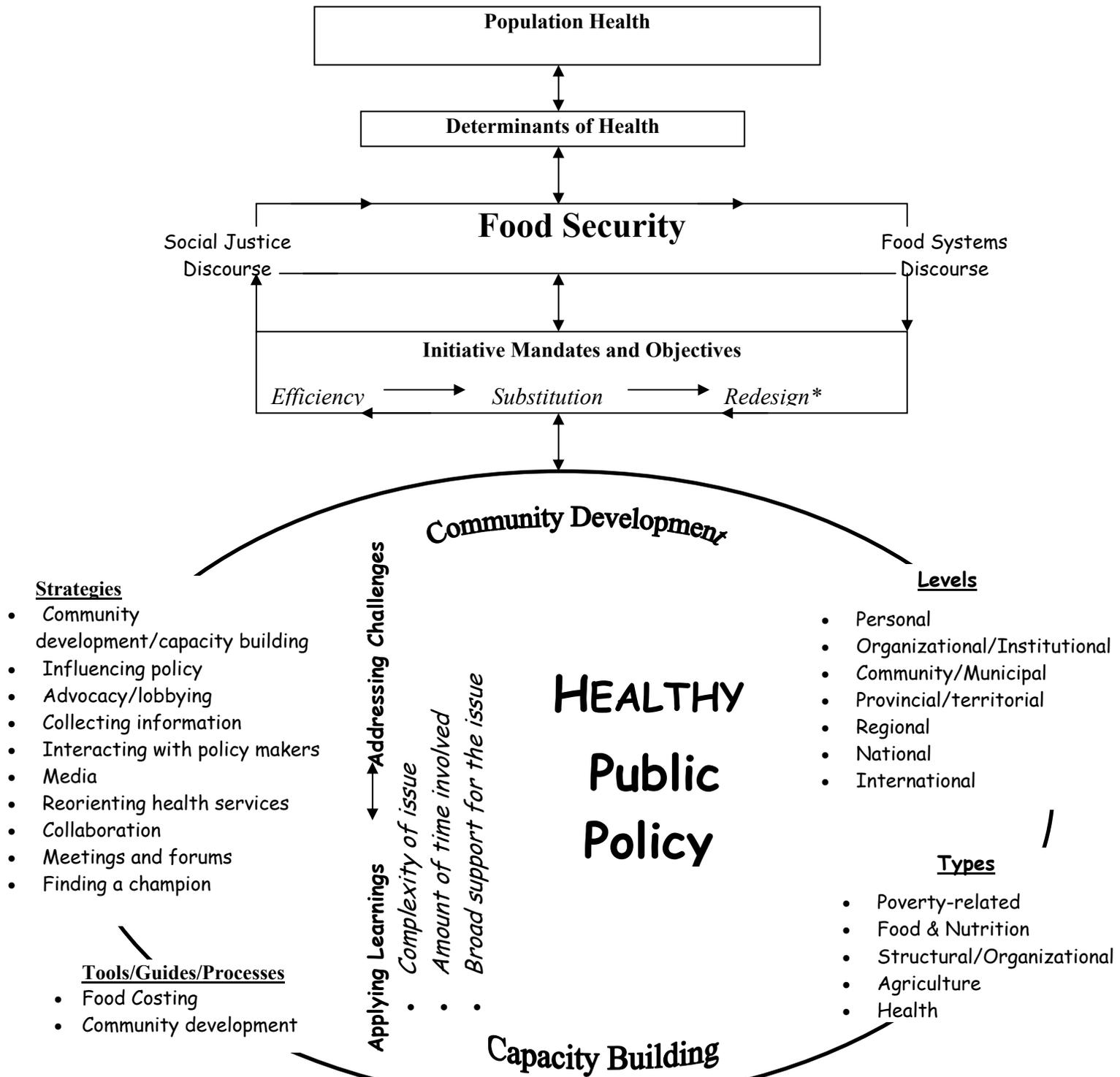
In addition to tools and processes related to community development, food costing – the systematic process used to determine the cost of a nutritious diet and compare it to the adequacy of incomes – was mentioned several times as a specific tool and process commonly used to influence food security related policy. Food costing tools such as nutritious food baskets have often been used for advocacy to influence policies related to income security programs. For

example, food costing has commonly been used as a method for assessing the adequacy of social assistance rates<sup>85, 86</sup>.

Finally Figure 2 highlights key challenges in influencing policy to build food security. These were primarily related to the differing perspectives and approaches to understanding and addressing the complex issue of food security, building buy-in and support for change, and the limited resources available to support community-based policy work. Key informants described a focus on one or the other of the broad approaches to policies that impact on food security, that is the antipoverty or the environmental sustainability approach consistent with the approaches described by Power<sup>43</sup>. In many cases the initiatives picked one particular approach in order focus on one issue and to assist in moving policy forward on that issue. Despite the choice to often focus on one approach, many felt strongly that the two approaches should work together to create a ‘movement’ for food security in its entirety. Collaboration, with the inclusion of all stakeholders, was viewed as an effective strategy for creating this movement.

Certainly, this environmental scan isn’t the final word on the complex task of how to approach influencing public policy to build food security. A set of tips for influencing policy to build food security emerged from the findings based on the experiences of the key informants, and what they learned through their successes, failures and challenges in attempting to influence policy, and provide a starting point for groups attempting to undertake this work:

- ✓ Celebrate small successes throughout the process
- ✓ Think big, but stay focused
- ✓ Form small working groups to focus on different issues
- ✓ Consider using participatory approaches, and learn about ways to involve people in the issues and build the skills and momentum needed for action.
- ✓ Know the political process
- ✓ Develop positive, “palatable” messages
- ✓ Share real-life stories to demonstrate the human impact of food insecurity
- ✓ Build public support for the issue
- ✓ Take action that is timely and specific



**Figure 2. A Model for Influencing Public Policy to Build Food Security**  
 \*Continuum of Food Security Strategies (MacRae, 1994; Kalina, 2001; Houghton, 1998)

## *5.1 Implications for Influencing Policy to Build Food Security*

### *Food Policy Councils*

Together, the findings of this scan suggest that an effective way to influence policy to build food security would be through the development of food policy councils (FPC). A movement of FPCs emerged in the late 1980s, the first in the city of Knoxville, Tennessee, in order to address the issues holistically rather than disjointedly through various municipal level departments<sup>1</sup>. They are usually made up of mainly voluntary members representing farmers, food processors, wholesalers and distributors, grocers, restaurateurs, anti-hunger and anti-poverty advocates, school system representatives, community leaders, scholars, and concerned citizens<sup>1</sup>. It has been shown that having a diversity of members creates opportunities for more creative and far-reaching solutions<sup>1</sup>. Food Policy Councils with more narrow membership and focus have been shown to be not as successful as broader and more diverse councils<sup>1</sup>. Many examples of FPCs exist across Canada and they have provided examples of policy successes that have been achieved by FPCs (e.g. TFPC, Saskatoon, and the BC Food Systems Network).

FPCs typically engage in work to influence municipal public policy to build food security<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps their most important function has been to build awareness of food security, and momentum for action at various levels of government and within the general public<sup>2</sup>. Many councils adopt a community-based approach to research and policy and program development, and work to involve communities in meaningful ways in order to build capacity and food security<sup>2</sup>.

The findings of this research clearly point to the value of forming FPCs, as such councils support many of the strategies for influencing policy highlighted by this research and have the capacity to overcome some of the challenges reported. FPCs emphasize collaboration, community development and capacity building, and community-based research<sup>1,2</sup>. They also create significant opportunity for advocacy and lobbying activities, and have been successful in building strong buy-in and support for change, by directly connecting their food security work with municipal governments and community organizations<sup>1,2</sup>. Furthermore, they have been effectively used to bridge the diversity of issues related to food security and the often dichotomized anti-poverty and food systems approaches<sup>1,2</sup>.

Unfortunately, one challenge raised by the informants in this research that may not be entirely overcome through the development of FPCs is the limited resources available. Although collaboration through FPCs may create a forum for sharing and leveraging resources, FPCs usually operate on a voluntary basis and are dependent on funding to support much of the work that extends beyond the mandate of their individual organizations and that would allow for participation of those typically excluded from such processes (such as through provision of childcare or transportation). This challenge may not be fully overcome until even greater awareness and concern is raised within communities, and governments and other funding bodies are forced to provide sufficient sustainable funding for building food security. Many FPCs have attempted to overcome the challenge of limited resources by employing a full or part-time staff member to complete administrative duties, such as grant writing<sup>1</sup>. In some cases, FPCs that have

established healthy partnerships with municipal governments have been successful in receiving staff complement from various municipal offices<sup>1</sup>.

### *Social Inclusion*

The findings of this research also point to the imperative to consider social inclusion as a fundamental guiding principle for building food security. Social inclusion is a proactive human development approach that aims to remove the barriers and risks that may prevent the meaningful inclusion and participation of individuals or communities in decision making, developing social policy, employment, and common cultural and social activities<sup>29,3</sup>. Social inclusion is about more than just inviting people to the table or gaining their input, it is about social justice, equity, valued recognition, human development and capacity building, and engagement<sup>29,3</sup>.

The literature, particularly in health promotion and community and international development, strongly points the need and value of social inclusion in the development of social policy<sup>3</sup>. Indeed, the basis of health promotion and population health movements is the engagement of communities in the development of healthy public policy<sup>69,70</sup>. However, there is recognition that in order for such engagement to occur, communities must be strengthened through access to information and the power to act<sup>69,70</sup>.

Although it was not named specifically as a strategy, the present research indicates that many initiatives across Canada engaged in addressing food security aim to foster social inclusion through community development and capacity building. Furthermore, most of the initiatives saw this as an integral element of their efforts to influence policy to build food security. This suggests that food security cannot be built in isolation of the communities affected by insecurity, and without an emphasis on social inclusion.

While it is important to engage and include communities in building food security, it is equally important to consider the potential to overburden communities or assume that they must be involved in the process. Communities experiencing food insecurity may have other demands and challenges that could limit their ability to be fully engaged in such a process<sup>4</sup>. In particular, lone parent households may be overburdened by the need to participate, and research has shown that lone mothers in Canada are the only group of parents who volunteer their time who experience negative consequences such as lost time with their children as a result of civic activity<sup>5</sup>.

Community development and capacity building efforts should aim to increase the inclusion of excluded groups in the development of healthy public policy, rather than simply engage communities in activities to address their own issues and offload what are essentially the responsibilities of a welfare state. Collaboration between the government sector and the private, non-profit sector, including the communities that the latter sector serves, is essential for building healthy communities, healthy public policy, and witnessing the benefits of inclusion<sup>6</sup>. Facilitating empowered communities and developing capacities cannot serve as a substitute for supporting communities through strong healthy public policy. That is, moving toward policy change and redesign strategies should remain the ultimate goal of food security efforts; building community capacity is an important process to move toward this end.

## *5.2 Future Directions*

This research was conducted with the guidance and participation of the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council Research Working Group and a National Advisory Committee. In the process of collecting, analyzing and reporting the data it became apparent to the members of the working and advisory groups that in addition to a scan of strategies being used by food security initiatives more in-depth information on who is doing what across Canada in the area of food security may be needed. Future research or efforts should build on the database of initiatives collected for the purposes of this study to develop a profile of what initiatives are actually happening across Canada, and what they are doing to address food security, including details of the various programs and efforts involved in each initiative. Such information can be used to build awareness of what others are doing, what works and what does not work, and a stronger network of initiatives across the country.

Future work may also focus on developing a stronger network of food security initiatives across Canada, including linking different sectors of government and non-governmental organizations. Given the effectiveness of food policy councils at the local and regional level, it is important to consider the potential for provincial and national networks to build food security through policy and programming at the national level. Research may be needed to assess the feasibility of provincial and/or national food policy council. It will also be necessary to identify what groundwork and foundational work may be needed to build and support such initiatives, as well as what resources and structures already exist to support such efforts, such as the Food Democracy Network and the Dieticians of Canada Nutrition and Food Security Network here.

To facilitate the development of local, provincial or national food policy councils, it may also be necessary to explore strategies for bringing together food security advocates from differing perspectives. Research is needed to gather success stories, learnings through lack of success, and examples from other issues involving multidisciplinary, highly politicized topics.

Future research is also needed to evaluate the success of the policy work that is being done to build food security. Such research would need to assess the impact of certain policy options on food security, as well as the impact on communities (i.e. community cohesion, social capital, community action) of capacity building and community development efforts. Such research could also be used to inform economic, health, and social analyses of different policy options that are desperately needed to build food security in our communities, provinces, and nations.

## *5.3 In Conclusion*

This research has revealed some commonly used and effective strategies specifically used for influencing policy to build food security, along with some tips for success and challenges to think about in the process of attempting to influence policy. Key recommendations based on this research for those attempting to influence policy to build food security are:

- ✓ Know the political process
- ✓ Meet with policy makers
- ✓ Build public support

- ✓ Involve communities in your organization and in developing your strategies
- ✓ Use participatory approaches to research and programming
- ✓ Use the media
- ✓ Collaborate with others working on similar issues
- ✓ Focus on bridging anti-poverty and food systems approaches to food security
- ✓ Develop positive messages
- ✓ Identify a champion
- ✓ Think big but stay focused
- ✓ Consider forming a food policy council in your region
- ✓ Take action

The findings suggest that developing food policy councils may be an effective way to incorporate the strategies presented here, and to address some of the challenges. The research also suggests that social inclusion is a fundamental component of food security, and that food security cannot be built without consideration for and inclusion of those impacted by food insecurity in the process of influencing policy. Both of these processes would be augmented by the support of government and non-government sectors working together towards building food security.

APPENDIX A: NSNC RESEARCH WORKING GROUP & PROVINCIAL STEERING COMMITTEE

Sophie Pitre-Arseneault<sup>∇</sup>  
Health Canada, CPNP

Barb Anderson\*  
Public Health Services, DHA 1,2,3

Cathy Chenhall\*  
Nova Scotia Department of Health

Leslie Ehler  
Kids first Parent Resource Centre

Dr. Doris Gillis\*  
St. Francis Xavier University

Dr. Eileen Hogan  
Acadia University

Dr. Shanthi Johnson\*  
Acadia University

Darlene Lawrence  
Digby County Family Resource Centre

Lynn Langille  
Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre

Brenda Leenders  
Public Health Services, DHA 4

Michelle Magarit\*  
Maggie's Place Family Resource Centre

Shelley Moran<sup>∇</sup>  
Chair, Nova Scotia Nutrition Council

Shannon Newcombe\*  
Caring Connections – Native Council of Nova Scotia

Janet Rathbun  
Department of Community Services

Patty Williams  
Principal Investigator

<sup>∇</sup> Member of Research Working Group & Provincial Steering Committee

\* Member of Research Working Group

## APPENDIX B: NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Patty Williams  
Principal Investigator  
NSNC/AHPRC Food Security Projects  
Mount Saint Vincent University  
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Doris Gillis  
Asst. Professor, Dept of Human Nutrition  
St. Francis Xavier University  
Antigonish, Nova Scotia

Trudy Reid  
Dietitian, CPNP program  
Maggie's Place Family Resource Centre  
Cumberland County, Nova Scotia

Margie Coombes  
Food Security Network of Newfoundland and  
Labrador  
St. John's, Newfoundland

Cathleen Kneen  
Coordinator, BC Food Systems Network  
Publisher, "The Ram's Horn" newsletter  
Sorrento, British Columbia

Joanne Houghton  
Coordinator, Food First of Northern BC  
Northern Health Authority  
Prince George, British Columbia  
Lana Moore  
Alberta Food Security Network  
Camrose, Alberta

Kelly McQuillen  
Manager, Diabetes & Chronic Diseases Unit  
Winnipeg, MB

Andrea Lebel  
Canadian Diabetes Strategy  
Halifax NS

Barbara Davis  
DC Nutrition and Food Security Network  
Ontario  
Toronto, Ontario

Brenda McIntyre  
Health Promotion Specialist, Nutrition  
Department of Health & Social Services  
Government of Nunavut, Iqaluit, Nunavut

Susan LeFort  
National Anti-Poverty Organization  
Ottawa, Ontario

Lauranne Matheson  
Program Officer, CPNP, Health Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario

Elsie DeRoose  
Federal/Provincial/Territorial Group on  
Nutrition  
Iqaluit, Nunavut

Lise Bertrand  
Direction de la santé publique,  
Montréal, Quebec

Ellen Vogel  
Adjunct Professor, School of Health Science  
University of Ontario Institute of Technology  
Oshawa, Ontario

Leanne Webb  
Regional Nutritionist, Department of Health &  
Social Services  
Government of Nunavut  
Iqaluit, Nunavut

Linda Lalonde  
National Anti-Poverty Organization  
Ottawa, Ontario

Eunice Misskey  
Population and Public Health Services  
Regina Qu'appelle Health Region  
Regina, Saskatchewan

APPENDIX C: ARTICLE REVIEW SHEET

Full Reference:

Organization/Strategy/Initiative represented?

Type of article? (Review, Study, Report)

Purpose of article?

Target group/study participants (if applicable):

Scope of paper (e.g. local, regional, provincial/territorial, national, global): \_\_\_\_\_

Did the paper / strategy impact policy, intentionally or not? Y N N/A

If yes:

What policy was targeted?

What level of policy was affected? Describe.

Personal

Organizational

Local/municipal

Regional

Provincial/territorial

National

Global

Other

Through what process was policy affected? Describe.

Advocacy

Lobbying

Media (brochures, newspaper articles, television)

Meetings with policy makers

Capacity building

Presentations to policy makers

Reports to policy makers

Dissemination of research results

Participatory action research

Other

What was the specific outcome? Describe.

Any media attention? Y N N/A

If Yes, describe what media attention was received?

Tools / Conceptual Frameworks / Models:

Results:

Recommendations:

Significant Learnings:

Successes/Benefits:

Failures/Limitations:

Significance of strategy to impact policy

Others:

Other learnings/relevant information (e.g. stats, etc.)

Contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

References to get:

## APPENDIX D: FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVES QUESTIONNAIRE

### **Are you concerned that the basic food needs of many Canadians are not being met?**

Has your group or organization been involved in efforts to build food security in your community, province or for Canada as a whole? If so, the learnings from your efforts are important to a national/international scan currently being conducted by the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council in partnership with the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre, Dalhousie University.

The purpose of the scan is to “paint the landscape” of the strategies that have been and are currently being used by communities and professionals to influence policy related to building food security in Canada and other developed countries. The scan is being conducted under the guidance of a National Advisory Committee, with representatives from each region of Canada and key organizations involved in issues such as food security, sustainable food systems and poverty. A final report will be produced in April 2002 and mailed to all who participate in the scan.

How can you participate in the scan or learn more about it?

Fill out the attached survey and return it to us via fax (902) 494-3594

E-mail us at [ehemphill@tupdean2.med.dal.ca](mailto:ehemphill@tupdean2.med.dal.ca) and we will send you an electronic version of the survey

Visit our website at [www.nsrc.ca](http://www.nsrc.ca) and fill out the online survey

Your participation in the survey will greatly enrich the lessons learned about strategies used to build food security in communities across Canada. These learnings will help inform a framework that can be used by various organizations who wish to impact policy related to food security at any level, and will be shared with those involved in building food security

If you have any questions about the scan, please contact Dr. Patricia Williams ([patricia.williams@dal.ca](mailto:patricia.williams@dal.ca)) / Tel – (902) 494-6642 or Christine Johnson and Eric Hemphill, Project Assistants at (902) 494-2764.

## Survey on Food Security Initiatives

1. Name, Organization:

---

2. Start date of initiative:

---

3. Mandate or objective of initiative encompasses:

- food security/insecurity, ensuring that:
  - all people at all times can acquire safe, nutritionally adequate and personally acceptable foods that are accessible in a manner maintaining human dignity;
  - people are able to earn a living wage by growing, producing, processing, handling, retailing and serving food;
  - the quality of air, land and water are maintained and enhanced for future generations; and
  - food is celebrated as central to community and cultural integrity.
- poverty
- social justice/inequality/inclusion issues
- sustainable agriculture/food production/environmental protection/harvesting of traditional foods issues
- healthy public policy
- community development/capacity building
- other
  - Please describe

4. How would you describe your initiative given the following options?

- Short-term Relief/Efficiency  
Initiatives that provide temporary emergency relief to those who have no access to food under traditional means (e.g. food banks, soup kitchens, financial aid).
- Capacity Building/Substitution:  
Initiatives, usually operating at the community level, that attempt to mobilize residents through sharing, communication and learning (e.g. community kitchens and gardens, support groups, Family Resource Centres).
- Redesign:  
Initiatives that target the entire health care, governmental policy and food distribution systems (e.g. food policy councils, social action groups, community shared agriculture).

5. Is affecting policy an explicit intention of your initiative?      Y      N

6. If yes, has the initiative been successful in affecting policy?    Y                      N

If yes;

At what level was policy targeted?

- personal
- organizational
- local/municipal
- regional
- provincial/territorial
- national
- global
- other

What strategies were used?

- advocacy
- lobbying
- media (brochures, newspaper articles, television)
- meetings with policy makers
- capacity building / direct public involvement
- presentations to policy makers
- reports to policy makers
- dissemination of research results
- participatory action research
- other

7. If no to #6, has your initiative affected policy without explicit intention to do so?      Y  
N

If yes;

At what level was policy affected?

- personal
- organizational
- local/municipal
- regional
- provincial/territorial
- national

global

What strategies affected policy?

- advocacy
- lobbying
- media (brochures, newspaper articles, television)
- meetings with policy makers
- capacity building / direct public involvement
- presentations to policy makers
- reports to policy makers
- dissemination of research results
- participatory action research
- other

8. Could you please provide us with any initiatives you are aware of that would be relevant to contact for our scan? \*Note. The purpose of the environmental scan is to learn about strategies used by different initiatives that have impacted policy related to building food security either intentionally or unintentionally.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

9. Following this interview we will be contacting some initiatives for a key informant interview concerning this initiative. Do we have permission to contact you at a later date?                      Y  
N

Contact Person:

Phone Number:

Fax:

E-mail:

Mailing Address:

Please Note:

- Not all organizations will be contacted further. This will depend on the number of initiatives and whether or not they meet the criteria for the key informant interview. If you agree to participate in the key informant interview and your initiative is selected, you will be sent an information sheet and informed consent form to sign with directions on returning it to the

Atlantic Health Promotion Research Center. Fax will be the preferred method for obtaining consent however e-mail or mail will be used if you do not have access to fax.

When called to schedule an interview date and time, you will be asked for permission to tape-record the session for analysis purposes.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We look forward to sharing the results with you!

Would you like to receive an executive summary of the final report?

Y            N

May we include your initiative's contact information in our final report?

Y            N

## APPENDIX E: TELEPHONE INTERVIEW PACKAGE

### **Overview:**

Food security is often defined different ways by different people. The definition we use seeks to be as inclusive as possible but recognizes that there are diverse factors involved in food security and that affecting policy in relation to food security can take various forms. Food security occurs when: all people at all times can acquire safe, nutritionally adequate and personally acceptable foods that are accessible in a manner maintaining human dignity; people are able to earn a living wage by growing, producing, processing, handling, retailing and serving food; the quality of land, air and water are maintained and enhanced for future generations; and food is celebrated as central to community and cultural integrity.

### **Purpose:**

This project has the goal of determining the most effective ways of affecting policy in regards to food security. In our understanding, policy is the framework within which decisions are made. We seek to examine a broad range of policies that can be affected in order to build food security i.e. from governmental policy to inter-organizational and personal policy. To this end, a national and international environmental scan is being conducted to discover different ways of promoting policy change and their relative effectiveness in developed countries. Once this information has been obtained, it is hoped it will be used to formulate a national model, which can be used by any group desiring to affect policy and make food security a reality for all Canadians.

## Key Informant Interview Questions

Note to interviewer: Pull info from initial survey for the first four questions.

- Please tell me a little bit about the work you do to promote food security: project's mandate (if applicable), your position and role in the work. Please give me a sense of your background and experience related to food security issues and policy work. Why are you involved in the work?
- What is/was the specific goal of your food security work?
- Tell us about your efforts \_\_\_\_\_. When did they begin and end (if applicable)? What geographic area does your effort include/encompass? What population is targeted by your effort?
- What resources (i.e. personnel, equipment) are/were required for your work? Probe for:
  - Is the project funded? If yes, how?
  - Does your work involve any collaboration with other organizations? If yes, in what capacity were contributions provided (e.g. in-kind advice/guidance/vision/motivation, office space, etc.)?
  - Have community members been mobilized to contribute to the project? If yes, how?
  - Are there any other key resources that you identify as being valuable to your project?
  - How are important decisions made concerning the project?

What has helped you move forward in your work?

- Are there any tools, guides or processes that are being used to direct your work? Was it adapted in any way? (if more than one, get specific details on each structure)

Focus on Q5-9

- Could you tell us about a specific need or problem that your effort was created to address? How were these needs identified (e.g. workshops, lit. review, needs assessment)?
- Could you tell us about specific strengths/capacities already present in the community that your work was created to build upon? How were these community strengths/capacities identified? What opportunities to further influence policy do you see?
- We would like to examine activities or actions that are currently being used in your work, or that you may plan to use in the future. Please give some examples of activities that you have been or will be using in your work. Probe each activity named to match the list of examples:
  - Create supportive environments
  - Develop personal skills / education
  - Build healthy public policy
  - Engage in research
  - Include advocacy/lobbying
  - Strengthen communities to take action/capacity building
  - Reorient health services
  - Media-related activities
  - Policy-maker-related activities
- In the initial survey, you were asked whether or not you intended to affect policy, as well as your effectiveness in doing so. Based on your responses, it seems that:

- One of the main objectives of your efforts was to affect policy, and you indicated that it was successful in doing this. Does this accurately reflect the goals and outcomes of the work? We are interested in knowing what specific policy(s) was/were targeted. At what level was policy affected (e.g. municipal, federal, etc.)? Describe the specific outcome of your policy work. What were your key learnings from your efforts to affect policy? What were some challenges you encountered during the process?
  - One of the main objectives of your efforts was to affect policy, and you indicated that it was unsuccessful in this task to date. Does this accurately reflect the goals and outcomes of the work? We are interested in knowing what specific policy(s) was/were initially targeted. Could you describe some possible reasons your initiative did not have the impact you wanted? What were your key learnings from your efforts to affect policy? What were some challenges you encountered during the process?
  - It was indicated that your efforts did not have affecting policy as one of its main objectives, yet this effect was noted. Does this accurately reflect the goals and outcomes of the work? We are interested in knowing what level was/were policy(s) affected (e.g. municipal, federal, etc.). Describe the specific outcome of the policy work. Any other outcomes? What were your key learnings from your efforts to affect policy? What were some challenges you encountered during the process?
  - One of the objectives of your efforts is to influence policy, but you are not yet able to fully assess your project's success relative to policy. Does this accurately reflect the goals and outcomes of the work? We are interested in knowing what specific policies are being targeted. At what level (e.g. municipal, federal, etc.)? Are there any specific outcomes relative to policy that you are hoping to achieve? What were your key learnings from your efforts to affect policy thus far? What were some challenges you encountered during the process?
- Were there any other successes, aside from possible policy impacts, that you were able to achieve? How do you define success in terms of your work? How do you know if your work has been successful?
  - If there is an evaluation process, briefly describe it and how will it be carried out (If not mentioned, probe for indicators, either process or outcome). What were some key results?
  - Is there anything that I have not asked you that you would also like to share with us about your project or the learnings from your work? Is there anything you could send to us that would provide more information about what was discussed today? Would you be willing to review the transcript of this interview to ensure it is complete?

Thank you!

#### **Reference Sheet for Interviewers**

#### **Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion – Strategies for Action**

- Creating Supportive Environments – Increasing the capacity of people to provide for themselves, increasing their access to food and other preventative health measures

- Developing Personal Skills – Enhancing people’s skills and knowledge about their own health and well being
- Building Healthy Public Policy – Focusing policy to include issues of the health and well-being of all involved
- Strengthening Community Action – Mobilizing entire communities to take control of health and well-being issues affecting them
- Reorienting Health Services – Guiding the health system to give health promotion and other preventative measures more attention

Others – research, education, advocacy, etc.

### **Evaluation Procedures**

- Process Evaluation – Feedback and changes are obtained and made on an ongoing basis.
- Outcome Evaluation – Feedback is gathered during or after the initiative is completed, by use of surveys or other research tools, in order to determine the outcomes.

## APPENDIX F: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

### **Introduction**

We invite you to take part in a research project being conducted by the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre, Dalhousie University. Taking part in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. The study is described below. We feel this study may benefit those involved by compiling useful and relevant information on the process used by food security initiatives to impact policy, and by making it available to those with common interests. If you have any questions concerning this study, please contact the lead investigator or the project coordinator, whose contact information can be found at the end of this information sheet.

### **Purpose of the Study**

To collect information on the process used by food security initiatives to impact public policy, and to share the “lessons learned” to assist any group wishing to engage policy that impacts upon issues of food security. This will enhance the capacity of community groups working locally, provincially and nationally across Canada to build food security at multiple levels of policy.

### **Study Design**

The names of relevant individuals and organizations were obtained from an extensive literature search of the areas of poverty, food security and policy. These individuals will be contacted for a brief interview, to determine if their initiative meets the criteria established for the scan. If so, they will be asked to participate in an in-depth interview concerning their initiative, approximately 45-70 minutes in length. The information gathered here will be synthesized into a final report of “lessons learned”, which can be used by organizations with various interests that wish to impact food security policy at any level.

### **Who Can Participate in the Study**

Selected participants who meet the established criteria (described under as “Criteria For Selecting Relevant Food Security Initiatives”) will be asked to participate.

### **Who Will Be Conducting the Research**

The lead investigator, the project coordinator, and the two research assistants will conduct the research, as representatives of the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council (NSNC). The NSNC is a non-profit group comprised of health and nutrition professionals dedicated to food and nutrition-related issues facing Nova Scotians.

### **What You Will Be Asked To Do**

Participants in this study will be contacted twice to answer some questions concerning a food security or poverty-related initiative with which they were involved. The initial contact is a short (approximately 15 minute) session concerning some broad details of the initiative in question. If a full interview is scheduled, you will be asked to complete a consent form and asked to return it signed, either by fax or by email. The second session is an in-depth interview, approximately 45-70 minutes length, which will examine the initiative in further detail. Questions here will concern the specific methodology, perceived and actual levels of success obtained in affecting policy, and other factors surrounding the initiative that are pertinent to the study criteria.

**Possible Risks and Discomforts**

Several questions in the full interview concern the perceived and actual successes and/or shortcomings of initiatives intended to impact food security or poverty-related policy. If the initiative in question was not as successful as intended, the participant will be asked to describe possible reasons why this was the case. It is to be understood that this information is necessary simply to share lessons learned with similar individuals or groups that may have similar intentions. Even though the initiative may not have fulfilled its goals, its existence may be useful to others in similar circumstances.

**Possible Benefits**

By compiling the “lessons learned” from many different food security initiatives, the results of this study will be useful to those intending to impact policy to build food security. It is hoped that using these guidelines will facilitate the important link between research and policy.

**Compensation**

Participants will not be compensated for their participation. They will, however, receive a copy of the final report when it is completed.

**Confidentiality**

All correspondence (information sheets, informed consent forms) will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre, Dalhousie University. Access to the original data will be limited to the Principal Investigator, the Project Coordinator, and the Research Assistants. When the project has been completed, data will be kept in the event that an audit of the project is conducted, or that the information is required for further analyses. No identifying features of participants will be present on any documentation or reports to ensure participant anonymity. Tapes will be destroyed immediately following transcription, and transcripts will be securely kept for five years, after which they will be destroyed by the Principal Investigator.

## **Summary**

Many initiatives have been used by community groups and other organizations to impact policy related to food security, however, a comprehensive study of the process used by these initiatives has not been conducted. This study will “paint the landscape” of the process used by these various initiatives and share lessons learned to assist others to impact policy that builds food security.

## **Other Issues**

There is the chance, if targeted policy decision-makers read the project’s resulting report outlining specific advocacy strategies, that the probability of participants’ groups obtaining the outcomes they desire may be diminished. This is unlikely to occur however, some groups, such as those engaging in more activist methods of affecting change (e.g. political lobbying groups), may be more likely to encounter it.

## **Questions**

Patricia L. Williams, Principal Investigator; Tel. (902) 494-6642, Fax (902) 494-3594, Email [patricia.Williams@dal.ca](mailto:patricia.Williams@dal.ca)

Brenda Thompson, Project Coordinator; Tel. (902) 532-5930,  
Email [Brenda.Thompson@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:Brenda.Thompson@ns.sympatico.ca)

Christine Johnson, Research Assistant; Tel. (902) 494-2764, Fax (902) 494-3594,  
Email [christinepjohns@hotmail.com](mailto:christinepjohns@hotmail.com)

Eric Hemphill, Research Assistant; Tel. (902) 494-2764, Fax (902) 494-3594,  
Email [e\\_hemphill@hotmail.com](mailto:e_hemphill@hotmail.com)

In the event that you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, you may contact the Human Research Ethics/Integrity Coordinator at Dalhousie University’s Office of Human Research Ethics and Integrity for assistance: (902) 494-1462.

# \_\_\_\_\_

***-INFORMED CONSENT FORM-***  
**Environmental Scan of Strategies for Impacting Public Policy  
to Build Food Security**

If you have read the information sheet that explains the research project and are willing to participate, please read the following and sign below.

**I understand that:**

- this is a study being conducted by the Nova Scotia Nutrition Council to collect information on the process used by food security initiatives to impact public policy, and end with a compilation of “lessons learned” to assist any group wishing to engage policy that impacts upon issues of food security;
- all the information I provide is confidential;
- a potential risk for me as a participant in this project is the discussion of initiatives that may have been unsuccessful or may not have reached their goals, and the reasons why this may be so;
- 
- a potential benefit for me as a participant in this project is the resulting final report that will share lessons learned linking research to policy, which may facilitate and improve the effectiveness of potential research and work in this area;
- I do not have to answer any questions if I so choose, and I can withdraw from the project at any time;
- If I have any questions about this research project, I can contact the lead researcher, Dr. Patty Williams, at (902) 494-6642, or the project coordinator Brenda Thompson, at (902) 532-5930;
- I will keep a copy of the consent form for my records.

**I have read and understood the information given about the project. I am willing to participate. I have been provided with enough information to make a decision as to whether or not I would like to participate in this research project.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return one signed copy of this consent form immediately by fax to:  
(902) 494-3594 ATTN: Eric Hemphill, Food Security Projects**

## APPENDIX G: SCHEMATIC OF MAJOR THEMES IN CODING FRAMEWORK

### **Question 1 - Background**

Previous experience related to food security issues and policy work  
Type of initiative being discussed  
Current role within initiative  
Mandate of initiative/focus/mission

### **Question 2 – Specific Objectives of Food Security Work**

Specific objectives

### **Question 3 – Description of the Work**

Time frame of initiative  
Geographic area targeted by initiative  
Population targeted by initiative

### **Question 4 – Resources**

Contributions to initiative  
Collaboration  
Community mobilization  
Decision making

### **Question 5 – Tools/guides/processes and Were they Adapted**

Tools/guides/processes

### **Question 6 – Specific Needs or Problems and their Identification**

Specific need or problem  
How need or problem was identified

### **Question 7 – Specific Strengths & Capacities and their Identification**

Strengths and capacities  
How strengths and capacities were identified

### **Question 8 – Strategies, such as Activities & Actions, Used by Initiatives**

Strategies

### **Question 9 A – Intended to affect policy and were successful**

Specific policy targeted  
Level of policy affected  
Specific policy outcomes  
Key learnings from the policy process  
Challenges encountered in the policy process

### **Question 9 B – Intended to affect policy but were unsuccessful**

Specific policy targeted  
Level of policy targeted

Possible reasons why success did not happen  
Key learnings from the policy process  
Challenges encountered in the policy process

**Question 9 C – Did not intend to affect policy but did so anyhow**

Specific policy affected  
Level of policy affected  
Specific policy outcomes  
Key learnings from the policy process  
Challenges encountered in the policy process

**Question 9 D – Intended to affect policy but cannot yet assess the effect**

Specific policy targeted  
Level of policy targeted  
Specific policy outcomes hoping to achieve  
Key learnings from the policy process  
Challenges encountered in the policy process

**Question 10 – Any Successes Aside from Policy Impacts**

Any successes aside from policy  
How success is defined  
How do you know if your work has been successful

**Question 11 – Evaluation**

Evaluation methods used  
Key evaluation results  
Who conducted evaluation

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