

# ATTACHMENT F

## Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit

### Backyard Chickens – Food Systems Perspective

From a food systems perspective, community food security is when all community residents obtain a safe, culturally appropriate, and nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance, social justice, and equal access for everyone ([Dietitians of Canada, 2020](#)). It addresses issues in the economic, environmental, and social aspects of the food system, and thus promotes adequate incomes for consumers and producers; local and diverse food production; environmental sustainability; protection of local agricultural lands and fish habitat; widespread access to healthy food; and food-based community economic development and social cohesion ([Dietitians of Canada, 2020](#)). Food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints at the household level ([PROOF, 2023](#))

A major component of community food security is providing equitable access to food; this includes food insecurity at the household level. As backyard hens/chickens are not accessible to all, this program would not address community food security and food insecurity. For example, the City of Toronto initiated an UrbanHensTO pilot program in 2018 which allowed up to four hens/chickens in registered households for the purposes of enjoyment and personal egg production ([City of Toronto, 2023](#)). However, this program was recently recommended to conclude by May 2023 ([City of Toronto, 2023](#)). A major barrier in participating in this program was the need for households to have an adequate and secure income which would support the start-up and operating costs for backyard hens/chickens. Therefore, this program was only available for households with a higher socioeconomic status; almost 70% of households in Toronto that participated had an income of more than \$100,000. These are also the residents who had access to a suitable backyard for raising hens/chickens. With food insecurity being an issue of inadequate or insecure income, the costs associated with setting up and maintaining backyard hens/chickens are not accessible for food insecure households. In addition, egg production does not address physical food access needs as it only contributes a limited amount of nutrients to meet a household's overall nutritional needs.

This program is not considered an effective intervention to address community food security or food insecurity.

Best practices to support community food security includes community programs, such as urban agriculture on municipal land. Urban agriculture can be an equitable approach to provide community members with access to food. It can also “green the city, improve biodiversity, and make use of under-utilized spaces and producing food closer to home” ([Valley & Whittam, 2019](#)). At a Municipal level, urban agriculture in priority neighborhoods would help strengthen supply and access to local, traditional, and culturally diverse foods available to all ([Chatham-Kent Food Strategy, 2022](#)).

Best practices to support food insecurity focus on income-based responses, such as providing people with a basic income guarantee, increasing minimum wage to a living wage, and increasing social assistance rates to reflect the cost of living ([PROOF, 2023](#)).