

The Toronto Youth Food Policy Council:

**The evolving implementation of a resilient and effective Youth voice
within the Canadian Agricultural and Food Policy framework**

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Forward

Food has the unique ability to unite us all: its consumption is a political act that the privileged majority of North American's take part in at least three times a day. Food is a cause for unification and celebration, but when its bounty is denied, it can lead to hunger and pain. Its production, processing, distribution and removal require a great deal of skillful knowledge, but yet, control of our food supply is becoming increasingly centralized and contaminated.

It is at the interface of this conundrum that my curriculum in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University has taken me. My conceptualization of food and agriculture as a diverse and interconnected system is the result of being immersed in multiple layers of production, consumption, activism and knowledge seeking. I grew up working on my family's vegetable farm where I experienced the fruitful cycles of the land and agriculture's place within the ecosystem. My undergraduate degree in Mass Communications at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire focused specifically on the importance of consumer education in local food purchasing. These interests led me to identify my Area of Concentration in my Plan of Study: Canadian Food and Agricultural Policy Public Health and Organizational and Social Ecology.

Throughout my six semesters in the Masters of Environmental Studies program, I have studied in depth the greater role of the food system in our everyday lives - including the existing food and agricultural policy framework, research methodology and theory, and,

by completing field experiences with Local Food Plus and more intently the Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC). As identified in my *Plan of Study* and *Major Research Project Proposal*, a self-developed curriculum has allowed me the unique opportunity to both examine and experience sustainable food system development in North America, and particularly within the City of Toronto. The purpose of both documents was to identify the overlapping characteristics of the *distanced* food system, and more specifically, how citizens can find a sense of agency given inherent economic, political and societal limitations.

During the spring of 2009, I began a formative field experience with the Toronto Food Policy Council, located within Toronto Public Health. Little did I know I had actually embarked on a journey of personal growth, organizational design and mobilizing Toronto's *Youth* food movement. When I began my placement under the supervision of TFPC Staff, Yusuf Alam, I was asked to organize a small group of Youth that could provide a new perspective to the existing Food Policy Council. While at the time I knew little about the function, structure and role of the esteemed TFPC, throughout the last four semesters I have had the opportunity to participate in solution-oriented work that directly corresponded to the knowledge acquired throughout my coursework in the Faculty of Environmental Studies.

Throughout the summer of 2009, I organized a series of steering committee meetings with interested Youth, which culminated in the introduction of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council (TYFPC) on September 9th, 2009 in City Hall. Over the past year, the

TYFPC has grown from a group of eight Youth with an idea to an organized and respected Community structure of roughly 100 young people between the ages of 16 to 30. My MRP report reflects the birth and evolution of the Youth Food Policy Council as Toronto's emerging voice of Youth engagement in sustainable food and agricultural policy development.

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I would like to thank my supervisor and food and agricultural policy guru Dr. Rod MacRae for sharing his vast wealth of knowledge and instantaneously responding to each and every one of my many emails. Thank you to Yusuf Alam, Dr. Wayne Roberts, Leslie Toy and Members of the Toronto Food Policy Council for mentoring me and incubating the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council, yet allowing us to blossom as a rambunctious group of Youth. To founding and new Members of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council – your energy and passion is truly infectious. I am excited to see what *we* can achieve in the future. Thank you to fantastic new friends for putting up with my random food-related tangents over a pint of Ontario beer. And finally, a BIG THANK YOU to my parents for supporting and encouraging me for the past 25 years of my life! Those onions certainly paid off...

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Product 1: Open Space Technology, theory and practice

Product 2: Timeline of the TFPC and MRP research

Product 3: Selection of research journal entries (September 2009 – March 2010)

Work Cited:

Appendix:

Acronyms

| | |
|---------------|---|
| CFAP | Canadian Food and Agricultural Policy |
| CFSC | Community Food Security Coalition |
| BOH | Toronto Board of Health |
| ECPMC | Event Coordination Project Management Committee |
| FCM | Founding Council Members |
| FPC | Food Policy Council |
| FS | Toronto Food Strategy |
| FSA | Food System Assessment |
| FC | Food Charter |
| GTA | Greater Toronto Area |
| MCRC | Member and Community Relations Committee |
| NCM | New Council Members |
| MOH | Medical Officer of Health |
| NWMC | Newsletter, Web and Media Committee |
| OST | Open Space Technology |
| PH | Public Health |
| RPC | Research and Policy Committee |
| SYTYCC | “So You(th) Think You Can Cook” competition |
| TDSB | Toronto District School Board |
| TFPC | Toronto Food Policy Council |
| TYFPC | Toronto Youth Food Policy Council |
| YFF | “Youth Food Fair” |

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Canadian Food and Agricultural Policy Framework and the Response of Citizen Bodies

“Because food touches so many aspects of our lives in so many ways, a government that does not have a comprehensive food policy cannot, by definition, have a comprehensive health policy, energy policy, job creation policy, environment policy, global warming policy, anti-poverty policy, immigration and settlement policy, trade policy, industrial policy or – last but not least – agricultural policy. When food is torn apart, with bits stored in silos of health, energy, environment, immigration, trade and agriculture departments, it becomes like the patient who is treated by doctors as a liver, pancreas, heart, spine, ear, nose and throat, not a whole person.”

- Wayne Roberts

1.1 The affects of our *distanced* Food System

According to scholar Canadian Brewster Kneen, a ‘food system’ is a highly integrated web that “includes everything from farm input suppliers to retail outlets, from farmers to consumers” (1993, p.11). The current, and overarching, ‘food system’ reflects international domination and local destruction of our food supply, whereby farmers, the environment and the global south suffer at the expense of globalization. In Western countries, individuals are trapped by the phenomenon known as ‘distancing’ or “separating people from the sources of their food and nutrition with as many interventions as possible” (Kneen, 1993, p.11) The effects of *distancing* can be found throughout every component of the food system. In the following literature review, I will provide an introduction to the *distanced* food system from its many angles of analysis.

The term ‘food-security’ is a complex and situational term used to describe the state of being food secure. Although incredibly circumstantial, “food-security” can be analyzed on an individual, household, community, municipal, and even national level. The Food

and Agriculture Organization states that ‘food-security’ exists “when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (Food and Agricultural Organization, 1996). However, this definition neglects to address environmental and farm sustainability and direct effects on the individual. Ryerson University defines ‘food-security’ along a spectrum known as the 5 A’s – or a food systems’ ability to provide food that is “available, accessible, adequate, acceptable and [provide] agency” (Ryerson University website, 2009). In this definition, ‘adequate’ refers to the ability of a food system to produce in “environmentally sustainable ways” (Ryerson Website, 2009). Regardless of conceptual differences, food insecurity is a major consequence of the industrial food system worldwide.

¹Throughout my Masters of Environmental Studies curriculum at York University, it has become increasingly apparent that *distancing* is perpetuated by policies that exist within and between governments, agribusiness and international regulatory agencies (MacRae, 1999a.). Canada currently lacks a “joined-up” food and nutritional policy, meaning that there is “no integration across jurisdictions such as health, agriculture, environment and social policy” (Rideout et al., 2005, p.570). Therefore, argues Koc et. al., unclear federal and provincial legislative authority has resulted in jurisdictional ambiguity (2008, p.126). The problem is then exasperated by Canada’s focus on supply-side policy at the expense of informed demand (Headley, 2006. p21). I will elaborate further on Canada’s

¹ Throughout my MRP research, Dr. Rod MacRae served as my 1) Faculty Supervisor, 2) Interviewee, and, 3) Source of information regarding his previous position as the first Coordinator of the Toronto Food Policy Council. In addition, MacRae is frequently cited for relevant publications regarding the Canadian Food and Agricultural Policy framework. MacRae is cited in three capacities throughout the body of my MRP – 1) academic, 2) personal interview, and 3) personal conversations – month XXX.

food and agricultural policy framework in section 1.2.

Kneen claims that the food system crisis is a result of the “reduction of a society to nothing but a market-economy” (Kneen, 1993, p.73). Although Canada’s farming climate could not sustain the entire populations’ dietary needs, a focus on agricultural exports prevents Canada from maximizing its local procurement potential. Canada is the world’s fourth largest agricultural exporter; in 2003 exports exceeded imports by almost 30 percent (AAFC, 2007, Statistics Canada, 2004). While levels of government farm support are lower than the US and EU, Canadian farmers are simultaneously subjected to reduced trade tariffs imposed by the North American Free Trade Agreement and the World Trade Organization. Luckily for some producers (dairy, poultry, eggs) supply management helps protect farmers from fluctuating market prices and assists in the marketing of agricultural products (Montreal Economic Institute, 2005).

Through providing cheap and convenient food, the modern food and agricultural system has forced Canadian producers into a bleak situation. The National Farm Union brings attention to the increased agribusiness profits admits a national farm crisis. For example, in 2004 Canadian farmers saw a near-record low Market Net Income of \$10,000, a measure that excludes government payments. ²This number shows how dependent Canadian agriculture is on the taxpayers’ dollar, off farm-income and access to debt accumulation (National Farm Union, 2005, p.1-2). Since farm debt is rising, it is not surprising that farms in Canada are disappearing. From 1996 to 2006, Ontario lost 15

² According to the National Farm Union, four to five billion dollars is spent per year to support farmers.

percent of its farms, a number that is expected to increase. Ontario's farmers are also aging. The average farmer in Ontario is in his or her 50's, and the number of farmers below the age of 35 has decreased to nine percent in 2006 (Seccombe, 2008, p.6).

Contrary to general belief, the farmer is not to blame for these trends. Farms are continuing to increase productivity and have seen the highest efficiency gains of any Canadian sector since the 1960's (National Farm Union, 2005, p.10).

³ Despite drastic drops in farm profitability, dominant agribusinesses saw near or record high sales in 2004. According to the National Farm Union, there are several "mechanisms that agribusiness use to extract ever-increasing revenues and profits at the expense of farmers" (2005, p.9). For example, because of their market power and concentration, agribusinesses are able to 'externalize' operational costs such as transportation, infrastructure and labor onto farmers. Agribusiness has also commoditized seed, chemicals, pharmaceuticals and energy, while simultaneously maintaining corporate 'pricing power' or the ability to set prices as high as the market will allow (National Farm Union, 2005, p.9). This has created a situation where corporations have more control over farming practices and profitability than the farmer.

Ontario sits on the best farmland in Canada. In fact, according to the Canada Land Inventory GIS mapping system, 52 percent of Canada's Class 1 farmland, with "no significant limitations in use for crops" is in Southern Ontario. ⁴ Although the creation of

³ In this case, dominant agribusiness includes fuel, fertilizer, seed, farm machinery and food processors.

⁴ The Greenbelt mainly protects class 2 and 3 farmland.

the Green Belt in 2005 protected 1.2 million acres of farmland the majority of class 1 farmland is rented and situated between the Green Belt and suburbs of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). The battle over this contested area of land will likely be won by developers, unless provincial government intervenes (Seccombe, 2008 p.12). In fact, the Town of Markham was recently considering a “Food Belt Proposal” which would halt sprawling development into farmland.” (Friedman, 2010). Initiated by two City Councilors, the Food Belt proposal was part of a 100 percent intensification plan, which would intensify urban development rather than spreading it into prized farmland. However, the proposal was defeated in a seven to six vote on May 11th, 2010. (Markham City Council Meeting, May 2010).

The effects of *distancing* can also be seen through the evolution of consumer deskilling. Jaffe and Gertler highlight the various ways consumers are becoming “less skilled in absolute and relative terms, as they become increasingly distanced from the sites and processes of production” (2005, p.143). Throughout the 20th century, consumers embraced convenience foods, simplified preparation techniques and concentrated retail outlets, *distancing* themselves further from the self-sufficiency experienced by earlier generations. The authors also align *distancing* with the ‘McDonaldization’ of consumer identity, or “a system of impersonal labor control in which internalized culture systems and structures largely replace direct management” in which all work (and food) must be more efficient, predictable and calculable (Jaffe et al, 2008, p.114). Both *distancing* and ‘McDonaldization’ further separate the post-nuclear consumer from the farmer who receives information on consumer demand directly from the corporate food industry

(Jaffe et al., 2005).

The *distancing* of consumers from producers has also altered our ‘foodscapes’, or the increasing “intuitional sites for the merchandising and consumption of food” (Winson, 2003, p.299). Foodscapes have been expanding into public spaces and increasing the amount of ‘pseudo foods’ that can be purchased in schools, convenience stores and concentrated retail. While ‘pseudo foods’ are generally high in fat, calories and sodium, they tend to be consumed as a replacement for their nutritious and unprocessed counterparts (Winson, 2003). The proliferation of pseudo foods in multiple foodscapes has drastically compromised the health of consumers. The number of Adults who are overweight has jumped to 64.5 percent and the number overweight children have doubled in the past two decades (Winson, 2003, p.299).

Although consumer foodscapes are increasing in scope, corporate retail concentration arguably has the most considerable influence over the *distanced* food system. Continual corporate buyouts and amalgamations give Canada its status as the most highly concentrated and oligopolistic food retail system in the ‘developed’ world. In fact, after a 2005 acquisition between Metro and A&P, four retail giants control over 80 percent of Canadian food retail (Zafiriou, 2005). This high degree of concentration has numerous effects on the food supply, potential local procurement policies, and places high production, distribution, and technological demands on farmers.

The consequences of food system *distancing* coupled with the breakdown of the

Canadian social safety net in the 1990's have left a greater segment of the population vulnerable to food insecurity (Rideout et al. 2007). The emergence of 'food deserts' in low-income communities is a recent phenomena associated with retail concentration and suburbanization of North America. While there is no unanimous definition of 'food desert', Larsen and Gilliland define food deserts as "socially distressed neighborhoods with relatively low average household incomes and poor access to healthy food" often with high access to fast-food or convenience-type stores (2008, p.1). However, 'desert' can also be a verb - "to leave someone without help or in a difficult situation and not come back" (Gallagher, 2006, p. 5). Food deserts are also characterized as areas with poor public transportation, high minority representation and where inhabitants may have limited time or mobility (Gallagher, 2006; Larson et al.; 2008, Apparicio et al. 2007). In addition to limited accessibility, healthy food often costs significantly more in food deserts.

Mary Gallagher of Chicago's Public Health Department assesses the severity of food deserts using the "food balance score" or the ratio of the distance to closest supermarket divided by the distance to closest fast food. (Gallagher, 2006). The greater the food balance score above '1', the more problematic the food desert. The Chicago-based study found that individuals living in communities with high food balance scores are more likely to die prematurely from diabetes, cardio vascular disease and cancer. Furthermore, African American communities in Chicago have an average food balance score of 3.37, meaning they are much more likely to suffer from associated problems. (Gallagher, 2006).

Social Justice activists often blame the ‘visibility’ of food banks in the GTA for preventing the government from taking policy-based action to solve the underlying structural causes hunger and poverty. According to Rideout et al., “non-governmental and civil society organizations have become part of the problem because of proliferation of charitable ‘solutions’ has shifted the policy debate from one of rights to one of benevolence” (2007, p.570).

The results of the Ontario’s ‘Nutritious Food Basket’ survey provide additional proof the problems associated with increased food bank use. The Nutritious Food Basket is a survey of 66 ‘healthy’ foods conducted by nutritionists and Municipal Health Units to measure the cost of eating healthy in each jurisdiction in Ontario (MOH, 2008b). Taking into consideration the average lowest price of the 66 food items, Public Health Units provide citizens with a costing tool to calculate the minimum cost of food spending per household, taking age and gender into consideration (Health Canada, 2008). Although the costing tool has recently been adjusted for inflation and rising cost of living, Toronto’s Medical Officer of Health (MOH) has said “anyone living on social assistance or working for minimum wage cannot afford the nutritious foods required to maintain good health” (MOH, 2008b). For example, a family of four living on social assistance *should* spend roughly \$590.00 on healthy food per month. However, when the average cost of a three-bedroom apartment (\$1,270.00/month) is subtracted from the average income (\$1,7820.00/month), the family is left with \$507.00 for all other expenses (Health Canada, 2008). Furthermore the Nutritious Food Basket does not include cleaning and household supplies or prepared deli food, and does not take into consideration individual

metabolic differences, dietary restrictions or cultural food preferences.

Despite the disheartening state of the *distanced* food system, there is an opportunistic awareness brewing among food, social justice and environmental activists across Canada. According to Koc et al., Canadian civil service organizations have “played a vital role in serving their targeted communities and advocating for their interests...(as) the backbone of social movements” assisted by egalitarian Canadian social climates (2008, p. 125). Throughout my Major Research Project report, I will fully explore one growing avenue for civil response: Food Policy Councils.

1.2 Brief analysis of Canadian Food and Agricultural Policy

In order to successfully intervene, food system proponents must have a comprehensive understand the Canadian Food and Agricultural Policy (CFAP) framework, and how its flaws have opportunistically allowed for the inclusion of new voices. Several Canadian scholars fault government structures’ inability to move beyond historical agricultural policy frameworks as a root cause of the lack of a joined-up CFAP. ⁵ In multiple pieces of literature, Rod MacRae argues that most CFAP and regulations “remain rooted in a traditional food-safety and fraud-prevention framework” (MacRae, 1999b., p.1). Early policies limited the government’s influence over consumer food choice and primarily focused on protecting market players from third party deceit (Hedley, 2006).

Furthermore, a focus on large, industrial and non-diversified agriculture after WWII resulted in CFAP that promotes food being seen as a “commodity” rather than as part of a larger system. Similarly, the belief that a free-market economy will be the sole alleviator

of drastic agricultural fluctuation has been the “predominant determinant of [the federal governments] approach to agricultural development” (MacRae and TFPC, 1999a., p.188). The consequences of these circumstances have resulted in Departments of Agriculture who have no existing policy implementation framework to solve larger food and agriculture issues.

Building off the above rationale, Douglas Hedley argues that CFAP has historically focused solely on the supply-side of food and agriculture at the expense of informed demand. According to Hedley, Canadian consumers are conditioned to desire cheap food from around the world as an expression of their participation in the market economy. Government priorities in ensuring (the illusion of) “consumer choice” can be illustrated by the writing of John Stuart Mill and his 19th century view on the role of government. Agricultural policies were originally positioned to protect market participants against fraud and to allow consumers to be “free agents” of choice (Hedley, 2006). Although arguably pure in motivation, when amalgamated with Keynesian principals of government intervention to prevent market failure (1930’s), the effects of uneducated consumer choice have caused unforeseen consequences on human health, the environment and the global south. Although the idea of supporting local and sustainable farmers is catching hold in Southern Ontario, policies and structures make it difficult for producers to respond to consumer demand.

Aside from the overarching structural problems, the lack of CFAP must also be examined according to jurisdictional responsibility. According to MacRae and the TFPC, federal

and provincial bodies control the majority of agricultural policy-creation (MacRae and TFPC, 1999). Related federal responsibilities related to the food sector include trade, national standard setting, social welfare programs and nationalized health care; the provincial governments oversee education, labor, land uses and agricultural acts, policies and programs (Koc, et. al, 2008). Furthermore, legislative and parliament authority is dispersed across both policy systems, making it incredibly difficult to distribute food-related responsibility and funding decided upon at either level of government. According to Hedley, there is “no traditional or current common institutional arrangement linking the institutions which share responsibility for the range of issues involved in regulating consumer choice in food, food products or productions processes” (Hedley, 2006, p.23).

1.3 A short introduction to Food Policy Councils

How does the consumer find a sense of agency within the *distanced* food system given the restrictive CFAP framework? One such model for citizen engagement, argues Food First and the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC), is through the introduction of Food Policy Councils (FPCs) to municipal, county or state-level policy discussions (CFSC, 2009a.). “A FPC consists of a group of representatives and stakeholders from many sectors of the food system... ideally representing production, consumption, processing, distribution and waste recycling” (Food First, 2009a., p.2). Since the first North American FPC was created in Knoxville Tennessee in the late 1980’s, researches have concluded that there is not *one* model for FPC success (Tanaka, 2006). However, FPCs are generally understood to have four functions which include (Food First, 2009a.,

p.2)”:

- 1) Serving as forums for discussing food issues
- 2) Fostering coordination between sectors in the food system,
- 3) Evaluating and influencing policy
- 4) Launching or supporting programs and services that address local needs

There are several structural variables that affect the ability of a FPC to fulfill the above functions including connection to representative government, jurisdictional representation, resources and community support (MacRae 2010, Dahlberg 1994).

Chapter 2 of my MRP will assess the current-roles, structure and challenges of FPCs, supported by the perspectives of several FPC representatives in Toronto and across North America. ⁶ Chapter 2 will also include an in-depth case study of the Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC), which is continually referred to as the “best funded and best resourced” FPC in the world (Roberts, 2010, personal communication - January).

The expertise of the TFPC has been successful at fostering support for a food system that is nutritious, accessible, regionally focused and environmentally conscious. This model, despite its successes, has neglected to represent the voices Youth who will carry the burden of our broken food system into the future. According to Statistics Canada, in 2001 there were over 300,000 Youth ages 15-24 living in Toronto, a number that increased by 3.5 percent from the 1996 census (Toronto Public Health, 2001). This is a significant

⁶ Dr. Wayne Roberts is cited in three various capacities throughout my MRP – 1) personal interview, 2) personal communication – month XXX, and 3) presentation – month XXX.

number of Torontonians who are underrepresented in municipal public policy and planning, despite a general belief that good policy is created when it incorporates the voices of those it affects.

However, despite previously poor representation of Youth at the food policy table, food issues are in fact Youth issues! For example, as the average farmer in Ontario is in his mid-50's, while only nine percent of Ontario's farmers are below the age of 35 (Seccombe, 2008, p.6). No matter how strong the urban infrastructure, the sprawling City of Toronto cannot support itself on a regionally based food system if there are no new farmers. According to Daily Bread, in 2009 35 percent of Toronto's food bank users are below the age of 18 (Daily Bread Food Bank, 2009). This is a significant number of children and teenagers who soon will be fending for and feeding themselves. In addition, the proliferation of pseudo foods, marketing and generational deskilling have led to sky rocketing rates of obesity, food allergies and Type 2 Diabetes.

After spending the summer of 2009 consulting with interested Youth and organizations as part of my field experience with the TFPC, Ryerson Graduate Student Ashley Andrade and I decided to build upon the momentum of Toronto's Youth food movement and form as a legitimate voice. On September 9th, 2009, the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council (TYFPC) formally addressed the above issues at Toronto City Hall, and proposed a formal working relationship with the TFPC. As far as we know, the TYFPC is the first FPC organized by and for Youth.

CHOMP Journalist Katrina Rozal recalls the TYFPC's introduction in her article

"Toronto: Home of the World's First Youth Food Policy Council" (2009):

"With no more Chairs left, some people stood in the doorway and others sat on a

carpeted floor. The room's capacity was violating the fire code. This is how the world's first Youth food policy Council made its City hall debut – in the company of City Councilors, food banks workers and eager Youth Toronto foodies. On September 9th, 2009, Toronto became the first City with a (Food Policy) Council responsible for putting the Youth perspective at the municipal level of Canada's largest City'.

The TYFPC seeks to mobilize and engage Youth to make change by building a just food system by 1) providing an open space for Youth to network, learn from on another and share opportunities, and 2) becoming the leading Youth voice in municipal food policy Chapter 3 of my MRP will report and analyze first year of the ground-breaking TYFPC, Chapter 4 will highlight challenges of the TYFPC model, and Chapter 5 will discuss the to the future of Youth engagement in food policy. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are told from the experiences Toronto Youth Food Policy Council Members.

1.4 Research questions, methods, application and purpose

Throughout my involvement as Chair of the TYFPC and as a Member of the TFPC, I have studied the intersecting relationship between two central questions; 1) How FPCs in North America have addressed the *distancing* of the food system and provided citizens with agency, and, 2) Why Youth voices must be a larger part of the food policy discussion. In answering these questions I hope to understand the structural possibilities

and challenges faced by Youth and existing FPCs, as Youth inclusion within the CFAP framework becomes more universal.

The design of my research is based upon principles of co-operative inquiry, which assume that all people are self-determining separate entities that make independent choices based upon their perceived perception of the world (Reason, 1994). Because humans therefore are the cause of their own action, special consideration must be taken in researching the evolution of human process. In his book, “Participation in Human Inquiry”, Peter Reason claims “persons can only study persons when they are in active relationship with each other, where the behavior being researched is self-generated by the researchers in a context of co-operation” (1994, p.41). Therefore, my research, as the Chair of the TYFPC and a Member of the TFPC, is in context of working relationships with fellow Council Members and activists in Toronto’s food community.

The participatory process is essentially “research *with* people rather than research *on* people (Reason, 1994, p.1). The perspectives and contextual realities of TYFPC Members have been instrumental in forming this report. The unfolding story of the TYFPC is a collaborative effort between Youth who built the autonomously-functioning Council structure during the 2009-2010 Council term.⁷ The perceptions of the Council Members have been captured by my extensive interview process - from February to June 2010, I conducted and analyzed several primary interviews including:

⁷ Several of the interviewees were interviewed on more than one occasion, or their insight was recorded through personal conversation. This distinction is indicated either by the type of communication (i.e. personal communication or personal interview) and the month correspondence took place (i.e. John Doe, 2010, personal communication – May).

- Six Founding Council Members (FCM) of the TYFPC
- Three New Council Members (NCM) of the TYFPC
- Three present or current Staff Members of the TFPC
- One Community Member of the TYFPC
- One Event Coordination and Project Management Committee Member
- One Council Member of the TFPC
- One FPC Scholar
- One Co-Chair of the Vancouver FPC
- One organizer of the Oakland FPC
- One Organizer of the North Carolina State FPC

The majority of interviews with TFPC/TYFPC Members were roughly thirty minutes in length in an environment of the interviewees' choice. A sample of interview questions can be found in the Appendix. The remaining interviews were conducted by email during the spring of 2010. Although each interviewee chose to be identified by name, participants were given the option of anonymity in the informed consent process. It is important to recognize that the interview process only reflects a narrow window of the TYFPC's evolution. Furthermore, since this research reflects the first year of the TYFPC's development, there are likely to be key variables that will shape the future TYFPC that are not accounted for in this report.

Personally, the interview process was an incredibly rewarding experience. Throughout

the process, Council Members demonstrated high levels of shared commitment, responsibility and understanding of the role of the TYFPC. Although Council Members have developed friendships with one another, it was apparent that their relationships were built upon a mutual respect in an environment where constructive criticism was appropriate for both personal and group development. According to a February 7th entry of my research journal (2010):

“Interviews with Council Members have provided me with empowering reinforcement, it appears as though the FCM have internalized the Council structure and realized its potential... the shared sense of prideful accomplishment is universal”.

An analysis of the participatory research process is found in the attached MRP Product 1, which outlines theory and practice of Open Space Technology (OST). In addition, to display the chronological intersection of the participatory process and my research on the TYFPC, MRP Product 2 is an in-depth timeline of the TYFPC’s evolution. Finally, from September 2009 to March 2010, I actively recorded my thoughts and observations in a research journal. Although the composition of entries was discontinued upon the early stages of writing (April 2010), my research journal provides a critical examination into the formation of the TYFPC’s structure. I have transcribed selected entries of my research journal which is comprised in Product 3. Finally, following Products 1, 2, and 3 is a supplementary Appendix which contains:

- Research process material
- Media coverage
- Structural components
- Council outputs
- Community meeting components
- Event Coordination material

It is my hope that the TYFPC becomes an inspirational model for other groups of Youth wanting for actualize similar initiatives. Since the incorporation of the TYFPC, several other FPCs have expressed interest or acted upon similar Youth-based initiatives including FPCs in Calgary, Oakland, North Carolina, and soon to be Durham FPC.

Similarly to ‘Adult’ Food Policy Councils, I believe there is not *one* recipe for success, but I recognize that the TYFPC has benefited immensely from the reciprocal relationship with the Toronto Food Policy Council.

1.5 Declaration of conflict of interest

Throughout the evolution of my research questions, it has become increasingly clear that my MRP places me in a rather delicate situation. The TYFPC developed out of my work in a summer Field Experience with the TFPC and Toronto Public Health. Since the Council’s incorporation I have served as the Acting ‘Chair’, overseeing the TYFPC’s

organization including operations, structure and Council Membership. ⁸Rebecca Schiff claims that Chairpersons act as “facilitators and sometimes liaisons between Staff and Members” (2007, p.280). Rod MacRae further emphasizes the importance of the Chair. “The style and skill of the Chair is particularly critical in the early stages, as the (FPC) is growing” (MacRae, 2010 – personal interview). MacRae claims that the Chair generally takes on more responsibility than should be placed on one individual, despite the general assumption that Chairpersons “are not expected to participate in subcommittees and additional work” (Schiff, 2007, p.280).

However, with my more recent involvement as *researcher* of the TYFPC, I now juggle three distinct and autonomous roles. Through understanding this conflict of interest, I recognize that as *organizer* and *Chair*, I may potentially influence the outcome of my Research. In order to minimize the effects that the three roles have on one another, I have taken the following precautionary measures:

- Maintained a thorough and comprehensive research journal, in which I have deciphered my role as Chair/Organizer and as Researcher.
- Conducted interviews with six Founding Council Members (FCM) and three New Council Members (NCM), in order to understand their perspective and involvement with the TYFPC.
- Met with my graduate supervisor, Rod MacRae, on a bi-weekly basis to monitor the effects of my conflict of interest.

⁸ Rebecca Schiff is cited in two capacities throughout my MRP – 1) as an academic, and, 2) through personal interview.

- Enrolled and completed “Facilitation in Environmental Studies”, in which I studied Participatory Research and Open Space Technology as theory and practice. The results of this study will be explored in MRP Product 1.
- Facilitated an Open Space Technology event for the February 1st meeting of the TYFPC Community, on the topic - “What is *unique* to the Youth food experience”
- Demonstrated how my research and evolution of the TYFPC were interwoven in the attached “Toronto Youth Food Policy Council: Timeline of evolution and research” document.

Although I have thoroughly contemplated the implications of my conflicted position, it is important to note that my work as Chair cannot be completely separated from the research outcome. In addition, given the nature of my collaborate research; I recognize that the story of the TYFPC must be told from the perspectives of those involved. Therefore, rather than describing the TYFPC as a research subject (‘they’) and myself as the researcher (‘I’), I will refer to the group as a natural whole (‘we’ or ‘us’).

Chapter 2: Food Policy Councils

“You don’t build gardens with fences”

- Will Allen

2.1 The Food Policy Council: A Food System Approach

As discussed in Chapter 1, the ‘food system’ is a highly integrated and cyclical web that describes foods journey from a seed in the soil to the waste that is discarded at the end of its nutrient cycle (Kneen, 1993). The food system includes a diverse range of human stakeholders who act as producers, processors, distributors, waster removers, and of course, consumers of food (Food First, 2009a.). In fact, one in eight Canadians is employed by the food system, and when you consider it further; every human actively participates as a consumer (AAFC, 2007).

Chapter 1 of my MRP focused on the systematic *distancing* of our highly privatized food system that has demanded stakeholder intervention to address and respond to the existing dominant framework. For decades, these flaws have been highly compartmentalized and dealt with by a fragmented range of agencies and non-profit organizations at various levels of state and local government (Food First, 2009a.). However, more recently, the food system has welcomed a new stakeholder player through the birth of the Food Policy Council (FPC). According to Food First’s recent report entitled “Food Policy Councils: Lessons Learned (2009a.):

“Food Policy Councils began as a way to address the food system as a whole, often bringing the weight of local, county or state government behind grassroots initiatives. FPCs work across sectors, engaging with government policy and programs, grassroots/non-profit projects, local business and food workers. Instead of many advocates working on the isolated symptoms of a failing food system, FPCs attempt to establish platforms for coordinated action at the local level”.

Researcher Rebecca Schiff, who interviewed 13 FPC organizers for her dissertation in the late 2000’s, claims that through the inclusion of a range of stakeholders, FPCs develop a diversity of approaches that ‘may not have been created without the synergistic effects of cross-sectoral communication’ (Schiff, personal interview, 2010). According to Wayne Roberts, Manager of the Toronto Food Policy Council, FPCs wear three hats simultaneously – that of *critic*, *intervener* and *advocate* (2010, presentation - January). As a *critic*, FPCs see the inherent faults of the present food system. *Interveners*, then, move the *critic* from being oppositional to propositional, while relating the regions’ problems to the food activists’ problems. And finally, FPCs act as *advocates*, working towards what must be done (Roberts, 2010, presentation - January).

FPCs are increasingly being seen as a ‘hub’ for food system activism and change.

Throughout Chapter 2, I will analyze the roles and structures of FPCs to better understand my experiences and observations of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council as my Major Research Project in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York

University. Given the recent innovation of the FPC concept, Chapter 2 will be informed by numerous sources including third party reports, academic research, existing FPC websites and documents, interviews with FPC Staff/Members and TYFPC Members, and direct observation as a voting member of the Toronto Food Policy Council. Specifically, Chapter 2 will further explore the FPC concept, structure, historical context, roles, and the challenges faced by FPCs as an actor within a system. I will conclude Chapter 2 with a case study of the Toronto Food Policy Council, by which I will uphold the TFPCs reputation as a highly functional and influential FPC.

It is important to note that, although Chapter 1 highlighted food and agricultural policy flaws in a Canadian context, Chapter 2 contains examples of FPC in both Canada and the United States.⁹ Given the general roles of the FPC and each Councils unique connection to its foodshed, I think it is relevant to discuss similarities and differences across a range of North American FPCs. In addition, the Toronto Food Policy Council often serves as a consultant for FPCs across the continent, and therefore the TFPCs response is not entirely specific to the CFAP framework.

Although I provide several broad examples of structurally successful FPCs in Chapter 2, as a recently appointed member of the TFPC and close colleague of Members and Staff, my accumulated knowledge of the TFPC is frequently reflected upon throughout this Chapter in the form of observations and specific examples.

⁹ A 'sustainable foodshed' is defined as a "regional form that meets local food needs, is energetically productive, and is ecologically and socially resilient" (Richardson, 2010, p.ii)

Jurisdictional Representation

Every functioning Food Policy Council began as a group of food-sector representatives that formed to address a specific set of consequences associated with the broken food system. Furthermore, “the majority of FPCs were founded as a result of grass roots organizing and networking” which varies depending on their jurisdictional reach. (Food First, 2009a., p.25) Most FPCs can be classified as representing state, county or local interests. Council formation can either take place through on-the-ground initiatives or by political instigation; the majority of state FPCs are a result of government action, while local and county FPC are generally a result of grassroots organizing (Food First, 2009a.).

As discussed below, Canadian FPCs commonly operate within a local or regional jurisdiction. Municipal governments are a local government created by the province to make policy, raise issues and oversee the implementation of policy. Since, in theory, municipal governments work within a defined context, the provincial government can ensure issues are handled successfully under local control. ‘Councils’, then, are the link between policy recommendations and the administration and generally are comprised of sector experts (Plunkett, 2010).

¹⁰ Although there are several FPCs in the U.S. that function on a state-level, Canadian FPCs are primarily local in nature. Schiff believes that the state-wide FPC seems to be an achievable tactic for scaling-out the FPC model in the United States. However the

¹⁰ Canadian FPCs are primarily local in nature, with the exception of the province of Nova Scotia, where 2009 Food Summit organizers were discussing the creation of Canada’s first provincial FPC.

difference in ‘political systems between the US and Canada is such that establishing a provincial FPC seems more difficult and perhaps less desirable for several reasons’ (Schiff, 2010, personal interview). Schiff claims the primary reason is the scale and scope of Canadian provincial governments (2010, personal interview). Since provincial governments have wider geographic coverage, corporate interests and the federal government may observe their activities as rigorously when compared to the state government. As a result, ‘given the difficulties encountered by FPCs in terms of corporate opposition, there seems to be greater likelihood of corporate pushback, opposition, and co-optation at the provincial level’ (Schiff, 2010, personal interview). Secondly, provincial governments tend to ‘institutionalize departments and programs within ministries’, while state governments are more likely to support the work of ‘ad-hoc committees’ with smaller foci resulting in a more accessible state level process (Schiff, 2010, personal interview). Given the restrictive nature of the provincial government, Schiff believes that a provincial ‘Department of Food’ would be more successful within the Canadian framework, provided it ‘maintain transparency in terms of its relationship with corporate food interests’ and maintain the autonomy from the federal government as a result of existing jurisdictional divisions (2010, personal interview).

The need for cross-departmental collaboration towards the creation of a ‘Department of Food’ is a result of the institutionalized failings of the food and agricultural policy framework. Specifically in Canada, where provincial and federal governments have distinct and separate responsibilities executing policy, the current framework has developed “along commodity lines not for the food system” (MacRae, 1998, p.188).

Therefore, argue MacRae and the TFPC, there are no existing mechanisms to address large and cross-departmental agricultural debates such as land use, regional procurement or the connection between food availability and health. Instead, the government's framework focuses on "specific dimensions of a technology or process, and no units take responsibility for the macro-policy questions that might confront the traditional reliance on the market to solve problems (1998, p. 190-191).

Brief History

The number of local Food Policy Councils in commission is on the rise. However, the multi-stakeholder body got a modest start in Knoxville Tennessee in the late 1970's. In 1977, Robert Wilson and his graduate students at the University of Tennessee's Graduate School of Planning, conducted a ten-week examination of the Knoxville community food supply (Becker, 1982). Their report entitled "Food Distribution and Consumption in Knoxville" identified poor food accessibility among low-income populations within the Knoxville regional foodshed (Tanaka, 2006). When President Reagan cut federal food stamps and school food programs, the Knoxville-Knoxville-Knox County Action Committee conducted a second study that focused further on food access and equity issues (Food First, 2009a.). In 1982, when Knoxville hosted the World's Fair, the two groups made a joint proposal to the Mayor that outlined two 'major concerns – food access and hunger in the inner-City, and lack of coordination of food system planning' (Food First, 2009a., p.17). With endorsement from the Knoxville City Council, the City unanimously adopted *Resolution R-202-81*, which boldly stated "local government has a

proper role to play in ensuring that all citizens have access to an adequate and nutritious food” (Tanaka, 2006; Becker, 1982, p.1). The following year, the Knoxville-Knox County Action Committee recommended the creation of the Knoxville Food Policy Council (Tanaka, 2006). In the past three decades, the Knoxville FPC has overseen the development of a food monitoring system, creation of a School Nutrition Education Supervisor, and access to full-service grocery via public transit (Food First, 2009a). In 2001, the Knoxville FPC was expanded to include the entire county and is now referred to as Knoxville-Knox County Food Policy Council. To date, the City of Knoxville allocates \$4,000.00 yearly to the administration of the FPC, while Staff salaries are generally supported by grants (Southern SWANK, 2005).

Similarly to Knoxville, the first waves of local FPCs in North America were created to address issues of food accessibility as a result of cuts in social welfare programs. In 1984, U.S. *Conference of Mayors* brought together five entrepreneurial City mayors who sought to examine ‘issues related to food and nutrition and the feasibility of launching municipal food policy’ (Clancy et. al., 2007, p.123). Although two of the five municipal representatives were unsuccessful in establishing subsequent FPCs, the conference was pivotal for highlighting the connection between Council based-intuitions and governments.

In 1994, Kenneth Dahlberg from Western Michigan University conducted one of the first studies on local FPCs entitled ‘Food Policy Councils: The Experience of Five Cities and One County’. The study focused on the actions of FPCs in Charleston, SC; Kansas City,

MO; Knoxville, TN; Onondaga County, NY; Philadelphia PA; and St. Paul, MN (Dahlberg, 1994). Rod MacRae, first Coordinator of the Toronto Food Policy Council, claims that Dahlberg's study was critical because up until that point, FPCs were not necessarily sharing resources or best practices with one another. "Dahlberg ended up being the glue that held the early FPCs together because he was communicating with all of them" (MacRae, 2010, personal interview).

The issues commonly addressed by FPCs have also progressed to mimic the evolution of the food movement. In the 1970's and 1980's, key issues included rising food prices, increased consumer knowledge and the oil crisis. In addition, there was a "fresh sensibility to food that was engendered by the back to-the-land enthusiasts of the 1960's [which] eventually combined with the interest in sustainable agriculture of the 1980's" (Clancy et al., 2007, p.125). Anti-hunger and poverty activists were brought into the equation during the Reagan era program cuts, followed by massive farm bankruptcies and a general increased environmental awareness. In the 1990's the rise in participatory democracy, backlash to globalization and free trade agreements, continued to bring in new sectors of activists into the food movement (Clancy et al., 2007).

The resulting system-oriented focus of the food movement, combined with an increase in funding, social networking and social consciousness, drastically increased the number of FPCs in operation during the 1990's and 2000's. According to a recent census conducted by CFSC, there are 98 FPCs in North America, 12 are recognized in Canada (Mark Winne, 2010, personal correspondence). The census number indicates a 300percent

increase in the number of FPCs indicated by Rebecca Schiff during her dissertation research of the mid-2000's (Schiff, 2007, p.83).

An increase in government funding and organizational resources has also supported the expansion of the FPC model. FPCs in the United States have seen additional sources of funding specifically through the United State's Department of Agriculture's Community Food Project's Grant, Risk Management Assessment, and the Drake University Agricultural Law Center's State and Local Food Policy Council Project (Schiff, 2007). The CFSC orchestrates the National Food Policy Program, which according to the CFSC website 'supports the development and operation of current and emerging Food Policy Councils' in the U.S. and Canada.

2.2 Defining and Identifying the 'Food Policy Council'

The term 'Food Policy Council' is met with some confusion, in fact, quite often FPC Members or Staff persons question the overall appropriateness of the term (Schiff, 2007, 2008). However, before analyzing the concept of a 'Food Policy Council', it is important to understand the definition of both 'policy' and 'food policy'. According to Rebecca Schiff, "'Policy' can be understood as a statement or plan of government, business, private sector organizations, or individuals intended to determine or guide decisions and actions" (2007, p.175-176). 'Food Policy', then refers specifically to guiding plans or statements related directly to the food system described in Chapter 1. Food First elaborates by stating 'Food Policy' refers to the 'actions and *inactions* of government that

influence the supply, quality, price, production, distribution, and consumption of food (2009a., p.1). Increasingly, what government bodies *don't do* in terms of equitable food accessibility, appropriateness and nutritional advancement has instrumental consequences on all actors within the food supply.

While the term 'food policy' may be indicative of its meaning, the term 'food policy Council' remains problematic. After conducting thirteen interviews with FPC coordinators and Staff Members, Rebecca Schiff reinforced the conceptual ambiguity of the FPC. One interviewee claimed that 'FPC' was valuable when the concept was initially made a reality, however, the term has since become so highly used that it would be problematic to rename now. Although the majority of stakeholder groups have maintained the FPC title, others have use different or arguably more appropriate names. For example, comparable organizations have taken up 'food systems Council', 'food security Council' or replaced 'Council' with terms like 'committee', 'alliance' or 'advisory group' (Schiff, 2008). In addition, 'food policy coalition' is frequently used, however 'coalition' implies that individual Members are 'expected to represent an organization's or interest group's point of view' (Schiff, 2008, p. 209). This could potentially impede organizational efficiency because Members often have to delay decisions until they can go back to their sponsoring organizations for an okay.

In addition, the term 'Food Policy Council' can lead to greater confusion based upon the Councils primary function within the jurisdictions' food system. FPCs act in numerous capacities and still, only a hand full identify 'food policy' as being of primary operational

role. Rather than being advisory in nature, the majority of FPCs tend to focus on implementing programs or projects from within other organizational or government frameworks (Schiff, 2008). Food First reports that many new FPC ‘feel they need greater experience as a basis for proposing policy recommendations’ and therefore prioritize programming as a ‘one-time’ success or knowledge-generating exercise (2009a., p.3). Both functions are discussed in section 2.4

2.3. Starting a Food Policy Council

Although the need for systematic solutions has become increasingly apparent over the last half century, Clancy et al. claims that many FPC have foundational ‘idiosyncratic histories’ (2007, p. 125). For example, the formation of most local FPCs is often a result of a charismatic champion, key leader of core group of individuals at the grass roots level. State FPCs, on the other hand, frequently involve the organizing of political leaders in different bureaucratic contexts (Clancy et al., 2007). In the following section, I will elaborate on two particular tools for creating a FPC – Food System Analysis and Food Charter – and the creation of stakeholder food and agricultural task forces.

‘Task Forces’ are designed to evaluate the food system and make recommendations that usually include the creation of a FPC. The Las Angeles Food Policy Task Force, for example, came together in September of 2009 at the 30th anniversary celebration of the City’s first farmers market. The task force began working with Roots of Change, a statewide non-profit organization, to build collaboration at the rural and urban level.

According to Alexa Delwiche, Coordinator of the task force, the two organizations worked together to (2010):

“Design a process by which the recommendations of the Task Force could be broadened and informed by the perspectives and insights of food system leaders from around the region. This dialogue inspired many recommendations, which seek to simultaneously improve public health, the economy, equity, and the environment in urban and rural communities”.

Among the recommendations presented to the Mayor of Los Angeles in June of 2010 was the proposed creation of a FPC, comprised of civic leaders and stakeholders, with an appropriate structure that would benefit the City, county and regional food shed (Delwiche, et. al., 2010). According to Delwiche the task force has a lot of political and organizational barriers to work through, but she is confident that after a year of “building momentum they can build something innovative that works for L.A.” (2010, personal interview).

Part of getting to know the regions’ food reality may also involve the FPC or task force conducting a Food System Assessment. According to Food First, Food System Assessments (FSA) ‘Illustrate gaps, assets and opportunities in the food system (2009a., p.32). This generally involves examining the functionality of production, distribution, processing, and food waste recovery. Given that FSA may indicate particular levers for action within a food system, they can be used by any number of stake holders including

non-profits, policy makers, residents, educators, law makers and often serve as a platform for the emergence of a Food Policy Council itself (Food First, 2009a.).

Many FPCs have made FSA available on their website. For example, in 2005, Vancouver's Department of Social Planning, Center for Sustainable Community Development, and the Environmental Youth Alliance conducted a FSA that enriched regional food system thinking the purpose of the FSA was to (Barbolet et. al., 2005, p.4):

- “1) Develop an assessment of food security in Vancouver by examining the availability, accessibility and acceptability of food provided through the charitable, community and retail food sectors,
- 2) Explore how the food system in Vancouver might be transformed through proactive community economic development and promotion of policies that build food system sustainability for all residents,
- 3) Provide information and recommendations to inform and support the work of the Vancouver FPC and other agencies engaged in food-related work in the City”.

After the FSA was compiled, 24 recommendations were made to improve the vitality of the food system, including five that specifically addressed the Vancouver Food Policy Council. The recommendations included that the Vancouver FPC continue to monitor the City's food supply, promote sustainable food procurement at the Vancouver Olympics, include the purchasing of local foods in the City's ethical procurement policy, expand the role of urban agriculture in City development and map bio-regional supply

side factors (2005, p.42-43). Vancouver FPC Co-Chair Brett Mansfield says that the FPC is now “completing some research that builds on some of the work of the FSA, as well as other data available from other partner organizations” (2010, personal interview).

A second and common first step of a new FPC is to oversee the development of a Food Charter (FC). According to Food First (2009a., p.32):

“A Food Charter seeks to enlist community Members in an effort to affect change within a food system and give voice to residents in the debate of what strategies policy makers should pursue in making their food systems healthier and more accessible”.

The Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives outlines several additional purposes for Food Charters. First, a FC requires that the local government assess obstacles, barriers and challenges to food security in their regions foodshed. This generally includes an in-depth look at the levers available within both civil society and the community. Second, a FC provides implemental strategies that institutions can follow to address their unique food policy goals. The creation of unanimous strategies also creates cooperative alliances across the various sectors of the food system. Finally, a FC allows for citizens to gather as a formal mobilized voice within the municipal government (Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives, 2004).

As described above, FCs are a powerful tool because they are written from a real community perspective instead of one person with a particular interest or viewpoint (Alam, 2010, personal interview). The New Orleans Food Charter is an excellent example of the documents' ability to rebuild a community. After Hurricane Katrina left 200,000 residents stranded in 2005, the Charter illustrated to the New Orleans's City Council "how to rebuild the City with a thriving local food system as a central planning goal" (Food First, 2009a., p.32). Furthermore the New Orleans FC outlines six strategies to ensure equitable access including recognizing the City's unique heritage and food traditions (2008).

Toronto became the first City in Canada to adopt a FC in 2001, following work by the Toronto Food Policy Council and FoodShare of Toronto (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives - SK, 2004).¹¹ According to TFPC Staff member, Yusuf Alam the fact that Toronto has a Charter continually sets the City apart from other large North American hubs. The document provides the City Councils' basic framework for addressing the cities unique needs and is supported by "ten reasons why Toronto supports food security". For example, the Toronto Food Charter boldly states that (2001):

"Food Security makes the City more affordable... Food Security saves on medial care... Food Security means every child gets a head start... Food Security is good business..."

¹¹ Alam and I worked very closely throughout the first year of the TYFPC. He is therefore cited in two capacities throughout my MRP – 1) personal interview, and, 2) personal communication – month XXX

Almost immediately following the creation of Toronto's Food Strategy, Saskatoon, SA (2002), Kamloops, BC (2002) Prince Albert, SA (2003) and Vancouver (2007) created FCs (Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives, 2004; CFSC) Manitoba became the first province to pass Food Charter in 2006 (Peasgood, 2006).

Both Food Charters and the Food System Assessments attempt gather a critical mass of food-system and community enthusiasts and define the strengths and weaknesses of the food system. However, to date, there is little documented evidence to confirm the tangible outcome of both documents. Moreover, limited access to resources may inhibit the documents from fully actualizing themselves within the community they examine. For example, although the Vancouver FSA was funded by Western Economic Diversification Canada, it was a partnership between three existing organizations including representatives of the Vancouver FPC (Barbolet et. al., 2005). Conversely, if FSAs are being used to justify the necessity of a FPC within a given area, it is unlikely that FSAs will be funded given budgetary constraints of most FPCs (see Section 2.5)

Although the Toronto Food Charter directly acknowledges and defines 'Food Security', its actual ability to uphold authority is unlikely. ¹²This is because in Canada the Food Charter is not 'justiciable', or it does not give citizens the 'right to a judicial or other effective remedy when their rights have been violated' (Rideout et. al., 2007, p. 568). According to Rideout et. al., the inability of citizens to challenge legal ambiguities in relation to food are a result the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and its prioritization of civil and political rights at the expense of economic, social and cultural

¹² In Canada, the 'right to food' also remains unjusticiable.

rights (2007). The historical social implications of this decision, which mimicked the United Nation's 1951 International Bill of Human Rights, have had been exasperated with the break down of the social safety net in the 1990's and the institutionalization of food banks to treat the symptoms of hunger (Rideout et. al, 2007). Therefore, while it provides a unified community-oriented vision, the actual ability of citizens to use a FC to legally uphold their rights is unlikely.

2.4 Structure and Roles of the Food Policy Council

Although Food First's study indicated there is "no one recipe for a successful Council", Rod McRae (2010) and Kenneth Dahlberg (1994) claimed that the success of a FPC is largely dependent on the Council's structure and the way it engages with the jurisdictional authority of other levels of government (2009a., p.6). In Dahlberg's 1994 research, he states several 'reasonably firm conclusions regarding the various factors that influence success or failure' of a FPC (1994, p.7). In his research of six early FPCs, Dahlberg found FPCs are generally more successful if they have a stronger connection to the Mayor or a more formal relationship with the respective government. Furthermore, the more institutionalized the Council, the more likely it is to have Staff support, operating budget and political support. Secondly, Dahlberg found that the most effective FPCs traditionally operate in smaller cities given the difficulties associated with gathering large and inclusive groups of sector representatives in greater urban environments. In addition, successful FPCs require the dynamic combination of dedicated and skillful individuals with the blending of private and public sectors

involvement. Finally, Dahlberg claimed that a successful FPC does not place too much emphasis on hunger issues, particularly if the FPC is unable to target and work to eradicate the structural forces of poverty (Dahlberg, 1994). Several of the above components are elaborated upon in sections 2.4 and 2.5.

The ability of a FPC to achieve the above structural recommendations greatly affects its functioning capacity. With an optimally functioning structure, the formal role of a FPC is to ‘identify and propose innovative solutions to improve local or state food system, spurring local economic development and making food systems more environmentally sustainable and socially just’ (Food First, 2009a., p.2). Wayne Roberts compares the role of a FPC to a “Swiss Army knife of the food movement” - it can serve several functions independently and simultaneously (Roberts, 2010, personal interview).

Although the Swiss Army knife’s role may be understood by FPC representatives or those closely connected to the affiliated institution, the tangibility of FPCs may be misunderstood beyond the inner circle. From personal conversations with persons in the food movement, even the most knowledgeable individuals report being confused about the actual responsibilities of a FPC. Founding TYFPC Council Member Emily Van Halem recalls having an evolving perception of the current Toronto Food Policy Council (2010, personal interview):

“In terms of food policy, my impression [of the TFPC’s role] has changed over

the years. At the beginning, it was like yes, this is where food policy comes from, and then I realized, we don't really have a [food] policy. Then I realized the TFPC publishes papers, or discussions around what policy should look like. And then more recently, I realized it seems misleading because when you put food and policy together it assumes power. Really [FPCs] serve more as a place for networking and as a hub for people working in food issues. They don't necessarily have the power that I once thought they had".

TYFPC Community Member Michelle German also finds the concept of FPCs to be ambiguous; "I would guess that FPC are almost like a lobbying group, with more community than government support" (2010, personal interview). TYFPC Council Member Hannah Lewis echoes German's comments, "I think I'm still a little confused about how much authority and voice the TFPC actually has" (2010, personal interview).

In an effort to better understand the FPC model and its potential to influence the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council, I have synthesized my research and observations on the distinct roles of FPCs. Although the 'specific functions of the Council are not necessarily clearly defined' (Food First, 2009a., p.6), I conclude that the majority of FPCs function in a capacity that can be described as falling under four major roles:

- Food Policy Councils as a facilitator of food system knowledge
- Food Policy Councils as a gatherer of food sector representation
- Food Policy Council as an advisor or recommender of sustainable food policy

- Food Policy Council as a incubator or supporter of community food programming

Quite often, the above roles are not stated in the Council’s founding documents or websites, but rather are a product of the overlapping ideologies of the organizations’ mandate. For example, according to the Calgary Food Policy Council’s website, a key principle for sustainable food system development is ‘Community Economic Development’ which states that “locally-based food systems enhance Calgary’s economy. [Furthermore] greater reliance on local food systems strengthens our local and regional economies, creates employment, and increases food security”. In working towards this principal, the CFPC was instrumental partner in bringing the Kingsland Farmers Market to Calgary in the spring of 2010. This outcome exemplifies the role a FPC as a as ‘creator of food programming’.

Still, the 100 Food Policy Councils in North America fulfill the above roles to varying degrees. For example, factors such as Staff support, funding, affiliation with government agencies, Membership make-up, the relative age and skill of the Council and Staff determine the overall success of the FPC. These factors affecting FPCs structural ability to achieve their mandates are further explored in section 2.4. In the following section I will elaborate on the four roles further and provide an example of a FPC that has exemplified the roles’ execution.

FPC as a Gatherer of Food Sector Representatives...

According to Clancy et al., FPCs have “emerged over the last two decades as a potentially useful tool in shaping state and local policy agendas to support sustainable food system goals” (2007, p.121). As such, the FPC serves as a gatherer of food system representatives from across a spectrum of sectors including production, consumption, processing, distribution and waste recycling and frequently designated political representatives (Food First, 2009a.; Clancy et. al., 2000)

Each member brings a network of food system knowledge that allows FPC Members to draw connections across their individual interests. (Schiff, 2007). In her research, Rebecca Schiff found that several FPC respondents indicated that “information exchange and the networks created among Members through the operation of the FPC was one of the most valuable and lasting legacies of the organization” (2007, p.190). The majority of FPC representatives interviewed by Clancy et al. also claimed that the Council has been a successful facilitator of knowledge because of its ability to bring together an increased understanding among representatives. One interviewee said “the connections made around the table can lead to individual actions by the departments. There is a degree of coordination and new ideas that emerge from getting together monthly” (2007, p.132).

Several FPCs have representatives from specific agencies, departments, or even City Councilors, particularly if is a government-sanctioned bodies. This representation can be extremely applicable as it will increase “collaboration and effective interaction with those agencies [as compared to] Councils that have no formal government representatives

(Clancy et al., 2007, p.133). Clancy et al. provides a particular example from the Connecticut State FPC whereby a department commissioner was appointed to represent the State's Department of Transportation. Although this individual recalls being confused following the initial appointment, after the Council began to integrate transportation-related issues into their programming, the representative began to "appreciate the value of the Council's work" (Clancy et al., 2007, p.133).

This seems to be a positive trend; particularly in government sanctioned FPCs because it allows individuals from other departments to realize their influence and impact on the jurisdictional food supply. This collaboration moves the FPC closer to operating as a *hub* for food system thinking between and among municipal bodies such as public health, transit authorities, waste removal, park boards and conservation authorities. Furthermore, because municipal bodies fall under the control of both municipal and provincial policies, the Council as a 'hub' for food sector representatives allows for better public transparency across the foodshed (Plunkett, 2010).

In addition, Food First claims that FPCs create an informed "democratic space for convergence in diversity... which is linked to the specific places where people live, work and eat" (2009a., p.7). Democratizing the food system gives a voice to those who traditionally are left out of the discussion including minorities, low income and newcomer communities, or young people (Food First, 2009a.). Council Membership therefore should be representative of the community the FPC addresses, and will

generally result in inclusive discussions that are unlikely to happen elsewhere (Clancy, et al., 2007).

Wayne Roberts claims that the TFPC purposively created Membership positions for demographics commonly discriminated against. Guaranteed positions become a win-win scenario for both the Council as a whole and the diverse individual representative. For the Council, increased socio-economic, ethnic or gender diversity resulted in the FPC being seen as a more legitimate and representative voice to speak on behalf of a diverse food community. As a TFPC member, the representative person may become more highly integrated into the institution, which in turn, may open up career opportunities. Furthermore, since the FPC is a hub of food sector representatives, the remaining Members benefit from increased diversity as it may expand their individual networks or broaden their perspectives on the interconnectivity of individual efforts (Roberts, 2010, personal interview).

Having a wide range of sector representatives also often results in improved external programme effectiveness. While FPCs provide a forum for greater food system understanding amongst Members of diverse backgrounds, individuals are also able to build networks between the FPC and their respective organizations. Network-building capacities can further assist Members' constituencies with their own programming while providing recognition for member organizations (Schiff, 2007).

Although the range of Member expertise and constituencies contribute to the vibrancy and wholeness of the Council, the natural competing interests of Council Members often leads to constructive debate. For example, at a recent meeting of the TFPC, Council Members were divided based upon their perspectives of emergency food sources. While Members representing social justice sectors believed the Council should take a stance on the structural flaws of social assistance, Members representing the non-for-profit sector argued that citizens will always fall through the cracks and therefore will always need immediate sources of food. Still, proponents of community food security believed that Toronto's most vulnerable should be educated on growing and preparing their own food in order to be emancipated from a dependence on emergency food.

Still, while this debate is unlikely to be resolved in the course of an afternoon meeting, the FPC model serves as a platform for the generation of stakeholder action. Since issues surrounding hunger are not static given the realities of those living below the poverty line, the constructive debate allows Council Members (and the public observers) to consider the issue from different camps. This democratic discussion may eventually result in policy advisory positions or provide strategies to eradicate hunger. For example, stakeholder discussions of the Toronto Food Policy Council in the 1990's, resulted in the creation of the City Council's Food and Hunger and Action Committee, which produced two reports "Planting the Seeds" and "A Growing Season" in 2000 and 2001 respectively (TFPC website).

Successful Example: The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network and the Detroit Food Policy Council

The Detroit Food Policy Council developed from the recommendation of the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. A 2008 City Council referendum resulted in FPC Membership structure that ensured 12 positions for food-sector representatives and six seats for Detroit citizens. Furthermore statements such as “Detroit’s majority population must be represented at all levels and in all aspects of the food system” ... and that the cities “majority African American population is dependent on others to feed them”, ensured the FPC was democratically reflective of Detroit’s population (Food First, 2009a., p.36; The Detroit FPC Website, 2009).

Since the FPC Members represented the needs of Detroit’s vulnerable African American community, the Council more thoroughly considered the affects of relevant food constrains including price, access and transportation within these communities. This representation resulted in the recommending of action steps such as (Detroit Black Community Food Security Network Website, accessed 2010):

- Increasing the number of culturally appropriate food outlets within a reasonable distance in all Detroit neighborhoods
- Performing research on the type and location of food establishments and the extent to which these stores fulfill neighborhoods needs
- Creating mechanisms with store operators and the Michigan Dept of Agriculture Food Safety Inspection system to ensure that Detroit stores

comply with food safety codes and maintain clean and sanitary food preparation and sales environments within stores

- Ensuring that food stores carry a variety of fresh foods and food items for persons with special needs and chronic conditions

FPC as a Facilitator of Food System Knowledge...

FPCs gather a great deal of food system knowledge from ongoing and relevant dialogue between numerous stakeholder representations. This collective expertise allows a FPC to educate and communicate with the public on food system issues. According to Food First, 2009 the most successful FPCs affectively provide education to citizens and officials related to four roles discussed in this section; programming, policy, networking, and alternative food systems.

Rebecca Schiff claims that education occurs on two levels “1) education of Staff, Members and their constituents, and 2) education of entire communities including government agencies, businesses, community groups and individuals” (2007, p.204). Both levels involve distributing knowledge through multiple outlets including promotional booths, informational material, social media, and through electronic list-serves (Schiff, 2007). The TFPC, for example, has an active list-serve and *facebook* page which serve as forums for public-knowledge sharing regarding relevant issues. Although the distribution of list-serve material is controlled internally by TFPC Staff Members, the *facebook* page is available for community Members to share stories, opportunities or events pertaining to Toronto’s food movement. By posting messages on the *facebook*

wall, individuals can remain engaged with relevant policies, debates or news stories, or learn about upcoming events.

Moreover, FPCs raise awareness on food systems issues by providing citizens with a platform to get actively involved (Food First, 2009a.). Awareness-raising takes place at public meetings where FPCs invite outside presenters and share resources with participants and other Council Members (Schiff, 2007). Schiff claims that “the education, networking and communication that occurs through these avenues plays a more fundamental role in achieving a greater awareness and understanding of FPC concerns and activities (2007, p. 206).

From personal experience as a recently appointed member of the Toronto Food Policy Council and as a previous audience member, the TFPC meetings effectively bring together a critical mass of citizens who want to learn and feel connected to a larger movement. Although it is difficult to quantify the number of relationships sparked at this public forum, I observe these FPC networking sessions to accomplish three main tasks. First, individuals representing particular organizations are able to gain volunteer and champion strength. Second, various issues of public debate are raised that often result in participants expanding their scope of awareness. And finally, Youth and other newcomer communities are able to build relationships that may result in job opportunities in the food system.

In addition, meetings also allow Members and participants to remain knowledgeable about the activities and programmes in the greater food community. Public TFPC meetings routinely include multiple presentations from organizers, activists, and entrepreneurs from various food-related sectors such as agricultural production, nutritional literacy and culinary tourism. Presentations help build a greater understanding and association among Council Members, the general public, and other presenters working on similar issues. At the meetings, the TFPC also acknowledges a ‘Local Food Hero’ who has shown leadership in sustainable economic or social development. In the past, the ‘Local Food Hero’ award has been given to businesses, restaurants, farmers, chefs, and program coordinators among others. The award ceremony recognizes the recipient by providing them with an opportunity to share their guiding principals while equipping public participants with applicable knowledge to diversify their food consumption patterns.

Despite its educational and networking role within the food community, many FPCs prefer to dodge larger public attention. According to Clancy et. al., some FPCs think that by maintaining a low public profile, the Council can work more effectively with government in a less threatening environment (2007). Schiff agrees, the majority of FPC interviewed avoid media attention for several reasons including” (2007, p.212):

“Having a general lack of interest in pursuing these lines of communication...
[seeing] potential danger in attracting possible adverse attention of public officials

or organizations that could threaten the stability of the FPC... and allowing other partnering organizations to take recognition for their achievements”.

Successful Example: St. Paul-Ramsey Food and Nutrition Commission

The St. Paul-Ramsey Food and Nutrition Commission was introduced in the mid 1980's after St. Paul lost its farmers market. One of the notable achievements of the Commission was its contribution to public discussion through the Mayor's 'food and nutrition honor roll' that has taken place every year since 1988 (Biehler, 1999 p.45-46). By rewarding organizations and individuals who contribute to the local food economy, the FPC is simultaneously generating greater capital for socially-conscious entrepreneurs and businesspeople. When more money is spent within the local community, capital is continually recirculated by employees and businesses (Blinder, 2008). The 'multiplier effect' of *Keynesian Economics* has further rewards for the food community in that it strengthens dependence on local farmers, reduces food miles and creates local food-sector jobs.

In addition, the St. Paul-Ramsey Food and Nutrition Commission organizes an annual 'hunger forum' to generate public dialogue on food issues relevant to the City, specifically regarding hunger and poverty. (Biehler et al., 1999). The forum allows knowledgeable Members to share their expertise through presentations to government officials and the general public. In addition to ensuring food system thinking beyond meetings, the presentations also raise awareness as to the Commissions existence.

FPC as Influencer of Food Policy...

As mentioned above, Food Policy Councils can be distinguished by the extent to which they attempt to influence or advise food policy. Food First's 2009 report claims that Food Policy Councils are important advocates of food policy. FPCs can 'set policy contexts' within and between numerous frameworks including organizations, governments, universities, farmers markets, retail outlets and other institutions (Food First, 2009a.). In addition, FPCs that are positioned within government structures may potentially provide material or institutional support. According to Food First, within local government, FPCs functions include (2009, p.20):

“Overseeing, advising and advocating for specific policies. FPCs can also help identify areas that governments have not been able to address and either propose or changes in government policy or identify an opportunity for non-governmental organization, project or business to initiate new programs. FPCs therefore have the opportunity to bridge the divisions in public policy-representing food issues to sectors of government that might be unaware of how their laws, regulations and procedures are affecting the health, nutrition and environment of some of their constituents”.

According the Food First, the number of FPCs with a formal relationship to the government varies depending on the jurisdictional authority of the FPC. Half of the state level FPCs are considered to be part of the government while, only 20 percent of county

and local FPC are part of the government (Food First, 2009a.). Still, while most FPCs with smaller jurisdictional reach function independently of the government, they may still have been established by formal government mandate or action (Food First, 2009a.).

The majority of Rebecca Schiff's interviewees indicated limited involvement and even 'disinterest in researching, writing, or recommending new policies or changes to existing policies' a sentiment more likely in the U.S. than Canada. In fact, two interviewees described policy work to be challenging because it may distract from actually taking action (2007, p.179). Conversely, other interviewees claimed that because they were created by a government mandate, policy research and writing should be an important component of their work in the food community. While new FPCs often do not have access to the resources to make policy recommendation, generally FPCs that were established to focus on policy make a shift towards program creation after their recommendations were proposed, and FPCs whose initial focus was programming, later move to producing policy recommendations (Schiff, 2007).

It is often difficult to gauge the general level of FPC involvement in food policy because FPCs exist internally or externally of government at multiple levels. In addition, if the FPC is affiliated with a government, the degree to which the Council can actually influence government varies depending on the political climate, the amount of support from elected officials or the relative skill of the Council (Schiff, 2007; MacRae, 2010, personal interview). Still, FPCs can attempt to get cross-departmental buy in, or exert pressure on political candidates. As was suggested at a recent Strategic Planning Session

of the TFPC, a FPC should be continually monitoring public officials' food system stance. In turn, FPCs could potentially educate the public as to the governments' role in promoting policies that support food system sustainability (Schiff, 2007).

In addition some FPCs have the ability to move beyond advisory functions towards actually creating policy. According to Rod MacRae, the TFPC of the 1990's, carefully moved beyond the municipalities reach to exert pressure from beyond their mandated jurisdiction. This included critically using the instruments of the municipality and the historical relationships between the branches of government", to make policy leeway (MacRae, 2010, personal interview).

Successful Example: North Carolina Food Policy Council

The North Carolina Food Policy Council, housed in the state's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, has been successfully influencing state-wide policy (and programming) since its creation in 2001 (Southern SWAG, 2005). In particular, a major policy change was observed after the 2003 'Produce Gleaning' project which allowed nearly 350 farmers from across the state to donate more than six million pounds of 'commercially-unusable' and surplus food to North Carolina's 900,000 residents living below the poverty line (Southern SWAG, 2005, p.46). When farmers expressed concern that they could potentially be held liable for the volunteers collecting the surplus crops, the North Carolina FPC recommended that changes be made to the policy-framework that would exempt farmers from repercussions. Shortly after, the General Assembly passed

House Bill 1335; protecting farmers from being held financially responsible for the injuries that occurred for the ‘Produce Gleaning’ project (Southern SWAG, 2005, p.47).

FPC as Creator of Food Programming...

Wayne Roberts believes that the real power of a FPC lies in its ability to build relationships by facilitating sustainable and equitable food programming within its jurisdiction by ‘bring people together’ and strengthening action-oriented campaigns (Wayne Roberts, 2010, personal interview). According to Food First, examples of successful programs instigated by FPCs include: farm to school programs, expansion of farmers markets, school garden programs, buy local campaigns, farmland preservation, supporting affordable housing for farm workers and urban gardening programs that collect produce for food banks (2009a., p. 21).

Since FPCs are made up of representatives from diverse sectors, FPCs often collaborate with Member organizations’ projects or programming. Furthermore, to avoid issue stagnancy, FPCs may also incubate programs which may later be implemented by Members respective organizations. For example, in the 1990’s, the TFPC helped gather a list of emergency food sources for people in need. The Foodlink Hotline service is now housed within partner organization Food Share, and is co-sponsored by Community Information Toronto (TFPC website).

As described above, Food Policy Councils often begin by spending a large amount of time and effort developing and implementing food initiatives. For many FPCs, this is because they need greater ‘on-the-ground experience’ before they can make policy recommendations or they wish to ‘establish a good track record before taking on larger structural issues’ (Food First, 2009a., p.20; p.7). These ‘quick-wins’ are helpful when they are accomplished in a short period of time because they build organizational credibility and provide Members with motivational accomplishments (Schiff, 2007).

However, describes Schiff, implementing programmes should not be a central activity of a FPC. In fact, if a FPC focuses exclusively on programming, it “can even be counter-productive to the underlying currents of educating and capacity building” (Schiff, 2010, personal interview). Since a FPCs unique structure potentially allows it to institutionalize systematic perspectives, it should use its “resources, knowledge, and ideas to help others implement programs” as opposed to reinventing the wheel (Schiff, 2010, personal interview). In addition, if FPCs are solely working with community programming, they may miss out on opportunities to conduct policy-based research or make related recommendations (Food First, 2009).

From my analysis on the various roles of a FPC, it appears that a FPC as a policy advisor and programme implementer are not mutually exclusive. Considering the definition of ‘policy’ used by Schiff, which can be ‘understood as a statement or plan... intended to determine or guide decisions and actions’, the potential of food programming is inherently contained within policy recommendations and visa versa (Schiff, 2007). In

fact, it is quite difficult to separate the two functions considering that most programming, when initiated by a FPC, is a result of a jurisdictional policy change or lack thereof. Many FPCs organizers therefore appear to measure their relative success based upon their ability to balance policy and programme-oriented relationship building.

Successful Example: Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy

The United States Department of Agriculture's national *Summer Food Program* delivers free summertime lunches to children living in low-income communities. However, after conducting a 1993 survey with participants, the City of Hartford Advisory Commission on Food Policy was concerned that the programme was not successfully reaching eligible children and that the food quality was insufficient. In addition, the Commission found that the Summer Food Program was not adequately utilizing the state's local food sources, which had resulted in excessive food waste. In response to their findings, the Commission then focused its efforts on securing a local vendor and monitoring participation rates and quality of food (Hartford Advisory Commission website, accessed 2010). Furthermore, the action of the Commission supports my earlier observations on the overlapping functions of FPCs in the policy and programming arenas.

2.5 Factors that Influence the Roles of a Food Policy Council

In the previous section, I have condensed the nearly 100 North American FPCs' functions into four main and interconnected roles. However, as the saying goes... *no two FPCs*

were created equally. Hence, there are countless factors that influence a FPCs ability to fulfill the range of roles, and ultimately, not every FPC is able to overcome the associated challenges. Since I have already discussed factors such as jurisdictional representation and a FPC's focus on either policy or programming in section 2.3, I will therefore briefly highlight additional contributing factors as they relate to the roles of a FPC including:

- Government or Non-Governmental Organization
- Staff Support
- Member Recruitment and Responsibility
- Outcomes
- Funding

While this is not an exhaustive list of variables, these five factors (along with questions of jurisdictional representation and policy vs. programming) were continually referred to in my personal interviews and FPC research. The challenges associated with these factors are listed in section 2.5.

Government or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO)

¹³ As previously stated in 2.3, most Food Policy Councils were created either as a government or NGO entity, and almost all maintain some level of NGO involvement. ¹⁴

The early FPCs including Knoxville, Toronto and Hartford all began with a solid

¹³ Generally in the Department of Agriculture or Public Health

¹⁴ While the TFPC served more as an advisory body, rather than a government organization, it maintained a strong connection to municipal government.

foundation in municipal government and, according to Schiff, “were created under orders, ordinances or mandates to function primarily as a government organization” (Schiff, 2007, p.181). However, as the number of FPCs increased, more Councils began to organize as NGOs. Schiff claims that this developmental divide has raised significant questions regarding the authority and potential of the Food Policy Council model (Schiff, 2008). However, this dichotomy has recently been blurred as many governments rely on NGOs to deliver programs and services (Schiff, 2007).

Rod MacRae claims that the most successful FPCs have a formalized relationship with a government department (Clancy et. al., 2007). As a subcommittee of the Toronto Board of Health, the TFPC has been able to successfully “use the instruments of the municipality and the historical relationships between the branches of government to exert some pressure” (MacRae, 2010, personal interview). This relationship has allowed the TFPC to move beyond an advisory role, into the realm of actual policy and programming change. MacRae elaborates (2010, personal interview):

“If FPCs have the right structural linkages to municipal government, whether it’s at the political or bureaucratic level, then their maneuvering room is much bigger than if they don’t have those linkages. Then, they can take on a more ambitious agenda”.

Furthermore, MacRae views a lack of formalized connection with municipal government as a step towards a Councils demise. “If you don’t have [that relationship], it becomes

very difficult to have any influence over [food policy]. It also puts much more pressure on your collective expertise as a body because you cannot rely on structural pieces to give you access”. In addition, without government support, FPCs acting as an NGO may end up competing over available funding sources with its Members’ organizations (Schiff, 2008).

Many FPCs, particularly in the United States, have a strong relationship with the mayor’s office, which can work to a FPCs advantage (MacRae, 2010). However, becoming too reliant on a single supportive political figure makes the FPC vulnerable during periods of government transitioning or fluctuating ideologies of elected officials. Furthermore, if the FPC was formed by a Mayor’s executive order, the next person to hold that office may choose to discontinue the FPCs work (Food First, 2009a.). For example, as described in section 2.6, Food First reports that the Iowa Food Policy Council was unable to sustain itself after a change in political leadership (2009a.). Still, other FPCs may lack mayoral support from the FPCs onset. The City of Las Angeles, for example, made two attempts at FPC development in the 1990’s and 2000’s. According to Delwiche, neither was particularly successful because the food movement did not have the support of the mayor and several City Council Members (2010, personal interview).

Still, a smaller number of FPC organizers believe that a more solidified relationship with government can dampen the prospective success of a FPC. Since NGOs are more integrated within the community and occasionally the foodshed, they may have an easier time engaging with and responding to grass roots interests (Schiff, 2007). In addition,

authoritative ties may jeopardize the diversity of food sector-based representation. For example, Schiff references one respondent who said that “farmers and other organizations felt apprehensive towards government interest due to recent government activities that had been perceived as threatening” (2008, p.214).

In response to the above debate, several FPCs have developed as a ‘hybrid model’.¹⁵ Although there are many existing variations of the hybrid theme, the Council generally has some formal relationship with government in terms of funding or resources but simultaneously functions autonomously. One of Schiff’s interviewees claimed that the hybrid model gives the Council the “liberty to discuss and voice opinion in respect to controversial issues” (Schiff, 2008, p.214). The Drake University of Agricultural Law Center also indicates that FPCs can be housed within academic institutions (2005). Although my research did not provide a specific institutional FPC, Wayne Roberts believes that both universities and hospitals should have representative FPCs to address their specific food-related needs (2010, personal interview).

Staff Support

Although research finds that FPCs function more effectively when they have Staff support, the majority of sources indicate that few FPCs actually have part time or paid Staff Members (Food First, 2009a; Schiff 2007). The availability of Staff is often associated with other variables including access to funding or relationship to government structures. While Staff are not Members of the Council, they are instrumental in

¹⁵ TFPC is an example of a hybrid FPC.

fulfilling a variety of administrative, organizational, research, communicatory and external relations roles (Schiff, 2007). Quite often roles are the ‘day-to-day’ workings of the Council that allow Members to enjoy less responsibility for Council organizing (Schiff, 2007, p. 290). In addition, Staff Members often engage in networking, report writing and working with partner organizations on project implementation (Schiff, 2007).

TFPC Staff Member Yusuf Alam describes Staff duties to include (2010, personal interview).

“A whole range of things on a day-to-day basis... in a very inner circle sense. We talk to the Council Members and make sure their issues are being put on the table... and make sure there is buy-in. We work as a linking agent, trying to make connections between the Council as whole and other agencies that potentially may support us. We also explain the FPC to the City, [including] what issues are important. The more celebratory side is that we plan the monthly meetings, get the word out, and talk about the successes and failings of the food system”.

For FPCs who are integrated into the municipal or state government, Staff duties often involve being a liaison between the government, the FPC and the food community. This function is incredibly important because it often results in the FPC securing future resources and support from political representatives (Schiff, 2007). Alam claims this role, “almost demands a bit of translating skills because there is beaucratic talk that happens in the halls of the City and amongst the FPC” (2010, personal interview).

Ideally, security of Staff drastically improves a Council's longevity. Although Knoxville does not have paid Staff or funding, it has always received in-kind Staff support from the Community Action Committee (Clancy 2007). According to Clancy et. al. the TFPC is the only government-oriented FPC to have "reliable government support for its director position" (2007, p.136). Since the TFPC is commonly referenced as being one of the most successful FPCs, the stability supported Staff therefore is an important structural component of FPC development.

Membership Responsibility and Recruitment

Food Policy Councils are made of a diversity of stakeholders, each representing a different sector of the food system. Depending on the FPCs level of Staff support and the extent to which they developed from government mandates, FPC Membership can vary in terms of responsibility and recruitment. Sector-based diversity often varies between local, county and state FPCs. For example, all statewide FPCs have representatives from production, distribution and consumption; while about 80 percent of local FPCs have representation from these three sectors. Conversely, 50 percent of county-based FPCs have representatives from waste recovery; while no state FPCs have representation from this sector (Food First, 2009a., p.24).

According to Alam, Members of the "TFPC donate their time, energy, skill and experience to keep Toronto Public Health abreast of emerging trends, challenges and

possibilities in the field of community food security: A gift of time and knowledge that no money can buy” (2010, Personal Communication – May). Members are generally active in a variety of activities including facilitating, networking, researching, championing and implementing projects (Schiff, 2007). Depending on the disposition of the FPC, Council Members might place greater emphasis on representing themselves as an individual or as a member of their respective organization. However, as described in section 2.2, Members are generally not required to approve a decision with their respective organization before casting a vote with the Council, unless the FPC is acting more as a ‘Coalition’.

The majority of FPCs decide if they will be a ‘working Council’ from their inception. Rebecca Schiff defines ‘working Council’ as an FPC where Members are expected to carry out Council-related tasks outside meetings and on their own time” (2007, p.281). In addition, Council Members have the option to engage further through subcommittees or acting as a Chairperson (Schiff, 2007). Subcommittees or task forces are generally developed by the FPC to tackle specific projects or components of research, and are generally more common at the local and county level. The Michigan Food Policy Council has formed four task forces to address, 1) The expansion of food related businesses and jobs, 2) Access to fresh and healthy foods, 3) Promotion of Michigan grown food, and 4) Enhancement of agricultural viability (Michigan FPC website, accessed 2010). The Chairperson is elected by Council Members, and generally serves between one and three years. The Chair often ‘functions as a human resource personnel and liaison between Staff and Members” (Schiff, 2007, p.288). Although Vancouver

FPC Co-Chair Brent Mansfield claims that responsibilities will vary from City to City, “it is important for Chairperson to be aware of the energy and opportunities in the community and play a key role in leading the FPC into areas where it can catalyze action related to key objectives of the FPC” (Mansfield, 2010, personal interview). For Mansfield this also means facilitating meetings and serving as a main contact for the City Council, School Board and Health Authority.

However, considering Council Members are acting on a voluntary basis and are active in numerous other organizations, they are likely to feel overburdened if tasked with too much responsibility. However, successful Councils are able to balance Membership responsibility with optimal productivity. For example, Dahlberg suggests that if Members’ workloads are too strenuous, the FPC should consider either increasing Council Membership or strengthening committee capacities (1992).

The second variable of FPC Membership depends on the process by which Council Members are selected. Selection is generally carried out in three main ways 1) self-selection, 2) application, or 3) election, nomination or appointment. As expected, 67 percent of states FPC Members are appointed, while only 14 percent are appointed at the county-level. Conversely, 55 percent of Members are self-selected at the local-level while 33 percent are self-selected at the state level (Food First, 2009a., p.27). Regardless of the process, Rod MacRae claims it is important for FPCs to be transparent about the kinds of knowledge or expertise they require while filling vacant Council seats. “There is a tendency in social movements to not be clear, specific and directed about recruitment...

although it often narrows down the pool of applicants... vagueness is actually a bad thing” (MacRae, 2010, personal interview).

Members of the Toronto Food Policy Council “represent a spectrum of Toronto’s diverse populations, and bring Toronto Public Health insights about food security needs, capacities and opportunities across the City” (Alam, personal communication – May 2010). The TFPC is larger than most FPCs and currently has up to 30 Members.

Membership includes one community member of the Toronto Board of Health (BOH), two members of Toronto City Council, three members of rural farm communities around the GTA, and 24 residents of Toronto who bring knowledge and expertise from a range of communities in the City.

If a vacancy arises, Alam says that the TFPC steering committee and Staff make the utmost effort to fill it according to the above requirements. In the case of a resident vacancy, a citizen is selected who represents the diversity of Toronto. If the nominee accepts the invitation, then they are allowed a formal seat at the table and their name goes on a submission to the Toronto Board of Health for official acceptance. Alam claims, “Filling the seat is generally not difficult because of the depth of relationships the Council and Staff have with practitioners within the community” (2010, personal communication - May.)

Given that FPCs attempt to be as representative as possible, it is important to consider what demographics are traditionally underrepresented in this model. As demonstrated by the prescriptive make-up of TFPC Membership is offered to accomplished individuals

within the affiliated political institution or to residents ‘who bring knowledge and expertise’ to the Council as a whole.

Particularly in government-affiliated FPCs, Council-make up requirements are in place to ensure cross-sectoral representation; still, Council ‘diversity’ can be analyzed beyond departmental representation. Since individuals have a certain level of expertise embedded in their own social, political, and ethnic reality, for a FPC to be truly representative of the population it serves, it should prioritize the direct involvement of citizens rarely consulted with. This would include demographics such the disabled, the young, or certain minority populations. This argument will further inform Chapter 3 of my MRP.

However, there could be potentially negative consequences of a truly representative Council. First, individuals may feel confined by a limited definition of themselves projected by the Council as a whole. This could prevent a Council Member from speaking outside of their *token* representation. For example, Alam recalls being a member of the TFPC in 2005, “[The Council] was looking for a voice from me that represented Youth and communities of color, I did not feel I was a representative of either, I felt like I was an environmentalist” (Alam, 2010, personal interview). Second, the FPC must decide whether it prioritizes the proposed diversity requirements over the Members’ food-system knowledge. This could be possibly be problematic, argues MacRae, who stresses the importance of Council Member ‘skill’ in determining the overall effectiveness of the FPC (2010, personal interview). Finally, the FPC must decide how ‘diversity’ will be achieved. For example, would the FPC be ‘diverse’ once

the ratio of Council representatives is equal to the communities' range of demographics? For a City like Toronto, with a wide-variety of cultures, achieving a representative diversity that maintains a certain degree of food knowledge would be much easier than a FPC in the Prairies or Mid-Western United States.

While the above scenario is more likely to reflect discrepancies of government-affiliated FPCs, NGO-oriented FPCs could potentially be faced with the opposite dilemma – lack of government representation. For example, the Lane County (Oregon) Food Policy Council developed from the efforts of two non-profit groups to tackle some of the highest poverty rates in the U.S. (Southern SWAG, 2005). According to their website, Lane County FPC Members include academics, community organizers, researchers, food bank activists, business owners, and food system analysts. Although the Mayor of Oakridge, OR is currently a FPC member, without solid political representation, bureaucratic fluctuating may alter the degree of governmental support. Furthermore, with a tilt towards achieving diverse of community-representation, NGO-oriented FPCs may lack the political finesse to affect food policy at its source.

Although FPC Membership numbers are limited, Rebecca Schiff claims that there are “several [additional] representatives related to the food system [that] could be included in Council Membership” (2010, personal interview). To counterbalance this obstacle between inclusiveness and effectiveness, many FPCs include ‘non-Member’ stakeholders to participate in committees or task forces. In addition, Schiff says that ‘open meetings’ are an excellent tool for including a wider range of sector representatives, who are encouraged to voice their opinion and network with the Council or community.

Outcome Evaluation

Outcome evaluation mechanisms are particularly relevant to my research because it is a topic that is infrequently addressed among FPCs, and, is a recent priority of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council in our attempt to become a more participatory body.

Evaluation outcomes can happen on two levels: first, evaluation of the individual FPC conducted and completed by Council Members, and two, evaluation of the FPC model in general. ¹⁶The first method of evaluation can take place in written or recorded form, group discussion or even as a formally facilitated session or retreat (Schiff, 2007). In a 1997 article, Webb et. al. stresses the importance of internal evaluation mechanisms for FPC saying that the process has “been shown to assist Members in identifying and reducing barriers to collective articulation” (1997, p.67). Furthermore, collective articulation can help groups actualize their goals, missions, objectives and strategies and direct project implementation.

Despite its applicability, there are several reasons why outcomes are difficult to measure including questions of what to evaluate, external factors that may influence FPCs effectiveness and the diverse opinions on the ideal size, purpose and composition of FPCs (Webb et. al., 1998, p.69). Still, the current lack of evaluation reduces the ability of FPCs to achieve the above four roles, and consequently “inhibits planning efforts of community organizations that might want to undertake to replicate an effort” (Webb et. al., 1998,

¹⁶ The TFPC recently took part in two Strategic Planning sessions on May 16th 2010, and June 17th 2010. Observations from both sessions make up my MRP report.

p.66). Poor collective articulation may also restrain the FPC from expressing a unified and purposeful voice to potential funders, if located outside of government.

Considering the constraints of outcome evaluation, it seems to be more important for FPCs to have a sense of *why* they are doing what they are doing. This includes the degree to which FPC organizers understand how the Councils structure and process relate to its outcomes, its ability to be effective and its capacity to make structural changes accordingly. Once FPCs are able to concretely communicate outcomes, it seems that more structured evaluation mechanisms will become commonplace.

Funding

Funding is perhaps the most influential variable influencing a FPCs outcome-oriented success, and both affects and is effected by the above mentioned factors. As expected, state-level FPCs receive the most funding from the U.S. government (50 percent), followed by county (24 percent) and local (16 percent) FPCs (Food First, 2009a., p.26). Additional sources of funding for North American FPCs may come from foundational grants, in-kind donations, contract work, sales or individual donations (Food First, 2009a.).

As mentioned in section 2.1, the United States Department of Agriculture actively funds the creation of larger FPCs in the United States through the creation of the Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program and collaboration with the Drake University

Agricultural Law School. Although symbolically, the governmental recognition is significant, only five FPCs interviewed by Food First reported receiving funding from USDA grants (2009). Clearly Canadian FPCs are ineligible for funding from the United States Department of Agriculture; however the TFPC receives resources from the City government to fund Staff and administrative costs, the Ottawa Social Planning Department funds the three Staff positions of the Ottawa FPC, while the Kamloops FPC relies primarily on grant funding (CFSC website, accessed 2010).

Rod MacRae claims that the TFPC was largely successful because the Council did not have to do its own fundraising for two reasons (2010, personal interview):

“First, we did not have to spend time doing [fundraising] to keep ourselves going, and second, it gave us a lot of credibility because people knew that when we did raise money we were not going to use any of it for ourselves. We could actually help other organizations raise money and we would not be a competitor to other organizations”.

The TFPC experienced the importance of secured funding during the large and overarching municipal budget cuts of the mid-1990’s. In 1996, Toronto’s Budget Chief, Tom Jakobek, attempted to ‘slash and burn’ several programs (including the TFPC) within Toronto Public Health to meet budgetary restrictions. However, former TFPC Co-Chair and current Mayor Barbara Hall were able to secure enough City Council votes to save the TFPC and other programs (MacRae, 2010, personal communication - May). The

nearly abrupt disappearance of the TFPC demonstrates the significance of funding and vulnerability of FPCs within changing political climates.

Still, it is possible for a FPC to survive as a volunteer organization, with absolutely no funding. According to *Food First*, eight percent of state FPCs have no funding, and 28 percent of local FPCs have no funding (2009a., p.26). However, no funding often places more responsibility, and therefore stress, on overburdened Council Members.

Furthermore, lack of stable funding contributes too many of the challenges faced by FPCs described below.

2.6 Challenges faced by the Food Policy Council

Section 2.4 outlined four factors that could potentially influence a FPCs ability to fulfill its roles. Naturally, the degree to which a FPC utilizes its resources will dictate its effectiveness and future vitality. Below is a list of common challenges faced by FPCs, which if left unaccounted for, could result in the demise of a FPC. I have gathered this list from a variety of conversations, readings, websites and personal observations.

- Over burdened Council Members
- Little or no funding
- No Staff support
- Structural problems (Government v.s. NGO status)
- No mechanisms for evaluation

- Poor communication among Members and/or Staff
- Unsupportive political climate
- Undefined roles
- External opposition from industry or government
- Single-issue focus, i.e. Hunger
- Over commitment to single program
- Time constraints
- Heavy reliance on a charismatic personality, organization or political figure
- Lack of comprehensive FPC research
- Lack of quantification of cost effectiveness of FPCs
- Outdated websites with limited information
- Public indifference
- Lack of decision making process, difficulty gaining consensus
- Public romanticizing particular food issue (such as local/organic food)

Examples of Failed Food Policy Councils

If Food Policy Councils are not able to overcome the above-mentioned challenges, they may dissolve. As a result of poor FPC evaluation, most sources only indicate vague statistics on FPC failure, while few actually provide detailed case studies. However, Food First provides four examples of disbanded FPCs – Iowa Food Policy Council, LA Food Justice Network, Marin Food Policy Council and Berkeley Food Policy Council. The follow chart depicts the main reasons the FPCs no longer exist (2009, p.40).

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Iowa FPC | Major change in political leadership that the Council was unable to compensate for |
| LA Food Justice Network | Funding issues and key Members lack of availability |
| Marin FPC | Too many organizations already working on Food Policy in the region |
| Berkley FPC | Expiration of grant funding and Members becoming to involved in FPC 'spin-off' programs |

Although the four FPCs dissolved for various reasons, Dahlberg cautions critiques to consider the evaluative criteria used to assess success and/or failure. 'Success' is generally associated with the FPCs existence and 'failure' with its demise; however, there are a number of variables that could potentially make a FPC unconventionally 'successful' (1994). According to Dahlberg, a FPC should be assessed according to its (1994):

- 1) Previously stated goals and objectives
- 2) Regional and current policies
- 3) Ability to educate political figures and the public
- 4) Long term vision regarding sustainability

For example, the Berkeley FPC was forced to disband because its Members were busy working on 'spin-off' projects that were initiated by the Berkeley FPC (Food First, 2009a., p.40). One such program was the Council's Spiral Garden project, a relatively successful and time-consuming urban garden and produce stand. The Berkley FPC Council Members were not able to commit adequate time to the project *and* the Council; therefore the Council was a means to an end. If this scenario is considered from

Dahlberg's framework of measuring FPC success, then the FPC achieved both its 'previously stated goals and objectives' and 'long term vision regarding sustainability' and therefore 'failure' status should be reconsidered.

2.7 Case Study: Toronto Food Policy Council

Anyone involved in the sustainable food movement in Toronto would agree – The City is overflowing with organizations, institutions and *foodies* eager to make a change. Since 1990, the Toronto Food Policy Council has been enormously influential at placing our City on the international food movements' *who's who* list.

Throughout Chapter 2, I argued that the factors influencing a FPCs structure greatly determine the degree to which the FPC can successfully fulfill the above described roles. In the following case study, I propose that the Toronto Food Policy Council's ability to withstand major structural transition demonstrates its resilience and justifies its reputation as one of the most successful FPCs in North America. Furthermore, the ability of the TFPC to adjust to external realities is a direct result of multiple internal factors. To demonstrate the factors that influence the TFPC's longevity, I will focus on four major structural transitions uncovered throughout my research and as a member of the Toronto Food Policy Council.

The chart below depicts the four major transitions of the TFPC and the significant structural strengths of each era that allowed the TFPC to build its capacity, and as a result

become a leader amongst the FPC movement. The strengths identified are not the TFPCs direct purpose, but rather a secondary consequence.

| <u>Major Transition of TFPC</u> | <u>Structural Strengths of TFPC</u> |
|---|---|
| Creation of the TFPC - 1990 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive and progressive connection to government • Skill and expertise of PH Staff and Members involved in designing TFPC • Key political level leadership |
| Restructuring of TFPC - 1994 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill and expertise of Staff and Members • Greater focus on implementation and influencing Toronto's agenda • Increased sector-based diversity and reactivity of Council Members |
| Toronto's Amalgamation - 1998 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charismatic leadership • Council's ability to strategically maneuver in hostile environment • Relationship-building and education capacity • Working alongside growing NGO-sector |
| Food Strategy & Reorganization of Public Health - 2010 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support of Medical Officer of Health, Board of Health • Strength of organizational, interpersonal and political relationships • Future reorientation of Food Strategy <i>and</i> TFPC under the Health Cities Directorate |

In the following section, I will elaborate on the contextual realities of the four structural transitions and highlight the major Council achievements between periods. While each of the transitions was structurally significant, the greatest change occurred following Toronto's amalgamation in 1998; when the Council Coordinator position changed from Rod MacRae to Wayne Roberts and the City's political orientation drastically shifted from a supportive to a hostile environment. As such, the 1994 restructuring of the TFPC and the Council's position relative to the Food Strategy are less threatening transitions.

Several sources inform my analysis including personal interviews with Council Members and management, organizational reports, the TFPC website and observations as a member of the Toronto Food Policy Council. Although I will not explicitly reference the four roles of a FPC describe in section 2.4 (policy advisor, program creator, gather of sector representatives and facilitator of knowledge), I believe that the structural capacity of the TFPC has allowed the Council to successfully balance the four roles of FPCs effectively and efficiently.

Structural Transition One: TFPC Creation in 1990

Background - The City of Toronto has a rich history of prioritizing health-oriented and progressive municipal policy. In 1919, Toronto was proclaimed to be the ‘Healthiest of the World’s Large Cities’ with a population over 350,000 due to its low mortality rates. In addition, Toronto’s Medical Officer of Health from 1910 to 1929 Dr. Charles Hastings helped the City realize that “with a well organized Department of Public Health, a municipality may have as much *health* as it is willing to pay for.” (Hancock, p.4). Considering the pioneering efforts of Hastings, the supportive community and the commitment of City Council, Toronto has ‘indeed reached a high level of public health’ (Hancock, p.4).

The history of the Toronto Food Policy Council can be traced back to 1984 when Toronto held the first of the ‘Healthy Cities’ workshops and shortly after became an early instigator of the Healthy Cities project. According to the 1990 Milan ‘Healthy Cities’

declaration, the movement called for “*health* for all policy, [which took into consideration] sustainability, equity, accountability and intersectorality”. Furthermore, Healthy Cities would take action to address these factors by establishing cross-departmental and participatory Healthy Cities organizations (WHO, 2006).

Subsequently, Tim Lang from the London Food Commission came to speak and inspire Toronto in forming three convergent clusters of action; sustainable agriculture, hunger and poverty and the Healthy Cities movement (MacRae, 2010, personal interview). In response, Toronto Public Health and the Medical Officer of Health soon put forth nearly 100 related recommendations in a document on Public Health Planning for the 1990s. Two of the recommendations proposed the development of a Food Policy Council to address a comprehensive food policy (MacRae, 2010, personal communication - May). As the first Coordinator of the Toronto Food Policy Council hired in November of 1990, Dr. Rod MacRae recalls the City Council being slightly progressive. Furthermore, key Councilors, such as Jack Layton, supported the creation of the FPC, and were successful at getting a few right wing Members of the City Council to vote to create it (MacRae, 2010, personal interview).

Shortly after its creation in 1990, the TFPC successfully leveraged the timely support of the municipal government and made major headway in food system thinking. Since the early Council was supported by a progressive heritage, it allowed Rod MacRae and the Council to flush out ‘what holistic food policy looked like at a municipal level’ and overcome policy-based barriers to sustainability (Roberts, 2010, personal interview). Although the food movement in Toronto and across North America was less established

in the early 1990's, the TFPC was well-respected among the FPC movement because it had a unique structure and created numerous pieces of 'conceptual and solution-oriented writing' (MacRae, 2010, personal interview).

Throughout the 1990's, the TFPC used its internal skill and political support to research, write and publish 15 ground-breaking discussion papers that linked the negative consequences of the food system to the need for sustainable food policy development (TFPC website, accessed 2010). According to Rod MacRae, policy papers were generated according to what food issues the Council deemed pressing or important. The critical part of the process was making sure the document was framed to reach a specific pre-determined audience and that Council Members felt their feedback had an influence on the document (MacRae, 2010, personal interview).

¹⁷In addition to the production of food policy papers, the relatively rich government budget and three full-time Staff Members allowed the FPC to initiate numerous and relatively high-profile programs including (TFPC website, accessed 2010):

- Instigating Food Share's 'Field to Table' program which provides affordable and locally-sourced food to citizens around Toronto
- Providing fundraising assistance that helped community organizations obtain \$3.5 million for relevant projects

¹⁷ The initiatives listed include programs and policies enacted before and after the 1994 TFPC restructuring described below.

- Designing Canada’s first Food Access grants program which allocated \$2.4 million dollars to 180 schools and community groups
- Co-authoring the Ontario Public Health Association's Food and Nutrition Strategy Statement
- Participating in the Breastfeeding Network of Metropolitan Toronto
- Consulting for several planning processes including City of Toronto Strategic Plan, Commission on Planning and Development Reform in Ontario, and the Ontario Planning Act
- Initiating a "Buy Ontario" food program involving Huron County farmers and eight Ontario hospitals to increase hospital purchases of local foods
- Founding the Rooftop Garden Resource Group to launch green roof research and promote a green roof industry in Canada

In addition, the TFPC of the early 1990’s had a roughly \$20,000 operating budget, which enabled the Council to oversee a significant amounts of contracting work. ¹⁸One major contracted work was a feasibility study, which lead to the creation of the ‘Field to Table’ program’ (MacRae, 2010, personal communication – June).

Structural Transition Two: TFPC Restructuring in 1994

¹⁸ According to FoodShare, which now houses the ‘Field to Table’ program: “The Good Food Box was the eventual outcome of the Field to Table project, started in 1991 by the Toronto Food Policy Council? The Members of the FPC recognized that food banks were an inadequate response to urban hunger, while also recognizing that hunger at the level of the individual and household is not the only facet of food insecurity. A feasibility study proposed alternatives for people with food access barriers, such as small pre-order buying clubs and traveling fresh produce markets. FoodShare, a Toronto anti-hunger organization, agreed to take over the actual operation and administration of the Field to Table Project” (Food Share website).

The reorganization of the TFPC in 1994 was a concise refocusing of the Council Membership. The TFPC was founded with 12 Council Members and a particularity strong representation from the food-industry. However, in 1992 MacRae began to realize that the nature of the TFPC's work was beginning to shift; the Council was moving from envisioning larger projects to actually proposing implementation strategies. The Council's functioning transition required the FPC to expand its Membership and acquire a greater diversity of sector-based representatives. Although MacRae was advised to avoid Council restructuring in 1992 and 1993 due to the City's recession, in 1994 the TFPC expanded to 21 Members and drastically changed its Membership composition. The TFPC was able to strategically articulate what kind of Membership was needed to move on to larger implementation goals (MacRae, 2010, personal interview). As a result of the restructuring, different demands were played on the Council Members. Despite the more demanding Council environment, MacRae recalls that roughly eight of the Members were incredibly proactive and knew how to use the FPC to influence their own agenda (2010, personal interview).

According to MacRae, this period was marked by the TFPC discovering how to "work with the City's agenda and then trying to influence its major decisions" (MacRae, 2010, personal interview). As such, the newly restructured TFPC had several unsuccessful and victorious implementation attempts. Unsuccessful agendas included convincing Toronto Community Housing to work food into their plans, securing local procurement in hospitals and working with Toronto's internal planning system to embed food system

thinking. However, notable implementation achievements included designing Canada's first 'Food Access Grants' program and banning of Bovine Growth Hormone.

Structural Transition Three: Amalgamation in 1998

Background – On January 1st, 1998, the newly amalgamated City of Toronto was created from seven previously existing municipalities. Although the action was largely unpopular among residents, the province argued that amalgamation would reduce the number of political representatives, decrease the likelihood of role duplication, ensure greater accountability and streamline government savings (McInnis, 2000). In other words “it was no longer progressive City roses” (Roberts, 2010, personal interview). While Rod MacRae was Coordinator during amalgamation, he resigned in October of 1999 and the TFPC needed to a replacement Coordinator.

Following amalgamation and MacRae's resignation, the TFPC faced considerable Staff setbacks during the City's attempt to “strip away the nuances” and condense what had become Canada's sixth largest government structure (MacRae, 2010, personal interview). Major setbacks included MacRae's previously (non-unionized) Coordinator position being demoted in the City hierarchy the TFPC losing one and a half Staff positions. According to MacRae, changes in TFPC Staffing disadvantaged the Council in four main ways. First, with three Staff Members, MacRae was able to focus on detail-oriented policy implementation and long term transition-oriented strategies. The TFPC's new Coordinator would spend the majority of his or her time navigating the hostile political

environment and therefore would have less time to focus on implementing policy change. Secondly, while MacRae reported to a Director-level position, the new Coordinator would report to a less-experienced Manager who generally provided less tactical and sophisticated insight. Thirdly, since the Coordinator position was unionized and situated lower in the PH hierarchy, he or she would take a significant pay decrease. And finally, the Council would have to change the way it operated as a result of the Staff Member's reprioritization of time (MacRae, 2010, personal interview).

¹⁹The TFPC hiring committee recognized the constraints and hired Dr. Wayne Roberts as MacRae's successor. Roberts's background in radical politics and social equity coupled with his notoriously positive disposition greatly influenced the path TFPC during the 2000's. While the amalgamation of the City of Toronto consequently resulted in a conservative take over within the management of the municipal government, Roberts admits "many people [thought that] the TFPC had it easy, but for the first few years we were fighting for our lives" (2010, personal interview).

In the years following amalgamation, Roberts and the TFPC transitioned the Council's functioning capacity in three key ways in response to external political conditions including:

- 1) Reorienting the TFPC more directly to Public Health
- 2) Strengthening the connection with the NGO sector and creating a 'hub' for food sector engagement

¹⁹ An interim Coordinator fulfilled the position for about 9 months between MacRae and Roberts.

3) Transitioning the TFPC from implementing policy change to challenging the dominant powers within the institution

²⁰ Firstly, following amalgamation, the TFPC reported to an intervening body as a *subcommittee of a subcommittee of Toronto City Council*. Realizing the limitations of this reporting line, Roberts strategically refocused the TFPC more directly towards the Board of Health. However, as a consequence “everyone on the FPC had to have some kind of credential or be of a higher caliber” in order to maintain the overall creditability of the Council. Although this transition may have unintentionally prevented less-experienced or diverse representatives from becoming a Council Member, the reorientation did strengthen the TFPC’s overall capacity to think critically and engage further with the food community. As a result, the Council was able to host large and inclusive public meetings, distribute relevant information across far-reaching audiences, and provide a networking hub for external organizations.

Secondly, the TFPC built more collaborative relationships with Toronto’s non-governmental organizations. According to Council Member Wally Secombe, the TFPC has since been successful at bringing Toronto’s diverse community food projects into the public profile and celebrating their respective accomplishments (2010, personal interview). For Roberts, this meant “bringing people together to move the [food] agenda towards action”, focusing on opportunistic relationships and avoiding conflicts the TFPC

²⁰ The TFPC of the 1990’s reported to the Board of Health, which reported to City Council, however post-amalgamation the Board of Health reported to the Commission of Social Services, which reported to City Council (MacRae, 2010, Personal Communication – May)

did not necessarily have the resources to carry out (2010, personal interview). As such, the Council became the *bridge* or catalyst that ‘connected people, issues and interests related to food in Toronto and its surrounding foodshed’ (TFPC, 2010b.).

Finally, the TFPC of the 1990’s focused primarily on overcoming barriers to sustainable food policy development. However, given the restrictions placed on Staff and the uncooperative political climate, Robert’s realized that “the Council could not be the power, but rather must challenge the power” (Alam, personal communication – May). By confronting the status quo, the TFPC has been at the forefront of the *new* food movement - characterized by the transparency, cultural appropriateness, environmental sustainability and celebratory aspects of the food system (Roberts, 2010, presentation – June).

The TFPC of the 2000’s under the Coordination of Wayne Roberts achieved several notable accomplishments as a result of the four key transitions described above. A non-exhaustive list of outcomes includes (Friedman, 2006; MOH, 2009; TFPC website, accessed 2010):

- Advocating for policy change at municipal, provincial, and federal government
- Providing Staff and resources to the Food and Hunger Action Committee, which produced the 2001 report entitled “Planting the Seeds” and the 2003 implementation outlines entitled “Tending the Garden”

- Fostering public and political acknowledgment regarding the importance of agriculture to the City of Toronto
- Championing and moving the City towards the implementation of the Food Charter
- Given hundreds of presentations, powerpoint presentations and held information booths for environmental, social justice, and other food related organizations and affiliated individuals
- Producing reports to support and institutionalize the local food movement
- Representing urban interests in the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee
- Awarding the “Local Food Hero” award to inspiring entrepreneurs across Toronto
- Providing learning experiences for university students at York University, Ryerson University, and University of Toronto
- Enabling and fostering the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council
- Working with the Medical Officer of Health to propose and advance the efforts of the cross-departmental Food Strategy (see below)

The achievements of the TFPC during the 2000’s were different, but equally as influential as those of the 1990’s. Despite relative structural stability, the two eras of the TFPC are characterized by common elements, including fickle political climate, expertise of Council Members, support of relevant social movements, and issue/role prioritization of Staff Members. Furthermore, the ability of a FPC to do external policy work is

incredibly contextual. For example, the TFPC of the 1990's was successful at envisioning municipal food policy within a supporting political environment. The TFPC of the 2000's, on the other hand, focused on positive relationship building and the generation of 'hub-like' status, to further legitimize its existence in a turbulent political environment. Finally, the respective skills of Rod MacRae in the 1990's and Wayne Roberts in the 2000's and their coincidental ability to influence external realities, have advanced the TFPC as a leader in the North American FPC movement.

Structural Transition Four: Food Strategy and Reorganization of Public Health in 2010

The TFPC's final structural transition lies at the forefront of the Toronto Food Strategy's (FS) implementation and the Council's position following the 2010 restructuring of Toronto Public Health. While the TFPC and FS are not mutually exclusive, the restructuring of PH will dictate the future course of both institutions. Furthermore, the capacity of the TFPC to develop a strategic plan regarding the implementation of the FS is dependent on the Council's ability to leverage structural changes in Toronto Public Health to. In the following section I will separate the process of FS generation from the proposed City restructuring to show the respective implications on the Toronto Food Policy Council. The uncertainty of the structural transition is further exacerbated by the retirement of Wayne Roberts as Council Coordinator in June of 2010. While, as a member of the TFPC I have a general understanding of external realities, I will not speculate on the associated outcomes of both structural transitions, as they will be largely

determined by the 2010 fall municipal election and skill of the TFPC's future Staff Members.

Background – Food Strategy In response to increasing rates of food-related illness, citizen reliance on emergency food sources, depleting agricultural land and the corporatization of our food supply, Toronto's Medical Officer of Health Dr. David McKeown proposed the creation of a Toronto Food Strategy in 2008. The goal of the FS, or what Wayne Roberts would call "the most grueling policy process and largest project of the TFPC's existence" is to embed food system thinking into municipal government. Specifically, the Food Strategy will (Roberts, 2010, presentation – January; Toronto MOH, 2008b., p.2):

“Develop an action plan to improve the food system to better support good nutrition, healthy development and disease prevention, poverty reduction and social justice, a strong local economy, environmental protection and climate change action, and the promotion and celebration of culture and community through food”.

During the summer of 2008 Toronto's Dr. McKeown presented the 'State of Toronto's Food' to the Board of Health, which had been reviewed by the TFPC throughout its development. (Toronto MOH, 2008) The report provided a list of municipal food related activities and recommended the creation of a FS steering group to “develop a draft strategy for broad stakeholder consultation and engagement” (Toronto MOH, 2010, p.3).

When the proposal was passed, a 21-member steering committee was formed which included a range of senior City Staff, food system activists, academics, and several Members of the TFPC. According to the February 1st, 2010 update, the steering group's mandate was to “guide the development of a consultation report which articulate[d] a bold but practical vision for Toronto, identifying both long-term objectives and short term measures to move towards the vision” (Toronto MOH, 2010b., p.5). Given the interconnectivity of the City's food movement, the FS steering group proposed ‘six directions towards a more sustainable and healthy food system for Toronto’. The directions included (Toronto MOH, 2010, p.5):

- 1) Grow food friendly neighborhoods
- 2) Make food a centerpiece of the new green economy,
- 3) Eliminate hunger,
- 4) Empower residents with food skills and information,
- 5) Connect City and countryside through food
- 6) Embed food system thinking in City government.

Furthermore, the initial February 2010 report entitled “Food Connections: Towards Health and Sustainable Food System for Toronto”, suggested several ‘action steps’ that could be taken to implement the six proposed directions (Toronto MOH, 2010, p.5).

Since the FS seeks to shift the City of Toronto towards a ‘health-focused food system’, the Strategy's generation required a ‘collaborative process that include[d] a wide range of

City divisions and community partners’ (MOH, 2010, p.1; MOH, 2008b., p. 2). After the FS report was passed by the BOH on February 16th, City Staff Members including Wayne Roberts, Yusuf Alam, FS Manager Peter Dorfman and TFPC Citizen Co-Chair Janice Etter conducted a series of public consultations with key stakeholder groups. The engagement sessions were open to the public; however the City focused its efforts on representatives from sectors such as the environment, farming, urban agriculture, academia, parks and businesses. As a recognized group of Youth activists, Members of the TYFPC took part in a formal consultation with Dorfman on March 30th to ensure that the Youth perspective was reflected throughout the evolution of the FS. The specific recommendations of the TYFPC and reflections of the Council Members are discussed in Chapter 3.

According to Wayne Roberts, the FS in its current form is meant to be the ‘appetizer’ of what will become a multi-year process (2010, presentation – June). However, since 2010 is election year and the City is facing significant budget cuts, the FS must leverage Toronto’s existing resources, organizational strengths and foodshed realities. Furthermore, the February 2010 report states how urban environments, particularly Toronto, are poised to lead the way for food system development (Toronto MOH, 2010, p.6).

“When it comes to the list of what’s required for cities to lead the way in food – knowledgeable and engaged residents, abundant natural assets, economic strength, “collaborative infrastructure” and dynamic leadership – the Toronto

region has a lot going for it. So many of the ingredients to produce health, environmental, economic and social benefits through food are already in place, available to be leveraged by a strategy and connected through a common vision”.

In addition to leveraging Toronto as a leader in the food movement and maintaining a strong focus in community engagement and consultation, the FS also emphasizes the importance of cross-departmental government collaboration. Peter Dorfman told the TFPC that the FS “sees *food* as a solution to all of the City’s issues, and thus *food* must be seen as meaningful to all parts of the City” (Dorfman, 2010, presentation – June). Therefore, in order to be successful, the FS must guide “other departments in the City to recognize their influence on the food system, and help Public Health amp up the process” (Roberts, 2010, personal communication - January). According to Jessica Thornton who organized TYFPC’s consultation process, “if we collaborate [cross departmentally], we can make change” (2010, personal interview).

To date the FS has been updated to include the spring’s consultation recommendations and was passed through Board of Health on June 1st. Next, the FS is expected to be approved by the City Manager who will request that “senior Managers across the City prepare to imbed food system thinking into their work plans” (TFPC, 2010a., p.2)

Although the passing of the FS symbolically embeds food system thinking in Toronto, its initial passing through Public Health does not have any financial implications. However, after the fall 2010 City election, the implementation procedures of the FS will be

reassessed and subsequently passed through the Toronto City Council in January 2010. After it is passed by City Council, the FS will be administered to Toronto's agencies, boards, commissions and departments, who will be asked to rethink their effect on Toronto's food supply. This includes the government providing a report that outlines the existing resources and future strategies to influence food. Roberts claims the FS's accountability will help it become an annual report, growing in strength, scope and inclusiveness every year (2010, presentation – May).

The TFPCs relationship to the Food Strategy

The TFPC has played a critical advisory role to the FS Steering Committee by “providing input on key issues, strategy and facilitating linkages” (Toronto MOH, 2009, p.8).

According to the MOH, since the TFPC has become the leading voice in policy-related issues and action-oriented response, the Council is essential to the FS's ability to educate the public, build coalitions and collaborate among a range of sectors. (Toronto MOH, 2010). However, there appears to be a disconnect between the TFPC's advisory function and its internal capacity. Although the TFPC has provided expertise and pushed food system thinking within PH since 1990, to date, the TFPCs future role in the Food Strategy is unclear. While the Council formally adopted the document as its key functioning apparatus on June 17th, the TFPC currently lacks a strategic plan for FS oversight and implementation.

However, given the TFPCs history of maximizing structural opportunities, I believe the Council will leverage the FS for the benefit of the TFPC, food community and embodiment of food system thinking in the City of Toronto. I foresee the TFPC becoming a portal for FS animation or the mechanism by which Toronto's citizens can become engaged with the key 'action steps' recommended. The TFPC must build the FS's momentum and continue to focus on interdepartmental discussion.²¹ According to Dorfman, "the more the Council links what it is doing to the FS's dialogue, the greater impact the implementation will have (Peter Dorfman, 2010, presentation – June).

Despite the opportunistic nature of the FS, the TFPC must balance FS implementation with its other leadership roles and "never lose perspective on influencing the issues" (Dorfman, 2010 – presentation – June). The poor blending of functions combined with the lack of unified strategic vision could potentially lead to internal structural confusion, and thus leave the Council vulnerable. In response to the above dilemma, the TFPC has recently formed three adhoc Committees to address the Council's 1) terms of reference and government structure, 2) recruitment, and 3) diversity of representation. To date, the Committees are meeting to set forth formal guidelines and will report back to the Council in September.

Background – Restructuring of Toronto Public Health. Unlike the FS, the TFPC had little input regarding its position within the upcoming restructuring of Toronto Public Health. According to conversations at the May 16th, 2010 Strategic Planning session,

²¹ Food Strategy Manager Peter Dorfman was part of a panel at the June 7th TFPC public meeting. The panel focused on Food Strategy implementation and the next decade of the TFPC.

until now, the Council has been housed within the directorate of ‘Planning and Policy’. During the next six months, the TFPC will be redirected to ‘Healthy Public Policy’ (Alam, 2010, personal communication – June, Dorfman, 2010, presentation – June). Luckily, the Council’s placement is unlikely to be a long-term solution since under ‘Healthy Public Policy’ the TFPC will have little implementation authority. Therefore, within a few months the TFPC is likely to be resituated to the ‘Healthy Communities’ directorate along side the institutionalized FS (Alam, 2010 – personal communication – May). Since, under ‘Healthy Communities’ the FS and TFPC will function laterally, TFPC Staff Members appear to be optimistic about the Councils’ future position post-restructuring.

Despite the fortunate position of the TFPC within ‘Healthy Communities’, the consequences of upcoming hiring decisions are uncertain. Following the City restructuring, there will be four existing Staff positions between the TFPC and the FS as well as a vacancy in the Healthy Cities directorate position (Alam, 2010, personal conversation – May). The outcomes of hiring decisions on the TFPC will depend on the skill and expertise of the new Council Coordinator and the level of support from new directorate of ‘Healthy Communities’. While the TFPC could be involved in hiring Roberts successor if they so choose, the Council will not be involved in the hiring of the ‘Health Cities’ directorate. If this person is supportive, or as Roberts puts it “does not get in the way” of the TFPC, then the Council will be positioned in a more favorable direction moving forward (2010, presentation – May).

Throughout section 2.7, I have argued that the resiliency of the TFPC throughout four major periods of structural transition has increased its longevity and justifies its reputation as the most successful FPC in North America. The success is relative to the leadership of MacRae and Roberts, the skill of the Council Members, the relationship to municipal government and the ability of the Council to leverage internal and external realities.

In Conclusion, TFPC has become Toronto's 'hub' for food enthusiasts. Furthermore, the Council's organizational capacity has allowed it to attract a wide-range of supporters who believe in the power of collaborative change. This support has resulted in the incubation of several notable projects that have maintained support from the TFPC. One such group consists of a growing mass of Youth eagerly looking for ways to become involved in Toronto's food movement. In the following Chapter, I will provide an in-depth case study on the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council, told from the perspectives of the Council Members themselves.

Chapter 3: The Toronto Youth Food Policy Council

“Youth exist in a permanent state resembling intoxication”

- Aristotle

3.1 How this Chapter is Organized

Throughout Chapter 2, I provided a general overview of the Food Policy Council model, including historical manifestations, roles, functions, challenges and structures. The Chapter concluded with a case study of the Toronto Food Policy Council incubated who and fostered the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council as North America’s first autonomous Youth FPC. Chapter 3 is a collective articulation of the TYFPC’s evolution told by Founding Council Members (FCM) and New Council Members (NCM), as well as the observations of Staff and Members of the TFPC. While Chapter 3 is heavily process-oriented; the Council’s supporting output and documents found in the appendix of my MRP. In addition, Chapter 3 does not necessarily read in chronological order and the challenges associated with particular sections are examined further in Chapter 4.

3.2 The Unique *Transition* of the Youth Experience

There are currently 100 Food Policy Councils in North America that represent a spectrum of food system sectors including production, consumption, processing, distribution and waste recycling. Furthermore, most FPCs prioritize a diversity of representatives from various ethnic, cultural and political demographics. While this diversity has obvious

benefits to the Council's scope and legitimacy, a key group of representatives have been underrepresented throughout traditional policy-making process – Youth! According to Rebecca Schiff, “[Youth have a] degree of audaciousness and daringness among Youth from which FPCs could benefit... it's a unique perspective on current and future needs” (Schiff, 2010, personal interview). In addition, “Youth are crucial to engage in such work because they are the ones who will become the future leaders [of the movement]” (Mansfield, 2010, personal interview).

Youth, by nature, exist in *transition*. We are often living on our own for the first time, buying and preparing food on a limited budget. We are searching for meaningful careers in period of economic struggle and our social awareness is being continually broadened by higher education. However, the reality of this *transition* is that we have become the *distanced* food system's target demographic. For example, Youth are facing skyrocketing rates of food-related illnesses, food bank users under the age of 18 are increasing and future generations of farmers are watching Canada's best farmland being destroyed at the expense of economic development and urban sprawl.

As Bob Dylan once said... *The times, they are a changing*. The *transition* from child to Youth, and Youth to Adult, has been completed by every FPC Member during different phases in our food systems' reality. For example, existing TFPC Members may have actually grown up on a family farm. However, the reality of our current food system is such that my generation represents a diminishing percentage of farmers in North America. Adult Council Members may recall cooking meals from scratch with loved

ones, while my generation is suffering the consequences of nutritional illiteracy and the proliferation of highly processed foods. However growing food system awareness has created an environment by which Youth are becoming increasingly knowledgeable and have avenues to exercise their energy. As Jamie Kennedy said at a recent TYFPC meeting “[Although my generation] has kind of blew it, its up to you to examine how we view food as a culture. A group like [the TYFPC] would not have gathered 30 years ago” (Kennedy, 2010, presentation – June). Yusuf Alam agrees: Youth today “see potential in the gaps... the gaps are only there to be filled” (Alam, 2010, presentation – June).

Youth focus their energy on a wide range of food issues depending on their individual reality. Jessica Thornton believes that, “unless you are battling issues of basic access, one of the scariest issues facing Youth today is worrying about who will actually produce our food as farmers get older (2010, personal interview). What if our ability to access food is denied for reasons outside our control?” FCM Emily Van Halem claims that many Youth are concerned by our poor relationship to food. “Young people’s food skills are lacking because we don’t connect with our food anymore”. The consequences of this disconnect are heightened by a food system that promotes poor body image and negative health consequences (Van Halem, 2010, personal interview). Sarah Mian agrees, “I think the most pressing issue facing Youth today are the [elevated] risks of illness like heart disease, obesity and diabetes” (2010, personal interview).

Still, by and large, the Youth-led food movement is motivated by a generation of knowledge seekers with the desire to question the existing *distanced* food supply. For

example, Slow Food Convivias are emerging at Universities around the world, one-half of college freshmen believe it is “essential to adopt green practices to protect the environment” and even at York University, Healthy Food Initiatives at York brings students and Staff sustainable, home-cooked and affordable meals in a communal environment (Higher Ed Research Institute, 2009, p.4). The momentum, enthusiasm and urgency behind the Youth-led food movement have created a spark for Youth participation in food and agricultural policy.

3.3 Who are the Members of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council?

Toronto’s Youth food movement is characterized by the abundance of experiences and cultural perspectives of those involved. For example, the twelve Members of the TYFPC come from a wide variety of backgrounds including nutrition, community mapping, urban agriculture, culinary arts, public policy, business, social justice and environmental politics. Council Members are also active in various cultural communities including as Members of the Latino, Jewish, Islamic, Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgendered, Portuguese, South East Asian and newcomer communities.

During my interview process, several of the Council Members reflected upon what they specifically contribute to the Council. Hannah Lewis, who recently completed her Masters of Environmental Studies at York University, claims that her experiences leading Community Food Mapping workshops have greatly influenced her knowledge of organizational structures (2010, personal interview):

“I bring organizational and process knowledge about facilitating meetings and workshops in community engagement. My knowledge about food is not necessarily as broad as many Council Members, I’m just starting to learn more about it”.

For Ivan Wadgyamar, his cultural heritage solidified the importance of culinary traditions from an early age. “I’m the son of two Latin American immigrants. Because of my heritage, I what was able to inherit different styles of food [knowledge] which I have been able to incorporate into my life” (Wadgyamar, 2010, personal interview). His families’ tradition of preparing authentic Mexican and Chilean recipes has helped Wadgyamar keep his cultural background alive. He believes that these experiences will assist him in bringing a new asset to the TYFPC (Wadgyamar, 2010, personal interview):

“I defiantly think that one of my contributions to the TYFPC will be finding new ways to diversify the community. I would like to find ways to expand to different neighborhoods in Toronto, as well as to different educational backgrounds”.

TYFPC Secretary Sarah Mian says that by growing up in a Muslim household, she has witnessed the availability of culturally appropriate foods in Toronto shift through her parents (2010, personal interview).

“My families’ religious values influence me. We eat mostly lamb. Back in the 70’s when my parents arrived, there were very limited places they could get Halal meat. In the 80’s it began to grow more. Now, if you go to Pakistan, or come here, you will find the same foods. Anything you want in Toronto, you got it.

New Council Member Hudson Bernard recently finished his chef training at George Brown College and brings culinary lens to the TYFPC (2010, personal interview):

“I have been cooking since I was 13, so pretty early for North American chefs. As the culinary voice, I help to put everything into perspective. Chefs need to know where there food comes from, where it is going and how it is processed – we fit perfectly into the food movement. In fact, we need to be included”

Although the Council Members have varying degrees of experience and expertise, they all share something in common - a love for food and a desire to change the current problematic system. TYFPC Co-founder Ashley Andrade’s familial care-giving experiences led her to pursue a Master’s in Nutrition Communication at Ryerson University (2010, personal interview):

“My grandmother was living with diabetes and had suffered a stroke. My mother and I made her meals. By providing her the therapeutic meals, I noticed improvement in her quality of life, and that is when I realized there is a link between food and health.

Jessica Thornton, co-lead of the *Policy and Research Committee*, first became aware of the effects of individual food choice in grade 12 after taking an Ontario Academic Credit course on World Issues (2010, personal interview):

“The class had to do a project on a food item that was problematic, and then we had to share the facts with a grocery store. I chose to bananas. I could not believe that people were being murdered, union leaders were disappearing, and people were dying from pesticides floating in the water. It just really resonated with me, even before issues of localism meant anything. I stopped eating bananas until I found out about fair trade”.

As a recent graduate of the University of Toronto, Jason Qu, experienced the effects of food choice on a very personal level after losing 40-45 pounds in his adolescence (2010, personal interview).

“Growing up, my parents worked really hard so they were not around very much. I had to cook for myself, starting at age 10 or 11, and a lot would be convenience food. When I got a bit older, I got better at cooking and I started losing weight. I realized it was all interconnected; I needed to lose weight because I was eating poorly, because my parents worked so hard. This just happens to Youth, and we [often] don’t have an opportunity to reflect on the way things are”.

Finally, another Council Member had exceptional health issues, which made her completely rethink what she was eating. Because of this, she believes that “life experiences alter people’s behavior. If you don’t have anything big happen to you, or someone you love, you may not understand or notice that there are hardships in life” (Anonymous, 2010, personal interview) .

My personal connection to food originated as the daughter of a vegetable farmer in central Wisconsin. Although I worked numerous summers on our families 600 acres of onions, carrots, potatoes and mint, it was not until university that I realized the inequalities of the food system. As a junior at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire I enrolled in an Ecofeminism course, where I learned about the interconnection between the degradation of the environment, women and agriculture. This knowledge led me to launch a public awareness campaign in independent grocery stores where I taught consumers about the benefits of buying local foods and compiled lists of foods that were grown or processed in Wisconsin. In addition, I surveyed participants on their consumption preferences, while trying to uncover barriers to buying more local and sustainable food. The survey results were presented at several conferences, in addition to opening up a summer internship with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture. Although the majority of my academic and entrepreneurial life centers on sustainable food supplies and policies in urban settings, I am very grounded by my background with agriculture. Given that the number of farmers below the age of 35 has dropped to nine percent in 2009, I often reflect upon the importance of Youth learning how to farm sustainably near urban settings (Secombe, 2008).

Although the majority of Council Members are quite knowledgeable about the food system, FCM Emily Van Halem argues that the TYFPC should also create a space for Youth to develop their knowledge alongside one another. “I don’t think we should exclude people because they don’t have food knowledge, I think passion is a really big part of it, and giving people a space to foster their development” (Van Halem, 2010, personal interview).



Several of the Council Members pose for a picture at Council Member Pizza Party

Picture Courtesy of Julia Wan

3.4 History of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council: The Build Up

Although the birth of the TYFPC in 2009 was the first time the TFPC explicitly prioritized Youth inclusion, the founding Council of the 1990's was comprised of several people under the age of 30 (MacRae, 2010, personal interview). MacRae says “there was not explicit talk about inviting young people to sit on the Council... however, they were still major contributors particularly in the anti-poverty and entrepreneurial sectors” (2010, personal interview). For example, Mike Schreiner, now Leader of the Green Party of Ontario, represented community economic development at age 26 or 27 recalls MacRae. Younger Council Members came with a fresh way of looking at the issues, “the energy that young people brought was infectious” (MacRae 2010, personal interview).

As time progressed, Wayne Roberts claims that the need for a Youth sub-committee of the TFPC became increasingly apparent (2010, personal interview). As discussed in Chapter 2, the 1998 amalgamation of the City of Toronto forced Roberts to focus the TFPC towards the Board of Health in the early 2000's. As a result, Roberts realized that everyone on the FPC had to have major credentials in order to reorient the FPC in that hostile environment. However, as a result “people with thinner CV's could not get on the FPC” (Roberts, 2010, personal interview). Given their lack of professional experience, Youth representatives were unable to become Members of the TFPC. Roberts explains “A red light [went] off in my head, and it's been flashing for almost a decade” (Roberts, 2010, personal interview.).

Still, the inclusion of more credentialed Members did result in several positive outcomes for the Youth of Toronto. For example “the TFPC [was now able to hold] open meetings

and oversee a large list serve that reached many demographics” (Roberts 2010, personal interview). Furthermore, the transparency of TFPC meetings generated a very large Youth audience. “By 2002-2003, you had to be asleep not to notice the people coming to our meetings were Youth... this is where the energy was” (Roberts 2010, personal interview). As TFPC member Wally Seccombe recalls, “It was obvious that young people were excited about the kinds of discussions that were taking place” (2010, personal interview).

Still, although Youth were actively attending TFPC meetings, they were still considered to be part of the audience rather than active participants. Hannah Lewis recalls being one of the younger audience Members prior to the birth of the TYFPC (2010, personal interview):

“At first I was not sure why we would need a Youth FPC, but at that moment I suddenly realized everyone on my side of the room was under the age of 40, and everyone on the other side of the room, the important side of the room, was over the age of 40. And then I started thinking, yes, this (TYFPC) is necessary!”

TFPC Staff Member Yusuf Alam recalls Youth being a demographic of interest when he was a Member of the TFPC in 2005. Although he considered himself to be a representative of the environmental movement, Alam says “the Council was looking for a voice [from me] that represented Youth and communities of color” (2010, personal interview). In addition, Alam believes his “Membership was internally kept grey; some

times I was told I was there to represent I organization, and other times because of my experiences. However, the overall flavor of the room was that I was looked at to talk on behalf of Youth issues” (Alam, 2010, personal interview).

When Alam was hired as a Public Health Consultant in early 2009, he was asked by Roberts to focus on Youth engagement and issues surrounding poverty and hunger. The TFPC was clearly in favor of Youth engagement, claims Alam. As internal conversations started to manifest, Alam recalls Council Members asking themselves “are we going to have Youth Members or subcommittees” (Alam, 2010, personal interview). The time was right recalls Sercombe, “The TFPC was obviously enormously benefiting from the kind of enthusiasm and fresh perspectives and capacity for work and analysis that the Youth generation was giving us” (2010, personal interview).

Furthermore, Rod MacRae claims that the municipal process of the TFPC will benefit from the inclusion of Youth. As Adults who may have been involved with the movement for years, many Council Members may stop looking at the issues in a fresh way, while Youth often bring in a fresh perspective and creative ideas (MacRae, 2010, personal interview). In addition to the external benefit of including Youth in the municipal food policy discussion, the Youth involvement would also assist the TFPC in a tumultuous political environment (Roberts, 2010, personal interview). Roberts suggests the Youth Council was part of the TFPC’s strategic thinking; “right now the City is getting along with us, but you never know when that is going to end. “If there is a Youth Council

behind the TFPC, it would be a lot harder to bring Toronto's movement down" (2010, personal interview).

Given the supportive climate of the TFPC and the energy of the Youth community the time was right for the Youth Food Policy Council to turn from a theoretical idea into a formal voice. In February of 2009 while enrolled in Rod MacRae's Food Policy course, I emailed the TFPC to inquire about possible internship opportunities with the Council. Alam responded almost immediately, saying "We do not have funding to bring anyone on in a paid capacity, but I am always willing to talk to you about building a project if you think it could align with your area of study" (2009, personal communication - January). After meeting with Alam in mid-February, I remember feeling encouraged about the possibility of volunteering with the TFPC and its openness to fostering leadership within the food movement. Alam also reiterates the importance of capitalizing on citizen interest; "I have always worked for an organization with open doors. If I cannot get you a seat on the inside where I am, let's talk about ideas and I'll give you my advice" (Alam, 2010, personal interview).

In March, TYFPC Co-founder Ashley Andrade attended a TFPC meeting after hearing about the Council through Cecilia Roche, her Nutrition professor at Ryerson University. Andrade recalls that she "really wanted to immerse [herself] more in food policy and related food issues. When it came time to do my practicum, a light bulb went off" (2010, personal interview). By April, Andrade was speaking with Alam regarding a placement with the TFPC.

Andrade and I began collaborating, and soon realized that we were both incredibly interested in the idea of forming a Youth Group. Although Andrade's focus was primarily to create a newsletter and blog, we both realized the importance structuring ourselves from the ground-up. In June, we organized a series of public interest meetings at Metro Hall, which were attended by Youth, organizational leaders and Youth allies. Andrade recalls, "Tracy and I worked diligently to network and meet with Toronto's interested Youth. We took the feedback and analyzed it, and soon realized that a Youth Food Policy Council was the ultimate way to engage" (2010, personal interview). During July 2009, we invited roughly eight Youth to be part of a Steering Committee that would discuss 1) What it meant to *be* a Youth Food Policy Council, 2) How we would organize ourselves, and, 3) How we would define 'Youth'. Vice-Chair Tammara Soma recalls being invited to attend the Steering Committee meetings, and "for the first time, thinking this is actually happening" (2010, personal interview). TYFPC Secretary Sarah Mian found the visioning sessions to be very helpful, "we really saw something in our potential" (2010, personal interview).

By the end of July amidst a City-wide strike, Andrade and I were at a stand still: do we spend the fall months recruiting a greater *diversity* of Youth, or do we capitalize off the momentum generated by Youth who had already contributed to the Steering Committee meetings? However, given the energy and enthusiasm expressed by the eight participating Youth at a potluck on August 27th, we decided to formally introduce ourselves to the City at the TFPC's September 9th meeting at City Hall.

The August 27th potluck was also an important precursor to the Youth Council's unveiling for several reasons. It allowed the group to nominate and vote on four executive positions – Chair (Tracy Phillippi), Vice Chair (Tammara Soma), Secretary (Sarah Mian) and Treasurer (Hannah Lewis). Council Members also arranged themselves into Committees and volunteered to make presentations to solidify the groups' legitimacy amongst participating attendees and Toronto's larger food community. "It was perfect timing, we did it right", recalls Andrade (2010, personal interview). Alam agrees, towards the end of the summer "it naturally started snowballing; [the Youth Council] had the energy and motivation of dedicated individuals" (2010, personal interview).

Introduction of the TYFPC on September 9th, 2009

The September 9th introduction of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council exceeded the expectations of everyone in the room. "If that many people came out and were excited and optimistic that the TYFPC could represent them, then that was a really good sign" (Lewis, 2010, personal interview). Soma recalls the afternoon being a celebration, complete with influential City Councilors and Members of the Media, (2010, personal interview).

In addition to formally introducing ourselves to the TFPC and Toronto's food community, the TYFPC prepared an agenda, which included presentations, Committee introductions and possible working initiatives. More specifically, the presentations reflected relationships that had been built by the steering committee over the summer of

2009. For example, after correspondence and consultation with EcoSchools Student Leadership Facilitator Maggie Ballantyne, , the TYFPC decided to publicly endorse an earlier report prepared by Students of Toronto for Environmental Progress regarding the accessibility of locally grown food in schools. Soma and I also reflected upon the early stages of the Toronto Food Strategy through a panel discussion with Peter Dorfman and Emily Van Halem discussed Youth leadership opportunities from her experience as a Metcalf intern with Local Food Plus and FoodShare. The meeting concluded with the proposal of a formal working relationship between the TYFPC and the TFPC. This agreement is discussed further in section 3.7.

The introduction of the TYFPC also proved to be ideal timing for the TFPC, who was returning to business after Toronto's 2009 summer labor dispute. Alam recalls the discouraged Council seeing many of its earlier initiatives die as a result of the strike. However the TYFPC (2010, personal interview):

“Came out the other side [of the strike] as a Youth group [that had] manifested itself. Not only did [TYFPC] have a core group of impressive people, but [the TYFPC] also had networks in the community, a structure, and something intelligent to say”.

TFPC Member Wally Seccombe also shared in the excitement of the September 9th joint meeting. “I was ecstatic”, says Seccombe (2010, personal interview):

“I was impressed by how far [the TYFPC] had gotten in thinking the whole thing out, [the Council] even had the beginnings of committees and foci. [The TYFPC] had made a seamless blend between research interests and what this body could do in a collective sense. [The TYFPC] had the same sense of can do enthusiasm and a critique of the larger food system obstinacies to change. I saw it, that capacity of people who were critical of the food system and also believed (that) [the Council] could change it. That is the golden mean of activism. I was sitting beside Toronto City Councilor Shelley Carroll, and we were both muttering to one another, *Huh... This is amazing, what a knock out!* It was a dream come true”



Members of the Toronto Food Policy Council and Toronto Food Policy Council at the September 9th, 2009 introduction of the TYFPC at City Hall

Photograph Courtesy of Jocelyn Richards

TYFPC as a Hybrid Food Policy Council Model

As discussed in Chapter 2, FPCs generally fulfill four overlapping roles – educator, networker, policy advisor and program creator – to varying degrees depending on the Councils’ structure and jurisdictional representation. Since Youth traditionally have less applicable experience with the policy-making process, interviewees expressed confusion regarding the actual role of a FPC within the CFAPC framework. However, I argue that this naiveté regarding formal FPC process and structure actually benefited the TYFPC in our first year of operation. Since we did not distinctly know what a FPC *should do*, we were able to respond directly to specific opportunities that presented themselves and create a Council structure that worked for our dynamic group of Youth.

Although Chapter 2 proved that FPCs are most successful when they have access to government and resources, the ‘hybrid model’ worked well for the TYFPC as we gained strength and momentum. The TYFPC originated out of an institutionalized relationship between Ashley Andrade and me, and Staff Members of Toronto Public Health. Since our inception, the TYFPC has received significant support from the TFPC, and yet, has remained an autonomous body. Although we do not report directly to the Public Health, we do make bi-monthly reports to the TFPC, who in turn legitimizes our existence within the bureaucratic framework. This relationship has allowed us to contribute policy recommendations to the Toronto Food Strategy, utilize TFPC’s external relationships and develop strong relationship with TFPC Staff and Council Members.

However, while the TYFPC is grateful for the support of the TFPC, we must be careful not to depend too heavily on individual champions, particularly given the current restructuring of Toronto Public Health and the unknown implications associated with the hiring of TFPC Staff. Still, although I argue that a formalized relationship to the government is structurally preferred, the current autonomy of the TYFPC may provide a critical balance during political changes.

In following sections, I will elaborate further on the TYFPC as a hybrid FPC model, and our ability to successfully respond to opportunities and relationships that were presented throughout our first year of existence. The Challenges to the TYFPC model as a result of our structure will be observed in Chapter 4.

3.5 Structure of the TYFPC

During the months following the introduction of the TYFPC, Council Members saw an incredible level of interest from the both the Youth and food community in Toronto. The supportive relationships built throughout this timeframe heavily influenced the Council's course of action. In the following suggestion, I will elaborate upon the present functioning structure of the TYFPC, specifically the "Three C's of Council Membership, the Council decision making process, Strategic Plan, Membership Agreement, Council Expansion and Grant Application process. Due to the non-compartmental fluidity of our expansion, the structural components described below may not necessarily be in chronological order, but rather represent several pieces of the TYCPCs capacity.

Three C's of Council Membership

During the fall of 2009, the founding Members of the *Member and Community Relations Committee* outlined the “Three C’s of Council Membership” through the development of the TYFPC Member Agreement (see Appendix). According to the subsequently formative meetings, the “Three C’s of Council Membership” allow for any food-passionate Youth in Toronto to become involved with the Council according to their availability and level of interest. The “Three C’s” include 1) Council Members who are active in on least one of four Committees and attend bi-monthly Council Meetings, 2) Consultants who work with the Committee on projects or contribute to food policy research, and 3) Community Members who attend bi-monthly Community Meetings, participate in TYFPC affiliated events or write for the newsletter. As Consultants or Community Members, Youth have the flexibility to participate as frequently or infrequently as they desire. For recent graduate Michele German, the TYFPC Community serves as a hub for Youth involvement in food issues. “When I attend meetings and events I am mingling with other informed and dedicated Youth who are all working towards reaching a more equitable food system” (German, 2010, personal interview).

As previously stated, each Council Member actively contributes to at least one of four Committees, including the *Research and Policy Committee (RPC)*, *Event Coordination and Project Management (ECPM)*, *Newsletter, Web, and Media (NWM)*, and *Member*

and Community Relations (MCR). The four Committees are described in depth in Section 3.7.

Given the definition of a ‘working Council’, I argue that Council Members, Community Members and Consultants volunteer time outside of Council meetings to complete related activities or research. However, while Youth may lack resources, they often have the flexibility to take on additional work through their volunteer capacity. For example, Youth could potentially receive university credit or service learning hours for their involvement with the Council. In addition, Youth may have more available time to spend on Council activity if they don’t have a full time job or children to care for.

Council Decision Making

According to the Strategic Plan of the TYFPC, discussed in depth below, the TYFPC makes decisions by consensus and operate[s] using a combination of two models (2009):

- Whole Group Model – group operates as a team, a leader is needed to schedule things and lead the group so that everyone has a chance to contribute
- Team Model – group broken into sub-groups [Committees], each team functions similarly to the Whole Group Model, a leader coordinates the various teams.

Although to date, the functioning capability of the TYFPC largely resembles the Whole Group and Team Model, on March 22nd the Council Members voted to adapt a modified decision making process due to poor communication patterns. Prior to the March 22nd vote of the Council Members, Thornton pointed out that “There needs to be a better understanding that part of [being a Council Member] is to respond to emails”. Her sentiment was shared by other Council Members who repeatedly emphasized the importance of email communication. After a discussion amongst Council Members, the group decided that, in order for consensus to be reached, seven of 12 Council Members must provide an affirmative response via email. If consensus was not reached, discussion would be encouraged. However, if an issue required an immediate vote (within a few days), decision by text message would be appropriate. This method proved successful during a June 2010 vote related to funding issues. Communication challenges faced by the TYFPC are discussed further in Chapter 4.



Council and Community Members discuss culinary institutions at the June 7th Community Meeting

Photograph courtesy of Tracy Phillippi

Strategic Plan

The *Member and Community Relations Committee* organized two Strategic Planning sessions. The sessions took place over lunch at FoodShare on September 30th and October 26th 2009, and were facilitated by TFPC Staff Yusuf Alam. The Strategic Planning process used by Alam was modified from a document 2000 entitled “Planning for Change: Strategic Planning and Program Planning for Non Profit Groups”. According to the Community Animation Program and the Community Mobilization Program in Atlantic Canada (2000, p.4):

“Strategic planning is a step-by-step process that identifies who you are, where you are, where you want to go, how you wish to get there, when you want to arrive, who will do the work, and what the costs are. It is more than just planning. It’s strategic. Part of developing a strategic plan is to look internally at your group and then to the world outside to help determine how to make your vision become a reality. It provides a framework for activity”.

Strategic Planning serves a diverse range of purposes for organizational start-up and longevity. For example, the process can increase group cohesion by clarifying roles, convey the mission, vision goals and objectives to those involved, provide a bases for which progress can be measured, and, solve problems that the organization may be facing (Community Animation Program, 2000).

Below is a comprehensive chart which outlines the recommended ten-step process of Strategic Planning, as stated by the authors (2000):

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Who are we? | Step 1: Create or affirm an organizational vision and mission. Some groups also identify shared values and develop guiding principles and organizational structure. |
| Where are we now? | Step 2: (Internal) Analyze the current plan (if one exists), and the financial administrative performance of the organization, Step 3: (External) Assess and document the community issues to which the organization is responding. Step 4: Assess strengths, threats, weaknesses and opportunities – factors that will affect the organization and influence planning. |
| Where do we want to go? | Step 5: Prepare preliminary goals and objectives based on the information gathered and assessed in steps 1-4. If necessary revisit and reaffirm the vision and mission in light of new information. Step 6: review and validate the goals and objectives. |
| How do we get there? | Step 7: Develop a financial plan and budget to support the goals and objectives. Step 8: Develop an action plan for each objective. Develop a Communications plan. Step 9: Prepare a comprehensive plan for review, approval and implementation. |
| How are we doing? | Step 10: Evaluate progress and update the plan on a regular basis. |

Given the time constraints of everyone involved, the FCMs completed Step 1 through Step 6, with additional consideration for Step 7 (grant application), Step 8 (committee meetings) and future discussion of Step 10 (summer evaluation) throughout the 2009-2010 Council year. Specific and complete conclusions of the Step 1 through Step 6 can be obtained in the Appendix.

For the FCMs, the step-by-step process was incredibly helpful, reflects FCM member Emily Van Halem. “I was super impressed by the Strategic Planning process, because it created a sense of identity for TYFPC Members” (Van Halem, 2010, personal interview).

Other FCM expressed similar sentiments throughout the Council term, including the feeling that the process brought them closer together and shaped a unified voice.

Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives of the TYFPC

To frame the remainder of my MRP as a collective articulation of the Council, the following section states the groups Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives. To ensure the actualization of the Strategic Plan, FCM decided to assign at least one of the four Committees to each objective. Committee commitment is found in parenthesis following each of the objectives, with the exception of Objective 1.1., which is a responsibility of TYFPC Members appointed as Youth representatives on the TFPC.

Vision Statement:

Mobilize and engage Youth to make change by building a just food system

Mission Statement:

We, as Youth, are dedicated to building a food system that is sustainable, equitable, regionally-focused and accessible. As a group that represents the diversity of Toronto, we will seek to build community partnerships, produce Youth-centered policy documents and encourage the development of sustainable food system infrastructure in Toronto

Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: To be the leading Toronto Youth Voice in Food and Agriculture Policy

Objective 1.1 - Engage with the TFPC on two key issues per year

Objective 1.2 - Achieve one key change to Toronto's publicly funded school food policy in one year (RPC)

Objective 1.3 - Produce four papers on food issues per year (RPC)

Objective 1.4 - Create and distribute bi-monthly newsletter to reach 5,000 individuals (NWMC)

Goal 2: To create a space for Youth to connect, learn and be empowered to take action in food issues

Objective 2.1 - Hold monthly meetings of 50 people on food issues (MCRC)

Objective 2.2 – Hold, or collaborate on, three events per year (ECPMC)

Objective 2.3 - Utilize personal and electronic networks to share information and opportunities as they arise (MCR and NWMC)

Membership Agreement

Like the Strategic Plan, the Member Agreement of the TYFPC was created by the *Member and Community Relations Committee* and later approved by the Council. The Member Agreement consists of three components and is meant to formally outline the relationship between the TYFPC as a body and the Council Members as individuals. The

three components include 1) The purpose and scope of the agreement, 2) Its background, and, 3) The responsibilities of the TYFPC and Council Members. The document can be obtained in the Appendix of my MRP.

Members of the Committee met several times to develop the document following the cooperative evolution of the Strategic Plan. Specifically, recalls Van Halem , “we talked about the number of meeting Members would attend, the length of [Council] Membership commitment, and about having capacity building sessions over the summer” (2010, personal interview). Van Halem believes it is important for interested Youth to know the responsibilities of Council Membership before becoming a Member as well as having a signed document that both Members and the TFPC can refer to. “If Youth [feel they] cannot commit, maybe [they] would want to consider being involved in a different role, and the Three C’s allow for that” (Van Halem, 2010, personal interview).

Another important component of the Member Agreement is that it outlines the duration of Council Membership. Since Youth, by nature, are incredibly mobile, the Council recognizes and encourages summer internships, travel or agricultural opportunities. Therefore, formal Council activity will take place from September to June, with an optional sub-committee meeting during July and August. The *Interim Sub-Committee* will meet intermittently to review the Strategic Plan, Member Agreement, and Council expansion process. To date, three Council Members have agreed to be active on the Committee, with another volunteering occasional help.

It should also be noted that the Council Members did not formally sign the Member Agreement during the 2009-2010 Council Term. Several Council Members have expressed a strong desire to prioritize the updating and mandatory signing of the Member Agreement during at the beginning of the 2010-2011 Council Term.

Council Expansion Process

By November 2009, FCMs collectively decided to expand the Council from six active Members to 12 in 2010. This decision was a result of multiple factors including the 1) Unified Membership Agreement which outlined what it means to be a Council member, 2) Interest from the Youth Community to take on more responsibility, and 3) Benefit of greater Council Member involvement.

By mid-December, the *Member and Community Relations Committee* created a New Council Member (NCM) application. The application was distributed through our networks, list serves and by word of mouth. As previously mentioned, the TYFPC did not want to exclude Youth who lacked expertise in food knowledge, but rather, hoped to foster leadership potential. Therefore, instead of being primarily based on experience, the application asked Youth to 1) Share stories about their relationship with food, 2) Highlight what they brought to the TYFPC, and 3) Specify their Committee interest and why, in addition to providing a copy of their resume. This process, claims Van Halem, would help the Council access the applicants' level of enthusiasm as opposed to strictly their credentials. "There are many Youth [for] whom food is their life and they have a lot

of skills to offer, but they also have a university degree or they have great experiences that come from a life of privilege” (Van Halem, 2010, personal interview).

The TYFPC stopped accepting applications on January 15th and FCM found themselves with the task of selecting seven NCM from a list of 35 applicants. Andrade recalls thinking, “it was really exciting for me to read everyone’s application, but, how do you only pick a hand full from all of these Youth who are interested?” (2010, personal interview). Lewis, on the other hand, felt humbled by the process, which reinforced how important and big the movement is (2010, personal interview):

“Wow, 35 people want to be on the Council and so many people come to the meetings; we are the first in North America. This experience has made us sit back and realize the size of what we are involved in. This is something real... so much more than I expected a new organization could have accomplished in its first months”.

To democratically narrow-down the roster of very qualified candidates, TYFPC used a ‘dot-mocracy’ by which each Member selected their top ten applicants. The ‘top-ten’ lists were then compiled and raked by the Chair based upon individual frequency of votes. The top twelve candidates’ applications were then given to a TFPC Staff Member, who made the final selection. Given the restrictively tight time frame, the dot-mocracy resulted in a well-rounded selection as every FCM was given an equal say in the expansion process.

The seven NCM were immediately notified and offered a position on the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council. Unfortunately, one of the seven new Council Members severed communication and therefore was withdrawn from the Council. New Council Members were introduced at the February 1st TYFPC Community Meeting. Despite the high caliber of NCM, we agreeably faced several communication and process-based challenges during expansions, which are discussed in Chapter 4.

Grant Application

The ability of FPCs to be successful often depends on its access to secured funding sources. While the TFPC has a modest budget and Staff, the Youth Council does not directly receive operational funding from Public Health. However, given the TFPCs hybrid model and the formal working relationship with the TFPC, we do receive Staff support and access to printing.

In addition, the TYFPC has been privileged to build relationships with organizations and individuals who have provided resources throughout our first year of existence. Despite their support, we have realized that in order to sustain ourselves in the future, we need to have more substantial and reliable financial support. After weighing our options, we decided to pursue the Laidlaw Foundation's 2010 grant application. According to their website, the "Laidlaw Foundation promotes positive Youth development through inclusive Youth engagement in the arts, environment and in community" (accessed

2010). As an autonomous Youth group that seeks to create avenues of agency within Toronto's municipal food policy structure, the TYFPC believed we were an ideal candidate for the Laidlaw Grant Application.

Thornton, and I spent a month preparing the application, budget and work plan. We also received letters of reference from TFPC Coordinator Wayne Roberts and Citizen Co-Chair Janice Etter. After a series of drafts, the TYFPC requested \$18,768.00, including an in-kind donation of \$139,080.00 that comprised of Council Member (8 hours/week @ \$12.00/hour) and TFPC Staff time. In accordance with the Council's decision-making process, we received a majority Council Member vote on the final application before it was submitted. A complete copy of the grant can be found in the Appendix of my MRP.

Although the possibility of future funding makes the process worthwhile, Thornton says that the grant writing process was the Council's most challenging task to date "It forced us to formally express the missions and goals of the organization and to attempt to foresee the next 18 months which for a new organization, is extremely challenging" (2010, personal communication - April).

Unfortunately, I was informed that the TYFPC was not selected as a Laidlaw grant recipient on May 31st. Although the decision came as a shock to Members of the TYFPC, we are currently awaiting feedback as to why we were not selected. Upon its review, Thornton and I may decide to request a meeting with the Laidlaw liaison in an effort to better understand future eligibility. The challenges associated with lack of

funding are examined further in Chapter 4. Still, despite the disappointment, the experience was still a valuable learning experience for the Council as it forced us to solidify our future goals and path to achieving them.

3.6 Meeting Structure of the TYFPC

In the previous section, I outlined the specific roles of Consultants, Community and Council Members. However, to more accurately depict the effectiveness of the “Three C’s”, I will provide an historical analysis on the evolution of the Council’s bi-monthly Community Meetings and facilitation methods used.

Community Meetings

As previously mentioned, the TYFPC held its first formal meeting on September 9th, 2009. The following months brought an increasing level of interest among food-passionate Youth and therefore high levels of attendance at meetings. From September to December 2009, the TYFPC organized monthly meetings that simultaneously served as meetings of the Council Members. However, by December, it became apparent that the Council Members needed to meet in a closed setting to discuss and vote upon Council business. Rather than meeting twice a month (thus preventing Council Member burnout), the TYFPC decided to hold alternating bi-monthly meetings of Council Members and

Community Members.²² The alternating meetings were then titled “Community Meetings”, and “Council Meetings”.

The Community Meetings have evolved significantly since the fall of 2010. As outlined below, the meetings transitioned from being heavily scripted and presentation-oriented to more participatory in nature. The chart below depicts the seven Community Meetings held during the 2009-2010 Council term, chronological transitions that occurred, and notable Youth reaction.

| | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| September 9th | - Introduction to the TFPC and Public Health - Introduction of Council Members and Committees - Presentations about the Food Strategy, ‘Students of Toronto for Environmental Progress’ | “We have an open, safe space. It’s not a didactic environment” (Andrade, 2010, personal interview). |
| October 5th | - Scripted elaboration on the TYFPC - Brainstorming session with participants | “I really liked breaking into sub groups and forming ideas and brainstorming. I can testify that, as a shy person, the small groups were much more constructive” (Wadgyamar, 2010, personal interview) |
| November 2nd | - ‘Canadian Food Policy... A Strange Fruit’ Expert Policy Panel - Presentation from PACT ‘Grow to Learn Urban Agriculture Initiative’ | “The TYFPC gets people to meetings because there is a reason to go, and the networking is an off-shoot which feeds into its self”. (Van Halem, 2010, personal interview) |
| December 7th | - Presentations from Food Cycles and Everdale Organic Farm and Environmental Learning Center | “I loved the relaxed environment, thought-provoking and stimulating debates and the passion and ambition the TYFPC demonstrated” (Anonymous Community Member, 2010) |
| February 1st | - Introduction of New Council Members - Presentation from Afri-Can | “Open Space Technology was a much better way to run a meeting, and everyone left the room full of energy” |

²² Council Member meetings are closed and attended by Council Members and TFPC Staff. Community Meetings are open to anyone who wishes to attend, Youth or Adult.

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| | Food Basket Youth - Open Space Technology Event about Toronto Food Strategy (see below for details) | (Thornton, 2010, personal interview). |
| April 12th | - Presentation from Hot Yam, HiFIY Youth - Community Food Mapping Workshop with Council Member Hannah Lewis | “This was a great learning opportunity. I also liked the community mapping, it was very interesting way to identify problems and possible actions. I’m glad I was able to participate” (Anonymous Community Member, 2010) |
| June 7th | - Presentation from Chef Jamie Kennedy - Development of recommendations to culinary institutions encouraging a local and sustainable focus in curriculum | “Developing effective meetings is important because a strong foundation leads to a critical mass of participants who have a positive perception of the organization and who will respond to the energy in the room” (Van Halem, 2010, personal interview). |

To date, the TYFPC feels as though we have found a meeting agenda that best fits the dynamic of the participating Community Members. As of February 1st, the Community Meetings were organized to include:

- Mingling and Welcome 5:30-5:40
- Introductions of participants 5:40-5:45
- Committee Update 5:45-5:55
- Open space to share opportunities 5:55-6:00
- Presentations from active Youth 6:00-6:45
- Brainstorming session, interactive workshop, etc. 6:45-7:30
- Extended networking, mingling and social hour 7:30- Onward

The TYFPC has received very positive feedback from Community Members regarding the participatory nature of bi-monthly meetings. Michelle German recalls making several connections through the Community Meetings (2010, personal interview):

“Professionally the TYFPC connected me to my current employer (Real Food For Real Kids), by allowing me to interact with the founder of the company in a casual way. I owe my current job as a Lunch Club Coach to this experience and am a firm believer in the value of social networking. On a personal level I have formed friendships with people that grew out of sharing a similar passion for food justice issues and blossomed into supportive and meaningful relationships. On a community level I have connected with various initiatives Like the Young Urban Farmers CSA, which I have now taken an active role and am excited about its growth”.

Before becoming a Council Member in January 2010, Ivan Wadgyamar attended every fall meeting and feels as though he repeatedly made important connections through networking. “I was amazed at how organized [the meetings were]. I had a preconception that it may be disoriented... but the openness really worked to the TYFPCs advantage” (Wadgyamar, 2010, personal interview). Other anonymous Community Members expressed similar sentiments through feedback forms (discussed below). One participant said, “I love meeting other people and getting involved in their initiatives; they have greatly enhanced my *foodie* life and given me a community to identify with” (Anonymous Community Member, 2010).



NCM Chris Wong and Community Member Michelle German Participate in a Community Food Mapping Workshop at the April 12th Community Meeting

Photograph Courtesy of Cindy Brooks

Community Meeting Evaluation and Feedback

Throughout the evolution of the Community Meetings, the TYFPC realized the importance of allowing the Youth Community to provide feedback through evaluation.

According to Lewis (2010, personal interview):

“All the Youth that come to our meeting should feel that we are an ongoing representation of them. [We must] show them that we are not just collecting data from them that we are going to take, but that their amazing experiences can then go back into the Community and also to the TFPC. Part of making the TYFPC a truly Youth-focused organization is honoring those Youth by giving the

information back to them, so they can take the document back to their organization or community or academic work”.

Beginning at the April 12th Community Meeting, the TYFPC has been administering feedback forms for attendees to complete. The feedback forms ask participants to both reflect on their experiences as a Community Member, and provide constructive suggestions on how the TYFPC can improve meetings.²³ For example, some participants provided ideas for future meeting while other respondents wanted to know more about the Council’s Committees, specifically the TYFPCs involvement in the Toronto Food Strategy.

Alternative Meeting Facilitation: Open Space Technology

The progression of the Community Meetings to be more participatory in nature coincided with my coursework in ‘Facilitations in Environmental Studies’ at York University where I explored more thoroughly alternative techniques in facilitation. One particular method that was modified and orchestrated during the February 1st Community Meeting was Open Space Technology (OST). Although OST is more thoroughly explored in Product 1 of my MRP, I would briefly like to elaborate on the modified OST event designed by the TYFPC to address the Toronto Food Strategy.

²³ Proposed ideas for future meeting themes included food and parenting, genetic engineering, urban agriculture initiatives and the use of public space for food preparation.

According to Harrison Owen who discovered OST, group facilitators must learn to “let it go” and “make it happen” (1991, p. 148). In this case, ‘it’ means ‘Control’; a concept perceived in Western culture to be the epitome of success. If one ‘controls’ the situation, their desired outcome will prevail and their status will be maintained among the group. The TYFPC has prioritized an egalitarian meeting style by which every Youth opinion is considered equally relevant. However, in order to create an open space where participants feel comfortable to voice their opinions, Council Members, specifically the Chair must learn to let go of control. In addition to actively giving up control, Council Members must trust that the participants will ‘self-organize’ to achieve the only outcome possible (Owen, Spirit).

As discussed in section 3.7 the TYFPC has been given the unique opportunity to provide a Youth perspective to the Toronto Food Strategy. During the TYFPC’s modified experimentation with OST on February 1st, the Youth Community was able to uncover several themes relating the “Youth food experience in Toronto”, which would later form the TYFPCs deputation to February 16th meeting of Board of Health and formal Food Strategy consultation on March 30th.

About nine topics were initially proposed during the modified OST event. After a discussion amongst topic initiators, several topics were amalgamated resulting in six discussion groups. Each initiator was given the responsibility of recording the discussion and returning the results to me electronically. I then compiled, formatted and linked each

summary together and shared the results with the group. Discussion topics proposed included:

1. Access to urban farmland, navigating bureaucracy and new farmer training;
2. Youth, food and eating disorders
3. Food marketing to Youth and the proliferation of processed foods;
4. Use of media and social networking to target and engage Youth
5. Increasing childhood obesity, diabetes and allergies;
6. Cultural appropriateness of food options for diverse Youth

Council Members reflected very positively on the use of OST during the February 1st Community Meeting. Thornton said that OST was extremely successful (2010, personal interview):

“It was a much better way to run a meeting, and everyone left the room full of energy. I think that it made our community Members feel a lot more engaged in the Council. It was the first time that people came [to me] after the meeting and asked how they can get involved, instead of the TYFPC seeming like an out of reach body [that] they could not actually get involved in”.

Lewis, who frequently facilitates Community Mapping workshops, felt that the meeting created an accessible space. “I felt like every single person that was in attendance got really engaged in the discussion, and got to share their view. Everyone that came got a

change to excitedly share what they were concerned about” (Lewis, 2010, personal interview). Wadgyamar found the technique useful because participants could join a discussion that caught their attention or where they felt they could provide the most relevant contributions (2010, personal interview).

Meetings of the Council Members

Beginning January 2010, Council Members meet on a bi-monthly basis to discuss developments and vote on major decisions. As described in the Member Agreement, Council Meetings have become an important for Members to stay connected with the direction of the Council. During the 2009-2010 Council Term, Council Members met privately on September 30th (Strategic Planning), October 26th (Strategic Planning), January 16th, March 22nd, May 3rd and July 5th. The majority of Council Member meetings took place at my residence and although they had a predetermined agenda, was informal in nature.

An important component of both Council Member and Community meetings is a Committee update, which happens at the beginning of each meeting. Thornton believes that updates are crucial to both meetings. For example, through providing updates at Council Meetings, each Committee is accountable for their respective tasks. Thornton also believes that updates will help strengthen the Committees functioning capability if “community Members have the opportunity to make recommendations or provide positive reinforcement” (2010, personal interview).

3.7 Committees of the TYFPC

Quite often FPCs develop sub-committees as a way for Council Members to become more involved in particular issues. Although the TFPC recently formed 3 adhoc Committees, the TYFPC has taken on a rigorous Committee structure. The Committees of the TYFPC have remained intact since the early formation of the Council in 2009. At an informal Council Meeting on August 27th, 2009, the FCMs divided their working interests into four main categories, which formed the four Committees of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council. The Committees include 1) *Member and Community Relations*, 2) *Newsletter, Web and Media*, 3) *Research and Policy*, 4) *Event Coordination and Project Management*. In the following section, I will elaborate upon each of the four Committees, including their current working structure and accomplishments since September 2009. I believe the respective achievements of the four Committees very clearly demonstrate the resilience of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council.

At the August 27th meeting, FCM verbally committed to become actively involved in shaping a Committee, and several FCM volunteered to become a “Committee Lead”. According to the Member Agreement of the TYFPC, Council Members are expected to “Participate on at least one Council Committee by developing and executing [an] Action Plan. [Each] Council Member is accountable to a “Committee Lead” who will report to Chair and TYFPC Members” (2009, p. 2). Although, to date, only one of the four Committees has completed an Action Plan, each of the four committees has met to

discuss its course of action. It is also important to note that when the Council reconvenes in the fall of 2010, the documented completion of Action Plans will be a priority for the second Council term.

As described in section 3.6, NCM were given the option of which Committee they would like to be a part of based upon their level of experience and preference. NCM Qu recalls wanting to be involved in food policy, “it is something I would like to do in the future and working with the TYFPC would be a very valuable experience” (Qu, 2010, personal interview). Although stating Committee preference was a required question on the New Member Application, in the months following expansion, Council Members were able to attend various Committee meetings to solidify their Committee involvement.

To date, Council Membership on the Committees is uneven; *Member and Community Relations* has two Council Members, *Newsletter, Web and Media* has two Council Members, *Research and Policy* has four Council Members, and *Event Coordination and Project Management* has four Council Members. However, the four Committees require different amounts of work to achieve their relative goals, and *too* many Members may potentially hinder the ease of which the Committee functions. For example, the *Research and Policy Committee* needed more help organizing Food Strategy consultations, while for *Member and Community Relations Committee*, a smaller number of Council Members make it easier to develop Council documents, manage the list serve and organize bi-monthly Community Meetings.

The TYFPC wants to fully utilize the energy of Toronto's food passionate Youth while simultaneously reinforcing the Council's existence as a hub for Community involvement. "I think that the Committees are very important to engage the Community, since peoples interest lie in very specific areas" (Qu, 2010, personal interview). "For example, many of my friends are interested in policy and research, so if we had specific meetings where we identified some specific goals that we wanted to research, I think a broad group of people could attach themselves to various initiatives, focuses, and bring their own experiences to the table" (Qu, 2010, personal interview). In response to Youth interest, the activity of the four Committees was opened to Members of the TYFPC Community following Council expansion in January 2010. Each applicant who was not selected as a Council Member was contacted by a Committee Lead and invited to become a Committee Member. To date, Committee involvement by Community Members continues to increase, and we expect this to be a positive trend as the TYFPC moves into its second year.

In addition, several of the Council Members have participated in organizational roles outside of their designated Committee Membership. For example, as the Co-Lead of the *Research and Policy Committee*, Jessica Thornton has been instrumental in the ongoing organization of the Committee's consultation process. However, Jessica also took a lead role in the development of the Laidlaw Grant Application, which is a function of the *Member and Community Relations Committee*. Hannah Lewis, as a member of the *Newsletter, Web and Media Committee* collects media coverage of the TYFPC, but also facilitated a Community Food Mapping workshop at the April 12th Community Meeting,

which are organized by the *Member and Community Relations Committee*. However, it is this non-prescriptive nature that makes our group unique claims Lewis. “We have all have [had] the opportunity to do something new and different, weather it’s speaking at a meeting, or leading a workshop or helping out at an event” (Lewis, 2010, personal interview).

Participation in emerging opportunities is not limited by Committee involvement. For example, when events or speaking engagements present themselves via external relationships, they are presented to Council Members for their optional involvement. Specifically, this may include volunteer opportunities during events, invitations to speak at High Schools, or various food-related training workshops.

Member and Community Relations Committee

The *Member and Community Relations Committee* (MCRC) has been instrumental in creating a cohesive Council structure since the incorporation of the TYFPC in September 2009. In addition to being the liaison between the Community and Council Members, the MCRC oversees the development of the Strategic Plan, Member Agreement, Laidlaw Grant application, organizes bi-monthly Community Meetings, and manages the TYFPC list serve. The majority of these functions have already been explored throughout Chapter 3.

The MCRC has consistently had at least two active Council Members, including myself as the Chair. Given the responsibilities of the Chair, I believe it is important for the person fulfilling this role to remain active with the MCRC. According to Van Halem founding member of the MCRC, the committee also “spent a fair bit of time defining what it meant to be a member” (2010, personal interview). For Van Halem, this meant communicating messages and opportunities of the TYFPC to Members of her personal networks. As Staff Member of FoodShare and Local Food Plus, Van Halem was particularly instrumental in expanding the TYFPC founding Community through promoting events, new Council Membership and adding names to the growing list serve.

The MCRC oversees the nutritious and sustainable snacks that are prepared for Community Meetings. Beginning with the June 7th meeting, participants will have the opportunity to experiment with new recipes and share them with the Community, hence becoming active Members of the MCRC. Youth will be reimbursed for the ingredients, to relieve the financial burden of preparing food for a large audience. As one Community Member expressed in April 12th feedback, “Yum, more food, Yum!” (Anonymous Community Member, 2010).

Since the MCRC handles the majority of external communication, the MCRC accepts and requests media interviews. Unlike the majority of FPC organizers interviewed by Schiff, the TYFPC views media coverage as critical to the legitimization of our vision (2007). As the Chair of the TYFPC, I have been interviewed by several media outlets such as the Toronto Star, CHOMP Magazine, Toronto Observer, CHRY Radio and

CFRB. The TYFPC has developed a particularly strong relationship with CHRY Radio, after an active Community Member was approved for a food policy radio show entitled “In a Nut Shell”. This Community Member has recorded several Community and Committee meeting, and has interviewed Council Members. We are hoping to continue building this relationship and create a regular segment for the TYFPC in the future.



*NCM Mona Koocheck and Chair Tracy Phillippi
Participate in a Community Food Mapping Workshop at the
April 12th Community Meeting organized by the MCRC*

Photo Courtesy of Jaclyn Desforges

Event Coordination and Project Management Committee

The *Event Coordination and Project Management Committee* (ECPMC) has been incredibly active throughout the 2009-2010 Council term and has attracted a great amount of media and organizational attention to the TYFPC. Specifically, the ECPMC organized and hosted the fall “So You(th) Think You Can Cook” (SYTYCC) competition, the spring “Youth Food Fair” (YFF), and facilitated workshops in Food

Security at FoodShare's "Recipe for Change" Conference in October. The ECPMC initially began with two Council Members (including myself) and later increased to four after the Council expansion process. Due to high numbers of Youth participants at the YFF and SYTYCC (described in detail below), the ECPMC is likely to have the widest reach of TYFPC Community Members of the four Committees. According to Vice-Chair Tammara Soma (2010, personal interview):

The ECPMC puts the TYFPC name out there by gathering a group of projects that give a tangible aspect to what we do. Since food is best shared and communicated when we do events together... the Committee engages people and gives opportunities to get involved".

As observed during the November 2nd Community Meeting which focused on Food Policy in Canada, the policy-making process often leaves Youth feeling disengaged or even apathetic. Council Member Lewis admits having previously avoided policy because she found it inaccessible to the general public (Lewis, 2010, personal interview). "For a long time, I had been avoiding environmental policy when I was in undergrad because I feel limited and frustrated by it. I would much rather have worked at the community level". To help Youth feel empowered by policy, the ECPRM is planning to develop interactive Food Policy workshop that can be used in both middle and high schools across the GTA. Workshops are an ideal technique for Youth engagement with food policy because they are based upon personal experience and therefore seem less daunting (Soma, 2010, personal interview).

The development of a TYFPC facilitated workshop became a priority of the Committee after the Council was invited to engage students in two Toronto schools - Havergale Collegiate Institute and Linden School. Soma recalls her experience working with Youth from Havergale (2010, personal interview):

“We went to Havergale and did a workshop to introduce the TYFPC. By the end [the students] seemed more interested in food policy. We played a game called ‘agree/disagree’, where we would propose controversial statements, for example ‘being vegetarian is the best way to be environmentally friendly’. We then pretended the [students] were UN representatives from different countries, and they needed to take a stance on that particular policy statement. [The students] then went to different corners of the room if they agreed or disagreed. They learned to voice their opinion and have dialogue and debate, and that is what policy makers do”.

In order to build upon other organizations’ workshops, the ECPMC has been conversing with representatives Meal Exchange and FoodShare who are interest in partnering with the TYFPC. After the workshop format is designed, the ECPMC will train interested Committee Members to facilitate the workshops. On May 17th, six ECPMC Members met to discuss their level of involvement with the workshops.

The ECPRM is also likely to organize future social gatherings of the Council Members. Although some Council Members know each other more intimately than others, friendships still need to be strengthened. Ivan Wadgyamar states “making friends is in the TYFPC vital... It’s like getting along with your classmates or colleagues at work. When everyone has the same drive and motivation it defiantly gives a platform to unite” (2010, personal interview).

In celebration of the NCM and the Council’s accomplishments, Lewis and I organized a Council Member pizza party at our residence in February. The majority of Council Members, TFPC Staff, and the Council’s Service Learning Students (discussed below) attended the pizza party, each bringing a topping to share. In my opinion, this was a major point of cohesion for both NCMs and FCMs. In addition to future pizza parties, ECPMC is planning a year-end picnic in conjunction with our final Council Meeting in Dufferin Grove Park in July.

“So You(th) Think You Can Cook” Competition

The Toronto Youth Food Policy Council’s first major event took place at the 2009 Royal Agricultural Winter Fair on November 7th and 14th. After a discussion with TFPC Member Wally Sercombe, Tammara Soma contacted Fair organizers hoping to reach a rural and younger Youth community. Soma was able to connect with Lois Ferguson Manager of the Fair’s “Journey to Your Good Health”, who helped brainstorm the idea for the “So You(th) Think You Can Cook” competition. The cooking competition would

raise awareness for nutritional literacy among young people and promote food curriculum change in public schools.

Within the following weeks the ECPMC developed the competition format, application and promotional material that reached the Youth Community through our list serve, facebook page, individual networks and media coverage. The application required Youth to submit an original recipe could be made with three Ontario ingredients, be prepared in 20 minutes on stage with a budget of \$15.00 or less. In addition, applicants had to answer three questions:

- Why are you interested in entering this competition?
- Why do you think you should be the three finalists?
- Why did you choose this recipe?

Members of the ECPMC decided that the event would take place over the course of two Saturdays; the first competition would be for three contestants between the ages of 13 and 17, and the second for contestants between the ages of 18 and 26. While we received more applications from the older age category, the selection process was incredibly difficult due to the high caliber of recipe entries.



Members of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council on the “Be Healthy! Stage” during the “So You(th) Think You Can Cook” competition at the 2009 Royal Winter Fair

Photograph Courtesy of Journey to Your Good Health

We also received several prize donations for the finalists including gift certificates, kitchen supplies and appliances, artisan foods, signed-copy of Wayne Robert’s book “No Nonsense Guide to World Food”, and a personal culinary lesson from three of Toronto top Chefs. The competition was judged by Toronto Chef Brad Long and two additional TYFPC Members based upon the Youth’s professionalism, creativity and, overall tastiness of food. Soma and I Emceed the Competition which involved talking about the *distanced* food system, interacting with the audience, and promoting the vision of the TYFPC.

The winner of the older age category was 21 year-old Hudson Bernard who recently completed his culinary training at George Brown with an emphasis in French cuisine.

Bernard recalls hearing about the competition from a professor at George Brown (2010, personal interview):

“I wanted to push myself and see how I could work under the pressure. I decided to make a chestnut and brussel sprout soup. I choose those two key ingredients because not a lot of people like brussel sprouts and I wanted to change people’s perception around food”.

Bernard also recalls learning a lot about the TYFPC at the SYTYCC “I was amazed to see how young people were trying to make a change in the food sector” (2010, personal interview). After the competition, Bernard became an active Council Member of the TYFPC and believes “[the Council] should defiantly do the cooking competition every year” (2010, personal interview).



*NCM Hudson Bernard preparing his winning
Chestnut and Brussle Sprout Soup at the
“So You(th) Think You Can Cook” Competition*

Photography Courtesy of Journey to Your Good Health

The cooking competition was a favorite memory of many of the Council Members. Sarah Mian recalls being excited to judge alongside celebrity chef Brad Long and see the talent among inspiring young chefs (Mian, 2010, personal interview). For Soma, the skill of the Youth was “amazing... but I think these Youths are exceptions to rule that Youth are disengaged” (Soma, 2010, personal interview).

Members of the ECPMC are currently meeting with Lois Furgerson to plan the second SYTYCC competition in November. This year, we are anticipating support from the Ministry of Education and event planning assistance from Service Learning Students at the University of Toronto (see below).

Youth Food Fair

The idea for a Youth food fair came into fruition after Members of the ECPMC realized there are an incredible amount of Youth in Toronto interested in the food sector who may not necessarily know how to pursue a relationship with an organization. After being advised to contact Lauren Baker from Sustain Ontario by TFPC Staff, the ECPMC arranged a January meeting with several representatives from Equity Studies, Service Learning, and others at the University of Toronto. At this time, Lauren Baker proposed that an event coincide with her ‘Theory and Praxis in Food Security’ class, who were to

plan an event as their final project. The collaboration paved the way for what would become the first annual Youth Food Fair (YFF) on March 25th at New College.

From the very beginning, the ECPMC believed that having a spring fair would connect Youth looking for summer internships and volunteer opportunities with organizations focused on food, social justice or environmental issues. NCM Jason Qu thinks the annual YFF is a great way for Youth to find volunteer opportunities with food organization to “open up career doors”. He also references the incredible insecurity that comes with transitioning from University to a job (2010, personal interview).

“I’m in 4th year, and my biggest angst is where I go from her? A lot of my peers are taking a 5th year to figure things out; they don’t want to jump off the diving board. I think the Youth are very passionate about food, and to see our passion line up with a career is very exciting. It is not something you usually get”.

The organizing of the YFF took place in several phases. First, the Committee offered various food-related organizations in Toronto the opportunity to hold a booth, promote relative campaigns and network with Youth. After we had a rough idea of what organizations would be participating, we began actively promoting the event to the Youth community. This included creating a poster (see Appendix), advertising through the Council’s social media outlets and promoting at food-related events. The Committee soon realized that the YFF was gaining an incredible amount of interest from the Youth

Community, which in turn brought new organizations to the roster. After we had a rough estimate of attendees, we worked with the Hot Yam, a University of Toronto's sustainable catering collective, to prepare a menu for the event. Meanwhile, the Committee was also working with Debbie Field of Food Share, Rod Wener of the University of Toronto, and Jennifer Risdon from the Ontario Trillium Foundation to prepare a panel discussion for YFF participants. In addition, Jane and Finch Youth provided live theatre entertainment on issues surrounding hunger and poverty.

The YFF was successful and reiterated the importance of the TYFPCs existence. The ECPMC estimated that the event was attended by roughly 300 people including representatives of nearly 30 organizations including: *Access Alliance, Carrot Commons Green Roof, Everdale Organic Farm, GENEAction, Local Food Plus, Markham Food Belt, North York Food Bank, Not Far From the Tree, PACT, Students of Toronto For Environmental Progress, UT Campus Agricultural Project, West End Food Coop, Young Urban Farmers, Evergreen, Hincks-Dell Crest Centre, Hincks-Dell Crest Centre, Slow Food Toronto, Meal Exchange, CHRY Community Radio, Seed Your City, The Centre for Women & Trans People, Parkdale Community Information Center, Afri-Can Food Basket, Food Secure Canada, Green Party of Ontario, Greenest City, Window Farms, Toronto Food Policy Council and Toronto Youth Food Policy Council.*

Members of the ECPMC also had the unique opportunity to work more intimately with two students from the Theory and Praxis in Food Security course. The two students requested service learning placements with the TYFPC after the Council applied to host

participating students. As placement supervisor, I greatly enjoyed working with the two energetic and inquisitive students to organize and execute the YFF. The Service Learning Students assisted the ECPMC in the primary planning and implementation of the YFF specifically including:

1. Working on the promotional posters
2. Inviting participating Theory and Praxis placement organizations to hold booths at the YFF
3. Managing social media sites
4. Taking Council Member pictures at the Pizza Party, and creating a promotional video
5. Overseeing YFF set-up and registration
6. Emceeding the Panel Discussion
7. Creating posters, name tags, etc. for the YFF

TYFPC Service Learning student Niveen Saleh said that the Theory and Praxis course was her favorite experience of her University career. “I’ve met so many incredible students, had the chance to network, and expand on what I used to know about food sovereignty. This course provided me with more opportunities and for that I will always be grateful” (2010, personal interview). Saleh expressed her desire to continue being involved with the TYFPC after the completion of her placement and plans on becoming a Committee Member of the ECPMC during the 2010-2011 Council Term. Given the success of the recent placement, the ECPMC will be taking on two additional Service

Learning students during the fall of 2010 to specifically work on planning the SYTYCC competition.

Research and Policy Committee

The *Research and Policy Committee* (RPC) of the TYFPC has acquired the greatest amount of Community Member interest by engaging with the Youth Community around municipal food policy change. The RPC has also relied more heavily on Youth Consultants to achieve their Committee responsibilities.

Initially, according to the TYFPCs Strategic Plan, the RPC was tasked with the production of four Youth-focused food policy documents per year. However, when asked to work with Toronto Public Health to provide a Youth perspective to the Toronto Food Strategy, the RPC decided to focus more specifically on the Youth engagement process. Committee co-leads Jessica Thornton and Sarah Mian immediately realized the importance of the document. Thornton elaborates by saying “the Food Strategy recognizes that it is hard to make movement on food issues in the City because they cross all different departments... at the same time, it’s not just pointing out all the problems, its making useful suggestions” (2010, personal interview).

From January to March 2010, the RPC facilitated consultations with interested Youth regarding the FS. Meetings were held on January 23rd, February 1st and March 13th.

The initial meeting on January 23rd was designed to be a general conversation about what food “topics crossed Youths' mind the most” recalls Mian (2010b.). Since the Food Strategy draft was still confidential, the Committee was unable to present the specific areas for actions being proposed. However, Mian claims, we found that “there were many ideas [of action] in the Food Strategy being repeated” (2010, personal interview). In order to examine the Food Strategy specifically from the Youth perspective, the RPC used the February 1st Open Space Technology event to discuss issues that are unique to the Youth experience. Finally on March 13th, the RPC asked participants to come prepared having read the Food Strategy so the group could more thoroughly examine specific directions for change. Thornton recalls being surprised by the Youth Consultants who attended the meetings “Not only were people willing to give us the time on a Saturday afternoon, but they also came prepared to speak about the issues with a high degree of knowledge and willingness to get involved” (2010, personal conversation - April).

After the three preliminary Youth consultations, four Committee Members and three Consultants met with Food Strategy Staff on March 30th to formally propose five recommendations to the evolving documents. The five recommendations included:

- The TYFPC recommends that the City of Toronto officially support the YMCA Youth Eco-Internship Program and other programs
- For Youth trying to take advantage of the Toronto Food Business Incubator project, and similar support programs, the TYFPC would like to see a special

category for Youth applicants which would provide additional support throughout the start-up process.

- The TYFPC recommends that the City actively and publicly support these existing efforts to implement food literacy programs in schools, and to recognize the pressing importance of this issue.
- The TYFPC endorses the existing idea of working “with federal and provincial governments to provide programs that assist new Canadians and Youth who wish to farm in near-urban areas
- We call for the City of Toronto to formally recognize the TYPC as a legitimate avenue for Youth to collaborate, communicate, and agitate for changes within the food system

Thornton stresses the importance of the FS formally acknowledging the TYFPC “as a group of Youth who have the ability to oversee the proposed projects. We should be seen as a valuable resource and it is our responsibility to make sure the Youth voice is included” (Thornton, 2010, personal interview). The complete document prepared by the RPC on March 30th can be found in the Appendix of my MRP.

RPC Member Wadgyamar remembers thinking that the process would be largely controlled by Toronto Public Health, but was “pleased to discover that the [RPC] maneuver[ed] much of this conversation, which ended up being very constructive” (2010, personal interview). Staff Members “demonstrated substantial openness and a receptive attitude to hearing out our ideas and showing strong interest.” Mian recalls the process

being tedious, but necessary. “I think that the TYFPC is giving a voice to the most underrepresented group in public policy and it feels liberating to know that the TYFPC can offer the Youth perspective on something as important as the Food Strategy” (Mian, 2010, personal interview).

In addition to ensuring that the Food Strategy continues to recognize the Youth perspective, the RPC intends to conduct specific research around food policy issues that interest Toronto’s diverse Youth. As a new member of the RPC, Qu thinks that the policy recommendations proposed by the TYFPC will be particularly useful to support community initiatives. “I’m really interested in how these kinds of projects can grow, and become a little more institutionalized and structured, then replicable in the future” (2010, personal interview).

Newsletter, Web and Media Committee

The *Newsletter, Web and Media Committee* (NWMC) has been working diligently to produce a bi-monthly newsletter, oversee the development of the TYFPC website and collect all media occurrences of the Council. These tasks have been orchestrated primarily by two Council Members and one Community Member.

FCM Ashley Andrade compiles and edits Bi-monthly newsletter which is distributed both through the list-serve and at Community Meetings. Personally, Andrade has found the Newsletter to be a creative way for her to develop and expand upon her skills as a

nutrition communicator. In addition to sharing updates on the TYFPC endeavors, Andrade thinks that the newsletter provides an outlet for knowledge sharing within the community. A sample newsletter is attached in the Appendix (2010, personal interview).

The newsletter can be divided up into three components 1) The ‘Apple of the Month’, 2) Updates on the TYFPC, and 3) Freelance stories and reflections by Community Members or the NWMC. The ‘Apple of the Month’ is a feature segment that showcases an entrepreneurial Youth who is doing “something amazing in their community” (Andrade, 2010, personal interview). Andrade says the selected Youth is chosen in a variety of ways. “In the past, I have advertised the Apple of the Month in the newsletter.

Sometimes it’s a nomination by the group, other times it’s someone we know personally or a member of our community” (Andrade, 2010, personal interview). To date, in the NWMC five newsletters, the Apple of the Month has featured NCM Chris Wong and me, Hudson Bernard winner of the 2009 SYTYCC, garden educator for “Green Thumbs Growing Kids”, and the creator of “In a Nutshell” at CHRY radio.

Secondly, updates on the TYFPC have included a wide variety of subject matter including reflections from the SYTYCC competition by winner and NCM Hudson Bernard, the YFF and updates on the Toronto Food Strategy. Specifically, promotional stories were published by the Council’s two Service Learning students promoting the March Fair.

Finally, the bi-monthly newsletter allows for Community Member involvement through the submission of freelance stories. For example, during the fall of 2009, the TYFPC had built a strong relationship with the FoodShare's "Focus on Food Youth Program" through FCM Emily Van Halem. According the FoodShare's website (2010):

"Focus on Food is supported by Youth Services Canada, and is designed to offer Youth an opportunity for personal development, while gaining practical job experience. Many of the participants have been marginalized in some way- perhaps because they have experienced abuse, have ended up living on the street or are recent immigrants with language barriers".

In October of 2009, FCM facilitated a Food Security workshop along side several "Food of Food" interns at Food Share's 'Recipe for Change' conference. Following the joined facilitation, two of the "Focus on Food" interns wrote stories for the November/December Newsletter. The first story was a reflective experience that pushed the intern out of his culinary comfort zone. The second story highlighted experiential components of food including taste, smell, locality and cultural differences. Both interns personally expressed their excitement after the publication of the Newsletters, and added this opportunity to their resumes.

The second duty of the NWMC is to collect and archive the Council's media exposure. The Council believes that documented publicity is an important component of our organizational history. Links to TYFPC media coverage are emailed to Committee

member Hannah Lewis, who keeps an on-going list of TYFPC publicity. Three major print articles can be found in the Appendix of the MRP.

Since the TYFPC seeks to become a hub for Youth who are interested in the food system, the creation of a central website has always been a priority. After several call-outs for Youth web designers, a personal friend of FCM Andrade offered to create the template for the Council Website. NWMC has met several times to brainstorm a template and the domain name was purchased just before the Laidlaw Grant application was submitted. The NWMC meetings were also attended by a very dedicated Community Member, who provided the Committee with feedback after consulting with her colleagues in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University. Although the website development got off to a promising start, to date it has yet to come into fruition. The development of the website will be a high priority for the Council in the fall of 2010.

3.8 Relationship with the Toronto Food Policy Council

The TYFPC grew out of a relationship that had been built between several Youth Members and Staff of the TFPC during the spring and summer of 2009. The TYFPC proposed a formal working relationship with the Toronto Food Policy Council at a joint meeting on September 9th. Specifically, the 'Joining Document' requested that the TFPC:

1. Commit to a reciprocal advisory relationship

2. Create two, or more, permanent Youth seats on the TFPC when new appointments are made with the Board of Health
3. Provide Staff support and resources for independent and shared initiatives

1. As stated in section 3.3, the TFPC has been supportive of the Youth Council since the discussion had been added to the TFPC meeting agenda in early 2009. The TYFPC will continue to actively build this relationship through our two permanent positions on the TFPC, mentorship program and as a portal to the Youth Community. Particularly regarding the Toronto Food Strategy, Ivan Wadgymar believes that the TYFPC is a “vital asset [to the TFPC] because we provide useful, legitimate, and costless research that can be relied upon when making decisions that affect the strategy” (2010, personal interview).

Furthermore since the TFPC does not have the budget, office space or general Staff capacity to take on every interested Youth in Toronto, the TYFPC is the natural portal for the TFPC’s Youth engagement. However, given this role and the general newness of the Youth Council, it is difficult for us to balance incoming inquiries with the proper implementation mechanisms. TFPC Staff Members have been sensitive to this limitation and have provided guidance and mentorship regarding the harnessing of Youth energy.

2. The ‘creation of two, or more, permanent Youth seats on the TFPC was an evolving process that has recently come into fruition. The first informal meeting of the TFPC since September 9th took place on January 13th, 2010. The TYFPC was invited to send two

representatives to participate in the Member-only discussion on the Food Strategy.

Jessica Thornton and I attended this meeting as the Youth delegates and were received warmly by TFPC Council Members. On February 10th, the TFPC held its first formal meeting of the year, at which I presented a TYFPC update to participants. This meeting was also attended by several TYFPC Council and Community Members who showed their support for TYFPC inclusion.

Following the February 10th meeting, the TYFPC held a formal vote to decide who would represent the TYFPC on the Toronto Food Policy Council. Jessica Thornton was offered TFPC Membership through her employment with Local Food Plus, opening up two additional seats for Youth Council Members. Through email correspondence with Alam, the Council chose Chris Wong and me to represent the Council. With the assistance of TFPC Staff, Wong, Thornton and I collectively outlined our representative responsibilities to include:

1. Attending monthly formal and informal TFPC meetings
2. Committing to represent the voice of food-passionate Youth in Toronto
3. Participating in the May 8th visioning retreat for TFPC Members
4. Providing a bi-monthly update of TYFPC activity to the TFPC and vice versa
5. Proposing a mentoring relationship between the TFPC and TYFPC (see below)

On May 16th and June 17th 2010, Wong and I attended the TFPC's Strategic Planning session as Members of the TFPC. As explained in Chapter 2, the sessions were designed to help the TFPC develop a unified vision regarding the Council's relationship to the Food Strategy and to strategize around the restructuring on Public Health. Both Wong and I actively participated in the discussion and continually brought Youth issues to the forefront. Wong was also on a panel during the June TFPC public meeting, where he spoke specifically to the Youth experience in Toronto.

3. Finally, the Council Members of the TYFPC are incredibly grateful for 'Staff support and resources [provided] for independent and shared resources'. Specifically, this request has been actualized in numerous ways including:

- Printing material for meetings and events
- Covering food costs for Community Meetings
- Reserving meeting rooms at City Hall and Metro Hall
- Writing letters of reference for the Laidlaw Grant Application
- Providing guidance and connections for TYFPC Members

Mentorship Proposal

Since the introduction of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council in September of 2009, the Council Members have greatly admired the diverse accomplishments, expertise and experience of the Toronto Food Policy Council Members. The TYFPC has maintained a

strong desire to create a mentoring relationship between Youth and Adult Council Members. On March 22nd, the TYFPC voted to propose a mentorship program, which will begin in the fall of 2010. Therefore at the June 9th public meeting of the TFPC, I proposed a mentorship program between the Members of the TYFPC and TFPC, which was favorably received by all TFPC Members in attendance. The Youth Council foresees this relationship being carried out in two ways:

1. Individual pairing of interested TFPC Members with TYFPC Members – the two can exchange contact information, meet regularly for coffee, or just stay in touch via email.
2. The TYFPC as a group spends time with individual TFPC Members – the TYFPC Members could spend an afternoon with the TFPC member in their place of work, farm, school, etc.

In addition, we believe this relationship will be mutually beneficial to both Adult and Youth Council Members. Youth Members will gain insight into various sectors of the food movement and hopefully have a future reference for higher education or job applications. Adult Members will gain valuable connections with the energetic Youth community and potential volunteer power in the future. Intergenerational learning goes both ways, claims Wadgyar. “I defiantly think that Youth are role models for older generations. Many Adults, Wally (Seccombe) for example, love it that Youth are participating and building a legacy” (Wadgyar, 2010, personal interview). Lewis elaborates by saying that Western society has unnecessarily delegitimized both Youth

and elders. “We really need to reconceptualize how we view Youth”, we should be encouraged to “share our wisdom and sense of awe and wonder” (Lewis, 2010, personal interview).



Members of the Council and Community discuss culinary institutions at the June 7th Community Meeting

Photographs courtesy of Tracy Phillippi

Autonomy of the TYFPC

Although the TYFPC is incredibly privileged to have a strong relationship with a well-respected Toronto Food Policy Council, the TYFPC has developed from the hard work of twelve Council Members and participating Community Members. Wayne Roberts continually reinforces the autonomous mobilization and organization of the TYFPC by Youth Members (2010, personal interview):

“I think Youth should mobilize themselves from the bottom up, which is what the TYFPC has done. You are the people that deserve credit for the success of your organization. The TFPC has opened up doors and provided resources, but we did not come in and train you. You just figured out how to do it on your own. You should have that in your organizational history, which is factually correct”

TFPC Staff Member Yusuf Alam believes it is important for the TYFPC to develop a shared essence of itself and the community it represents. “What is a lot more meaningful is that the Youth community went from some level of awareness and empowerment, and has arrived some place else knowing they were capable and able to make their own change in a community-specific way” (Alam, 2010, personal interview).

Conclusion

In Chapter 3 I have described the *transitional* reality of the Youth experience and our place within the food movement. I also provided an historical analysis on the development of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council’s structure, process, Committee delegation and our relationship with the TFPC – told completely from the perspective of Council and Community Members, and TFPC Staff. However, implicit in the Council’s relative successes are several notable challenges. Challenges faced by the TYFPC in the 2009-2010 Council term are described in detail in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Challenges of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council

*“Never be afraid to do something new.
Remember, amateurs built the ark; professionals built the Titanic”*

- Author Unknown

4.1 How this Chapter is Organized

According to the review of FPC literature outlined in Chapter 2, there are several recurring challenges faced by existing and disbanded FPCs throughout North America. Key influencing factors include limited funding, little or no Staff support, weak connection to government structure, undefined Membership responsibility and recruitment, and poor outcome evaluation. However, given the nature of TYFPC described in Chapter 3, the Youth Council faces an independent set of challenges, which although they are influenced by the above factors, are unique to our structural circumstance and role within the food movement.

Throughout Chapter 4, I will highlight several key challenges identified by the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council Members and myself throughout our first year of existence. However, given the ideally participatory environment of the TYFPC described in Chapter 3, many of the challenges have been acknowledged and addressed by Council Members through meetings, emails or personal interviews. Therefore, for every key challenge explored throughout this Chapter, I will identify a proposed action of the Council in responding to the obstacle at hand. Since my MRP analyzes the TYFPC’s first wave of efforts to deal with such challenges, I will define the current course of the TYFPC, what

strategies may be used to overcome the challenge, and the degree to which the strategy has already proven successful. While the challenges presented in Chapter 4 are not an exhaustive or sequential list they can be primarily broken down into two subcategories for analysis:

Challenges that reflect the Youth reality:

1. Diversity of the Council and Community
2. Communication and Participation among Council Members
3. Bi-monthly meetings of the Council and Community
4. Perception of legitimacy

Challenges that reflect a FPC's organizational capacity:

1. Limitations of the implementation of the Strategic Planning process
2. New Member selection process
3. Funding limitations
4. Connection to political machinery

It is important to note that the challenges presented in this Chapter are contextual and are not a generic list of challenges faced by every group of Youth attempting to form a FPC. For example, the TYFPC's reciprocal relationship with Toronto Food Policy Council greatly alleviates potential conflicts that could be faced by groups of Youth without an established incubating FPC. In Chapter 5, I will elaborate further on structural and role-related differences that may influence the next wave of Youth FPCs.

4.2 Challenges that Reflect the Youth Reality

Our generation's reality is a product of numerous variables. For example, while we may have become motivated, impassioned and capable of multitasking, we are also over-stimulated by social media, convenience culture and the spread of information technology. In addition, we are encouraged to be mobile and maintain hectic schedules - *doing as many things as possible* as opposed to having a particularly strong impact in one area of concentration. FCM Emily Van Halem agrees, "[While] driven and passionate Youth recognize what they need to do [in order to] succeed... spreading [yourself] thin is routine (2010, Personal interview). Naturally, when we are over-burdened, we must prioritize our energy and time by creating a hierarchy of personal involvement. This symptom of the Youth experience inadvertently affects our organizational capacity; Council Members put unequal amounts of energy into the TYFPC, thus stretching the Council thin. These variables of the Youth experience heighten the challenges explored throughout this section.

Challenge 1: 'Diversity' of the Council and Community

Throughout Chapter 2 I highlighted the significance of food sector representation; ideally, FPCs should have Members from production, consumption, processing, distribution, and waste. Furthermore, if a FPC has a formalized relationship with a government body it is likely to have mandatory or appointed political representation. A large number of FPCs have further prioritized the inclusion of *diverse* Members, even

going so far to creating permanent seats for particular demographics. The Detroit FPC for example, boldly asserted that the FPC Membership would be representative of the City's African American Community.

²⁴ While the FPCs diversity demonstrates inclusiveness and provides a certain degree of legitimacy, a successful FPC will blend representational Membership with individuals' capacity to perform. Blending Member's performance capacity with diverse representation requires motivated and skilled individuals with the ability and desire to shape the organization's future. The difficulty of blending is exacerbated when relatively new FPC's do not have the mechanisms in place to support diversity. For example, how does the TYFPC navigate the question of diverse Membership when it is still figuring out its organizational form, structure and place within the movement?

Rod MacRae claims that this question can be examined by individual Members' psychological orientation, or "do Members have a 'certain approach to being' that will make the vehicle work?" (2010, personal communication – May). To some extent, a Member's psychological orientation and personal drive are independent of the 'diverse' perspective they bring to the table. Therefore, the TYFPC cannot assume that if a member represents a traditionally 'unrepresented' population, they will necessarily be able to perform at the same level as Members who are of an over-represented population.

²⁴ This often includes the support that might be provided by Member's base organization.

Still, in order for the TYFPC to fully consider a wide-range of Youth perspectives, a greater focus must be placed on future recruitment of Youth with different experiences and urban realities. According to FCM Tammara Soma (2010, Personal interview):

“Diversity of voice and representation is important to the TYFPC as Toronto's Youth consist of individuals from various ethnicity, religion, social, education and economic background. In fact, Toronto has been heralded as one of the most multicultural City in the world so TYFPC strives to reflect this value... As a Council, having different voices is a key thing, because when everyone agrees, it could be because we all come from very similar backgrounds”.

Despite experiences and perspectives of Council Members outlined in Chapter 3, the TYFPC Community is predominantly made up of university-educated Youth from comparatively privileged backgrounds. ²⁵Furthermore the TYFPC Community reflects the phenomenon of the female-dominated food movement. Wayne Roberts highlighted this emerging trend during a recent presentation for Food Secure Saskatchewan, calling the food movement a combination of a “two outstanding and active groups – the “Youth movement” and the “women’s movement”.

²⁵ The FCM (all women) gave a great deal of consideration to the *first* reality during the Council Member Expansion process. While we received 35 applications from very qualitative individuals, the vast majority of the applicants belonged to similar demographics as the FCM, and none represented ‘marginalized’ Youth communities. Therefore, the FCM gave strong consideration to motivated individuals who represented diverse cultural, educational or experiential sectors. However, in an effort to accept NCM that appeared ‘different’ than the FCM, the expansion process missed out on several female representatives with strong performance capacities.

Given the reality of the movement, I believe the TYFPC's dilemma of 'diversity' can be broken down into two realities: 1) the TYFPC as a reflection of those involved in the food movement, or 2) the TYFPC as a reflection of Toronto's Youth population. While I believe the TYFPC successfully reflects those Youth who appear to be interested in the urban food movement, to date, the Council struggles with representing 1) Marginalized Youth Communities, 2) High school students and 3) Non-food system thinkers. In the following section I will elaborate on each group of underrepresented Youth, and also highlight the TYFPC's attempts to respond to the proposed issues of diversity.

'Marginalized' Youth

Barriers to democratic participation are one of the greatest challenges facing urban Youth.²⁶ According to Ginwright and James, who believe that Youth of color have been largely ignored in development research, 'marginalized' "young people face intense economic isolation, lack political power, and are subjected to pervasive social stigma" (2002, p.27). The TYFPC is no exception to the rule; while the current Council has more appropriately achieved gender and ethnic-based equality, the TYFPC inadequately reflects the voices of those Youth living with the consequences of Food Security – Toronto's most vulnerable populations.

Response to Challenge

²⁶ I have chosen to put 'marginalized' Youth in quotations because I believe it is a subjective term and concept.

Although we internally struggle to define strategies associated with recruiting ‘marginalized’ Youth Communities, the TYFPC has made a very conscious effort to engage with key groups of Youth. In an effort to highlight the accomplishments of traditionally diverse or ‘marginalized’ organizations, we have built relationships with 1) *PACT*, 2) FoodShare’s ‘Focus on Food Interns, 3) SKETCH, 4) Afri-Can Food Basket, and, 5) Delegates from two African Countries hoping to build a connection with Toronto’s food and Youth movement. According to TYFPC Member Jessica Thornton, “I think that these organizations see the benefit of having a relationship with us, [for example] the Afri-Can Food basket reaches a community that we may not normally connect with” (2010, personal interview). NCM Ivan Wadgyar agrees “I was very inspired by the Afri-Can FB, and I was very inspired to see them speaking up. Not only were they of African descent, but they were also from high school” (Wadgyar, 2010, personal interview).

To better illustrate the evolving relationships, the chart below depicts the respective organizations’ mandate and interaction with the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council.

| Organization | Mandate | Partnership with TYFPC |
|---------------------|---|--|
| PACT | The PACT Urban Food Initiative Grow-to-Learn is a program designed to provide thousands of pounds of fresh vegetables to food banks across the City. PACT and its partner the Toronto District School Board are transforming urban high schools into living classrooms where Youth, teachers and community volunteers grow organic produce and donate to food banks across the City of Toronto. | PACT presented at a TYFPC Community Meeting. TYFPC helped campaign for PACT’s fundraising efforts. TYFPC facilitated a relationship between PACT and PH, which enabled PACT to hold FS consultations in its constituent’s schools. |

| | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Focus on Food Interns | Focus on Food is supported by Youth Services Canada, and is designed to offer Youth an opportunity for personal development, while gaining practical job experience. Many of the participants have been marginalized in some way- perhaps because they have experienced abuse, have ended up living on the street or are recent immigrants with language barriers. | TYFPC engaged interns in the SYTYCC. One intern took first prize in the younger age category. Two interns published articles in the TYFPC's bi-monthly newsletter |
| SKETCH | SKETCH creates opportunities for street involved and homeless people ages 15-29, to engage in the arts in a cross-discipline studio environment or in the community. | SKETCH Members attend TYFPC Community Meetings |
| Afri-Can Food Basket | The Afri-Can Foodbasket is a non-profit community food security (CFS) movement that is committed to meeting the nutrition, health and employment needs of Members of the African Canadian community, in particular, those who are economically and socially vulnerable. Through community food security, leadership development and collaborative partnerships, the Afri-Can Foodbasket will endeavor to advance the interests of the community in these areas. | Youth from the Afri-Can Food Basket presented at a Community Meeting |
| African Delegates | | Several Council Members met with African Delegates and built personal relationships with Members of Toronto's African Communities |

In the future, the TYFPC could consult with these organizations regarding the hesitancies held by 'marginalized' Youth regarding more solidified Council involvement. Also, while we did not receive any NCM applications from members of 'marginalized', this challenge will continue to be a major priority as the TYFPC expands in the 2010-2011 term.

High School Students

Another challenge faced by the Council is inherent in the average age of our Youth Community. Although the United Nations defines ‘Youth’ as being between the ages of 15-24, the Council Members have always used the term ‘Youth’ rather loosely (2010).²⁷ In fact, during the summer of 2009, the FCM decided that *one is a ‘Youth’ as long as one feels like a ‘Youth’*. Although there usually are a few high school attendees at the Community Meetings, by and large Youth aged 15 to 19 are absent from the conversation.

TFPC Member Wally Seccombe expressed concern regarding the absent high school voice. According to Seccombe, high school and university-age Youth cannot be assumed to have the same perspectives “for obvious reasons, they are in a very different position” (2010, personal interview, 2010).

“For example, their school work is not nearly as amenable as [university] work is towards food research. Secondly, high school kids are in a particular institution environment which is very different than University in terms of how food gets organized. Also, teenagers are in a different phase of the process of establishing their own food habits for better and for worse, and for all those reasons they need to have a presence, and opportunity to work within the TYFPC. They can benefit [from your work]) but they also need to have the space to create their own campaigns, media presentations”.

²⁷ At the June 7th TYFPC Meeting, the Community was pleased to see a greater number of ‘Adults’ in attendance, including two Members of the Toronto Food Policy Council.

Aside from their unique food disposition, the involvement of high school Youth is instrumental for the longevity of the TYFPC. As current Members outgrow their role, new leaders must “self identify” by being “fostered in the TYFPC environment” (Van Halem, 2010). This relationship, echoes Soma, could create “TYFPC alumni who mentor younger Youth (2010, personal interview).

Response to Challenge

Although the TYFPC has struggled to maintain a critical mass of high school students, we have made five major attempts to gain credibility in this community. First, at the September 9th introduction of the TYFPC, we publicly endorsed the (high school) Students of Toronto for Environmental Progress’s report on local food procurement and delivered a presentation on the importance of school nutrition. This foundational partnership led to the participation of the group and partner organization (Toronto Environmental Alliance - Youth Group) in the YFF on March 25th, 2010. Both groups have expressed an interest in being guest presenters at an upcoming Community Meeting. Although this arrangement would be mutually beneficial for both high school and college-aged Youth, high school Youth in particular will have their voice recognized among the older Members of the Youth Community

Secondly, after a high school student told the TYFPC that “it can be a bit intimidating to be surrounded by Masters students”, the Council realized the introduction process may be daunting to Younger youth (anonymous, 2010). However, expressed another Community

Member “introductions are a great way to get to know other Youth activists and share resources”.²⁸ Therefore, to balance intimidation and networking, meeting introductions now ask the participant to share: 1) Their name, 2) Area of food interest, and, 3) One thing they would like to learn from fellow Community Members. This series of talking points will hopefully alleviate intimidation *and* allow participants to network with other Youth who share related interests.

Thirdly, the TYFPC hopes that we can engage with high school Youth through the creation and implementation of the ‘Food Policy workshops’. Members of the *Event Coordination and Project Management Committee* have been working with Staff from Meal Exchange and FoodShare to develop a workshop curriculum for high school and middle school groups of Youth. Spearheaded by NCM Mona Koochek, the interactive workshops will help Youth question ‘who controls the food system’ and ‘why is exists the way it does’.

The TYFPC has also actively made an effort to engage younger generations of Youth through the “So You(th) Think You Can Cook” competition. Since high school Youth have less flexibility to explore the culinary sector, the ECPMC decided to have two competitions based upon age: 1) Youth ages 13 to 17, and 2) Youth ages 18 to 26.

Tammara Soma believes that this was an affective strategy to keep younger interested in healthy food preparation (2010, personal interview).

²⁸ This change of introduction technique may also be important for ‘marginalized’ Youth in attendance

Finally, the TYFPC believes that a greater degree of age-based diversity should exist within the Community and the Council. Therefore, TYFPC is planning to create two permanent Council positions for high school students when we expand next year. While selected Youth are not expected to have a wide-range of experiences, they must demonstrate a general way of thinking that aligns with the vision of the TYFPC. In addition, the Council will create internal mechanisms for leadership development among representatives.

Non-Food System Thinkers

The term “converted” is often used by Toronto *foodies* to describe an individual that makes consumption, production and economic choices using a food system lens. While Youth who identify with the TYFPC are naturally made up of environmentalists, social activist and *foodies*, the vast majority of Youth in Toronto are non-food system thinkers. Although Members may argue that this is not a challenge, others feel it is our responsibility to educate our “non-converted” peers and potential future colleagues.

The TYFPC must learn to balance *diversity* with Council unity; a dichotomy which is addressed by the “Three C’s of Council Membership’. Since food-system thinking is an integral component of maintaining a concrete Council, it must continue to be a prerequisite for Council Membership. However, for the TYFPC’s structure and programming to be effective, we must also engage with non-food system thinkers.

Response to Challenge

It is difficult to quantify and evaluate the number of non-food system thinkers the TYFPC is capable of reaching or what the potential impact of education would be.

While the TYFPC has yet to develop specific outreach strategies for engaging with non-food system thinkers, several overlapping actions of the Council provide a response to the challenge. Actions include:

- 1) Conducting Food Policy workshops in high schools
- 2) Delivering formal deputations to municipal governments (i.e. Food Strategy, Markham Food Belt, etc.)
- 3) Engaging with diverse academic communities (i.e. graphic design, evaluatory studies, information technology, etc.)

In addition, reaching non-food system thinkers often happens through interpersonal conversations between TYFPC Members and external personalities. For example, while the Royal Winter Agricultural Fair seems to be the ideal gathering of food-system thinkers, it is in fact dominated by agri-business and highly commercialized operations. Following the “So You(th) Think You Can Cook” competition, Hudson Bernard and I supported our dislike for Monsanto with factual knowledge and further convinced organizers to rethink future Monsanto-sponsored tours. Whether or not this conversation will actually have an affect on the Fair’s relationship with the agricultural industry, on an

individual level, Bernard and I were able to inspire a non-food system thinker to critically consider the implications of Monsanto on the sustainability of the food supply.

Challenge 3: Communication and Participation among Council Members

A major challenge of the TYFPC is poor internal communication between Council Members. As Chair, I instigate the vast majority of email conversations regarding meetings, upcoming opportunities and actions of the Council. However, despite several attempts to formalize a voting procedure, many of the Council Members still do not respond to messages. Unlike a face-to-face communication, where there is a general sense of emotional response to a topic, the Council Members may only actively indicate opposition if they have a strong opinion. Although I realize Council Members are likely reading emails, affirmation (*reply all*) is essential for the Council to move forward with relevant action. Jessica Thornton echoes my frustration, “what needs to be emphasized is the fact that, if people don’t respond, we can’t do anything. There are so many things [the Council] could be involved in, but if people don’t respond, we can’t do anything” (2010, personal interview).

Response to Challenge

Although the TYFPC as a body cannot control the drive and dedication of its Members, we have made several attempts to reinforce the importance of communication and participation. For example, for issues requiring immediate attention quorum will be

reached when seven of 12 Council Members provide an affirmative response via email. If quorum is not reached, the Council Members are encouraged to discuss their opposition with the group. Still, despite this formal motion, internal communication practices remain poor.

Since poor response may be an indication of confused Membership responsibility, the reevaluation and mandatory signing of the Member Agreement will be critical for future Council terms. Bi-monthly ‘check-ups’ could also ensure that Council Members feel their meaningful contributions are being observed.

In addition, delegating responsibilities could help negate the struggles of internal communication. NCM Tamara Wise and I are planning for the 2010 “So You(th) Think You Can Cook” competition by creating a ‘master list’ of event organizing duties and responsibilities. We will make four or five major categories and delegate event responsibilities between Members of the *Event Coordination and Project Management Committee* and Service Learning Students. As a result, each participant will have an equal amount of responsibility and the entire Committee will know how to direct incoming inquiries.

Challenge 4: Bi-monthly meeting of the Council and Community

As discussed in Chapter 3, the *Member and Community Relations Committee* proposed altering the meetings of the TYFPC Community and Council Members. This decision

has had several negative consequences including: 1) Missed opportunities, 2) Lack of motivation on behalf of some Council Members, and, 3) Confusion as to the future direction of the TYFPC. While is not an exhaustive list of side effects, if the Council met more frequently we may retain Members dedication and energy more effectively.

This challenge also reflects the difficulty of balancing the TYFPC's momentum with the workload of Members and the Chair. Although the majority of Council Members regularly attend meetings, when the workload is not evenly distributed among Council Members, over performers are more likely to pick up the slack between meetings. However, while over -performers often keep organizations functioning, they will eventually burnout.

In addition, since Community Meetings are short and infrequent, dominant personalities, agendas or interests may overshadow certain participants' ideas. For example, there are several active Community Members who appear to be using the meeting space inappropriately as a point of self-promotion to the point of alienation. Not only does this frustrate other participants, but it also takes up valuable time that could be used to discuss other relevant issues.

Response to Challenge

²⁹ Although a response to this challenge has yet to be identified, two strategies may negate the affects of this challenge. First, the Council has been discussing the possibility of holding the Community Meetings every month to keep attendance and enthusiasm fresh. While no decision has been made, I am hesitant that this would further increase the workload of already overburdened Council Members.

The second strategy is a result of the TYFPC's participatory meeting structure and reliance on the OST principal - the "Law of Two Feet". When participants are allowed to enter into or instigate conversations of their choice, they can actively avoid certain discussions they feel uncomfortable with. It should also be noted that the sensitivity meeting facilitator or Chair keeps the conversation on track and ensures equal contribution among willing participants.

Challenge 4: Perception of legitimacy

Although the TYFPC's bottom-up organizing, autonomous-nature and organic structure has helped us to achieve notable accomplishments in our first year of existence, the Council frequently experiences moments of internal and external self-doubt. Specifically during the Council Expansion process, FCN felt 'under-qualified' or expressed concerns such as 'why am I a self-appointed Member of the TYFPC, while NCM must apply'.

Externally speaking, the lack of legitimacy is both a result of our existence as a 1) Self-organized Council, and, 2) Youth group. As described in section 3.4, the TYFPC formed

²⁹ The "Law of Two Feet" is the only "law" of Open Space Technology and simply means that when participants feel as though they are no longer learning or contributing, they are free to move on from the conversation.

after a summer-long period of engagement with interested Youth. After constructive discussion admits a citywide strike, we decided to formally proclaim ourselves to be the self-governing Youth voice of the TFPC. While the media, TFPC and partnering organizations recognized our existence, we did not participate in the formal steps generally taken by FPCs in their foundational stages (described in section 2.4). Furthermore, while both Alam and Roberts recognize that the TYFPC “figured out how to do it on [our] own”, the TYFPC is often still viewed as a project or extension of the TFPC” (Roberts, 2010, personal interview). While this assumption places the Youth Council in a very advantageous position, we are often not the main point of contact for outside inquiries.

Secondly, given the *transitory* nature of the Youth experience, Youth are traditionally seen as being less legitimate than Adults. FCM Hannah Lewis claims “Youth are very much aware of being secondary to expertise, age and wisdom... and therefore [we] kind of get use to being secondary to Adults” (2010, personal interview).³⁰ This belief was reinforced during the TYFPC’s Foos Belt deputation to the Markham City Council, where we were labeled to be ‘naive’ and ‘idealistic’.

Response to Challenge

According to Lewis, “society really need to reconceptualize how we view Youth in the world” (Lewis, 2010, personal interview). The future development of Youth FPCs and

³⁰ Members of Landowners Association, who appear to believe that Young people are incapable of seeing the larger struggles of farming or that Youth are ‘more talk than action’, assigned these labels to the Youth generation during our deputation to Markham City Council.

legitimization of the Youth voice is dependent on the solidarity of Youth within the food movement. Two strategies currently being utilized by the TYFPC are social networking sites and food-related conferences. First, the TYFPC actively uses facebook and twitter to connect with Toronto's larger Youth and food community. Secondly, regional or national conferences allow Youth to network and share knowledge with groups in the food movement. The TYFPC participated in three conferences during 2010 – Sustain Ontario (March 2010), Community Food Security Coalition (October 2010) and Food Secure Canada (November 2010). Furthermore, as a Youth representative on the Food Secure Canada Steering Committee, I am able to provide national updates on the TYFPC (and TFPC) to other Members.

In addition, the TYFPC has been attempting to develop a website, which would provide information about the Council, our community, strategic plan, accomplishments and Committees. The website will hopefully become a place where Youth can share their experiences and thoughts with a larger audience either through a blog or by posting relevant work. Although there has been several delays in the development process, it will be a focal point if the summer *Interim Steering Committee*.

4.3. Challenges reflective of Organizational Capacity

While challenges tend to overlap the two subcategories, the majority of challenges that are reflective of the TYFPC's organizational capacity are comparable to those faced by FPCs outlined in Chapter 2. In the following section, I reconsider the limitations and

novelty of the TYFPC as a new Council as we attempt to navigate our evolving organizational capacity.

Challenge 1: The Effect of Rapid Council Expansion on the Implementation of the Strategic Planning Process

As discussed in the previous Chapter, the founding Members of the TYFPC took part in a Strategic Planning session during the fall of 2009 facilitated by Yusuf Alam. Due to time and resource constraints, the TYFPC completed Steps 1 through 6 of the Strategic Plan (see [Chapter 3](#)), and did not formally develop a financial plan/budget (Step 6), action/communication plan for each objective (Step 7), comprehensive plan for review, approval and implementation (Step 8), or an evaluation plan (Step 9).

While the generation of a Strategic Plan is not meant to be restrictive, according to the Community Animation Program and the Community Mobilization Program in Atlantic Canada, there are several limitations to the process including the potential lack of group commitment and vision, or the short organizational window of consultation (2000). In addition, new organizations may not prioritize updating the Strategic Plan annually because they evolve so rapidly or undergo major changes in Membership and leadership positions.

While the Members generally maintain a certain degree of commitment, I observed three definable limitations of the process given the rapid pace of Council evolution and the

‘short organizational window of consultation’ during 2009-2010 term. The first limitation was induced by the relatively immediate expansion of the Council following the Strategic Planning process in the fall. While the FCM found the planning process to be incredibly unifying, after the Council expansion, the NCM found themselves thrown into a small, but self-defined group of enthusiastic Youth. This was evident both during my interview process and later through personal conversations with the new Council Members. For example, explains NCM Ivan Wadgyamar, “My first meeting with the (Research and Policy) Committee is next week, so I’m going into this as a beginner.... So, since I don’t have a full grasp on what exactly the meetings are like, I’m playing it by ear” (Wadgyamar, 2010, personal interview). Members of the ECPMC have also repeatedly expressed their desire to become more involved and take greater ownership over actions of the Committee, but reported feeling unsure about *how* to become more engaged.

The second limitation of the Strategic Planning process was an inevitable result of the of the TYFPC’s birth. In what Tammara Soma would call the ‘explosion of the TYFPC’, the Council immediately saw an incredible amount of interest from the Youth community, food organizations and the TFPC. This encouraging energy, in turn, created relationships and opportunities that would instrumentally shape the first year of the TYFPC. Although the Council’s initial accomplishments are well defined, we did stray from several objectives defined by the Strategic Planning process. For example, according to the Strategic Plan, the *Research and Policy Committee* works towards objective 1.2, “achieving one key change in the TDSB” and objective 1.3 “producing four food policy

papers per year”. However, after being given the unique opportunity to represent Youth in the FS, the RPC decided to focus its energy on the Youth consultation process. While the Committees recommendations have been taken into consideration, the RPC currently not working towards the outlined objectives. Similarly, the *Event Coordination and Project Management Committee*, as specified by objective 2.2 of the Strategic Plan, will work on three key events per year. However, with a small number of active Council Members, the ECPMC focused their energy on the SYTYCC and YFF. Instead of developing a third event, the Committee will develop and execute Food Policy workshops. The workshops are more closely aligned to Objective 1.2 (assigned to the RPC). The *Interim Committee* will further examine this developmental theme during the summer of 2010.

Finally, as described in Chapter 2, FPCs often struggle with outcome evaluation. Since the TYFPC did not finish the Strategic Planning Process (notably Step 9) we have not developed a formal mode of evaluation. Therefore, although we perceive ourselves as being successful, we have no tangible evaluative criteria in place to ensure that our goals are met. Lack of evaluation mechanisms particularly hurts the work of the individual Committees, who, since they did not create respective Action Plans, have nothing to be formally accountable too. The unsigned Membership Agreement further exacerbates this challenge because there are no repercussions if Council Members do not uphold their obligations.

Response to Challenge

Although Council Members have not coherently addressed the above challenges, I believe that we have proposed several actions that will negate the potential consequences associated with the Strategic Planning process. The first challenge – New Council Member and Founding Council Member divide – has been addressed through two notable Council Member ‘parties’. Both the February 27th pizza party and July 5th picnic allowed Council Members to interact with one another in a *friendly* capacity. Both NCM and FCM expressed strong support for parties as a way to socialize outside of the traditional Council setting. Furthermore, when Council Members have a foundational respect for one another, they are more likely to communicate openly and feel accountable to the entire group.

Although both the pizza party and picnic are likely to become annual traditions, Council Members have suggested a more concrete orientation for future NCM. For example, in addition to formally introducing NCMs at subsequent Community Meetings, we will also have a Council Meeting that specifically focuses on welcoming NCM and making them feel as though they possess equal ownership over the Council. At this meeting, NCM will likely be paired with existing Council Members who will mentor them through the Strategic Plan, Committee Structure and individual member responsibility. In addition, orientation will hopefully help facilitate the delegation of action and lessen the burden on over-burdened Council Members.

In response to the second and third challenge associated with the Strategic Planning process – Committee’s responsibility and lack of evaluation plan – the Committees of the

TYFPC are required to provide a brief update at the beginning of every Community and Council meeting. The updates are generally given by the Committee (Co)-Lead and hold Council Members accountable to the larger group. As discussed in Chapter 3, the updates are also a beneficial way to attract interested Community Members, who may provide a valuable asset for Committee programmes. Although the updates are helpful, in the future the Council will make Action Plan's mandatory.

Finally, in response to the challenges described throughout Chapter 4, the TYFPC will form an optional *Interim Steering Committee*. The *Interim Committee* will meet during the Council break (July-August) to evaluate the Strategic Plan, Membership Agreement, NCM application process and other topics deemed relevant by the Committee. To date, three Council Members have volunteered to participate with additional support from other Members when available. At this time, we do not have the organizational mechanisms in place to institutionalize the recommendations of the *Interim Committee*. The ease and timeliness of this transition will likely dictate the course of the second term of the TYFPC. Although I will be unable to attend the Committee meetings, I am reassured by the performance capacity of the Members involved.

Challenge 2: New Member Selection

In Chapter 3, I provided an in-depth discussion about the Council expansion process that took place from December 2009 to February 2010. The application, created by the *Member and Community Relations Committee*, asked applicants to: 1) Share a story about

their relationship with food, 2) Highlight what they brought to the TYFPC, and 3) Specify their Committee interest and why. While FCM believed that the three questions would not exclude Youth with a limited expertise and allow applicants to share their *passion* for food issues, the application process had several limitations.

³¹First, the NCM decision process was faced with strict time constraints. At the January 16th Council Member meeting FCM decided to choose ten applicants based on a Dot-mocracy and communicate their top choices to TFPC Staff after only four days of reviewing the applications. The time constraint also prevented Council Members from discussing the applications with one another directly in person.

Although section 4.2 articulated the challenges associated with internal Council communication, the NCM selection process elicited a constructive debate amongst the FCM regarding ‘who would be offered Membership’. NCM were selected based upon their individual application with further consideration given to what the Council make-up would look like post-expansion.

Still, given the Council’s distinguishing demographic make up – university-educated women – we strongly prioritized more ‘diverse applicants’. However, since the application asked Youth to share stories, the FCMs made assumptions about ‘diversity’ based upon the applicants *name* and *resume credentials*. In hindsight, I believe that we

³¹ NCM Applications were due on January 15th and NCM were introduced at the February 1st Community Meeting

may have missed high caliber performers who have similar experiences and backgrounds as the FCM.

³²The below excerpts from email discussions indicate some perspectives held by FCM in regards to the NCM selection process:

“I feel that our demographics, our backgrounds (the fact that we are six amazing girls)... already influences the people we are going to choose. I feel like we're really missing out on the diversity [component].. Maybe I'm paranoid, but even with respect to the degrees, academic background, cultural background etc.. I think we need to involve more new immigrants who may not have the same experience or have been involved with the same organizations like the Stop etc”.

“I realize this list was made by a vote and I can't really change the numbers (just like in a real election) but I really would like to avoid having the majority of Council Members from the environmental program at York, I really think that this doesn't offer diversity. And although I recognize each candidate has different work and volunteer experiences I struggle to see how we would meet our goal of having a diverse Council? I do appreciate that these candidates have a genuine interest in our Council and in making change possible as is evident by their choice in school program”.

³² Email discussions took place from January 19th to January 25th, 2010. FCM viewpoints remain anonymous for the purpose of confidentiality.

“Based on everyone's personal experience, people are bound to have a different idea of how they see diversity represented on the Council. We have to work within some restrictions (given who has applied in the first place), as well as mutual respect between Council Members that each of us have made new Council selections the best they can, taking in all criteria we discussed on Saturday. We will all see different qualities in different people, given our own different backgrounds. I think the best we can do at this point is trust each other, understanding that we've all tried very hard to make the best decisions we can in regards to new Membership”.

“When I say diversity, I was also thinking about Youth who are usually excluded from such participation because of our life commitments (jobs, family, disability, poverty, etc). With respect to my comment on the application we are all speaking in the same language but in different ways, my point is that I felt that there were a lot of applicants who may not possess all the education or the experience credential that would have benefited from TYFPC involvement as a Council member”.

Response to Challenge

Given the process' constraints and the fact that this was the TYFPC's first attempt to expand the Council, I believe we handled the selection process to the best of our abilities

using a modified, but democratic Dot-mocracy. Since each of the FCMs were actively engaged in the NCM selection process, everyone provided insightful recommendations for the next Council expansion. Lewis agrees, “the method we went with was still a lot more transparent, inclusive and honest than what could have happened” (2010, personal interview). Fortunately, the ‘Three C’s of Council Membership’ allowed for all applicants to contribute to the Council in some capacity. Following the NCM selection process Committee Leads invited all applicants to become Members of the Committee they identified on their application.

The *Interim Steering Committee* will hopefully examine several outreach and selection-based strategies. Possible process alterations include holding interviews with qualified applicants, making the NCM decisions together in person, and more proactively offering unselected applicants Committee Membership. In addition, greater consideration must be given to what the ideal Council will look like as a whole. FCM Hannah Lewis believes that in the future, “we [should] think more about the composition of those six-people having a variety of skills among them, rather than just being the best” (2010, personal interview).

The TYFPC did not receive any applications from ‘diverse’ individuals, particularly representatives of ‘marginalized’ or high school communities. In the upcoming Council expansion, the TYFPC will make an effort to promote the application to under-represented groups through our relationship with the *Afri-Can Food Basket*, *PACT*, *SKETCH* and *Students of Toronto for Environmental Progress*. Specifically, the TYFPC

will consider creating two permanent seats on the Council for high school representatives, which will naturally serve as a *training* incubation for future leaders of the Council.

Challenge 3: Limited Funding

As discussed in Chapter 3, Thornton and I wrote and revised a grant application to the Laidlaw Foundation. On May 31st, the TYFPC was informed that we were not selected for funding. Although the process helped us to critically define our future course of action and chart our priorities, Council Members appeared to be shocked and disappointed by the rejection. Some Members thought the Council's application was 'too visionary' or that we are 'too new' of an organization to be eligible for funding. Thornton and I have scheduled a meeting with Laidlaw's program manager to discuss our application, and hopefully the feedback will provide a concrete indication as to *how* we can improve our application for future rounds of funding. In the meantime, TFPC Staff have advised us to 'not burn any bridges' and continue to improve our functioning capacity so that we are more eligible in future attempts.

Response to Challenge

Although I have yet to receive consensus from Council Members, I am determined to not let the funding rejection prevent future funding applications. We are also currently discussing the possibility of applying for a Hellmann's "Real Food Grant" which is

designed to “support initiatives that bring Canadian families and kids together with real food in their community” (Hellmann’s website, accessed 2010).

In lieu of funding, the TYFPC has built strong relationships with other organizations, institutions and individuals who have helped us navigate our first year with incredibly limited resources. As evident from our accomplishments, the energy of the Youth Community is capable of leveraging these relationships, particularly in regards to project implementation (i.e. SYTYCC, YFF, and Policy Workshops). Furthermore, as a ‘Council’ we can continue play an advisory role to the TFPC and provide networking space for Youth without a direct funding supply. The TFPC will also continue to support us through its ‘petty cash fund’, which covers the cost of TYFPC printing material and Community Meeting food.

Challenge 4: (Dis)connection to Political Machinery

Throughout my MRP I have stressed the structural significance of FPC connection to government; however, a Council’s relationship to political machinery is never black or white. As a ‘hybrid’ organization the TYFPC has benefited from our autonomous but reciprocal relationship with Toronto Food Policy Council. While the TFPC and FS team recognize the TYFPC as both a portal to the Youth Community and a source of consultation, we are unlikely to be formally recognized by other departments in Public Health. Although this disconnection means that the Council as a body is not in jeopardy during City restructuring, we could potentially be vulnerable if PH hires replacement

Staff who do not see the value in our existence. Personally, this makes me uneasy because TFPC Staff have been incredibly helpful in building the TYFPC and providing the Youth Council with opportunities we may not have had access to on our own.

Response to Challenge

The greatest strength of the TYFPC in overcoming this challenge is to maintain a strong relationship with the Toronto Food Policy Council. This includes being active participants at meetings, Strategic Planning sessions, adhoc Committees, and continually lobbying for the Youth voice. In addition the proposed mentorship relationship between individual Members of both Councils will strengthen the resilience of TYFPC in uncertain times.

Secondly, to strengthen the relationship between the TYFPC and political machinery, the TYFPC must continue have a presence within PH. This includes attending related BOH meetings, sharing the RPC's recommendations and policy papers with relevant politicians and departments, and ensuring that the Youth voice be included in the FS .

Conclusion

Throughout Chapter 4 I have identified several challenges faced by the TYFPC as a group of Youth and as an emerging organization. While we do have strategies in place to address the situationally dependent challenges, several overarching barriers still exist.

Chapter 5 provides major conclusions regarding my MRP research and implementation of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council.

Chapter 5: Conclusions - The future of Youth Involvement in Food Policy Councils

“Young people are joining together to demand a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. In the process, they are transforming policies and making institutions more accountable”

- Ginwright & James (2002)

5.1 Major Themes

While citizens serve as producers, processors, distributors and consumers of food, perhaps more empowering is the individual’s role as a citizen – or as Wayne Roberts’ says citizen’s ability to “reclaim food as an area of public policy” (Roberts, 2010, presentation – June). By design, Food Policy Councils have the potential to serve as a community portal to sustainable policy development. According to *Food First*, there are five key potentials for Food Policy Councils (2009b.):

1. To address public health through improving food, addressing hunger and food security, and improving the quality of available food
2. To affect national and [local] level policy debates
3. To connect multiple sectors that wouldn’t otherwise work together
4. To bring local food policy into the mainstream
5. To boost local economies

Throughout my Major Research Project implementation and research, I have argued that FPCs require several structural and role-related dimensions that will increase the scope of their potential, resilience and future longevity. Structural components include connection

to government structure, skill and drive of Membership, Staff support, reliable funding and capacity to fulfill four roles – 1) Facilitator of food system knowledge, 2) Gatherer of food sector representatives, 3) Advisor of sustainable food policy, and, 4) Creator of food programming. Since 1990, the Toronto Food Policy Council has earned its status as North America’s most respected and effective FPC due to its ability to overcome structural changes within the municipal government and its ability to fulfill the above four roles. However, the degree to which the TFPC is able to leverage its current implementation capacity through the Toronto Food Strategy and define a unified vision post-City restructuring and Staff changes, will greatly impact the next ten years of the Council.

Furthermore, I have argued that through the inclusion of diverse Youth Voices, FPCs can more effectively and legitimately address the future needs of a democratized food system. As Jamie Kennedy told a group of 50 Youth at the June 7th TYFPC Community Meeting, “*You* are the ones that will be influencing agriculture and food policy in years to come” (Kennedy, 2010, presentation – June). According to Wayne Roberts, “This should be happening at every FPC. It’s just the classic, ‘your time has come’ and it will soon be seen as normal, Youth [will] just automatically be included in the conversation” (Roberts, 2010, personal interview).

Although the TFPC has successfully incubated and fostered the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council, the dedication of Toronto’s Youth Community is responsible for creating the existing autonomous Council structure. Throughout our evolutionary year, the

TYFPC has created a structural framework that has achieved numerous accomplishments, categorized below:

Process Accomplishments:

- Creating Strategic Plan and Membership Agreement
- Expanding the Council from six to twelve

Event Accomplishments:

- Organizing Seven Community Meetings including presenters from Food Cycles, PACT, Everdale, Hot Yam, Healthy Food Initiatives at York, African Food Basket, and Jamie Kennedy
- Showcasing six of Toronto's talented Young Chef's at the first annual 'So You(th) Think You Can Cook' Competition at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair
- Facilitating Food Security Workshops for FoodShare's 'Recipe for Change' Conference
- Organizing the 'Youth Food Fair' with Service Learning Students from 'Theory and Praxis in Food Security', which brought together nearly 300 Youth and food organizations in Toronto

Influence-based Accomplishments:

- Holding four Youth consultations and providing five recommendations to the Toronto Food Strategy
- Solidifying two permanent seats for Youth on the TFPC

- Delivering two deputations to the Markham City Council endorsing the Food Belt Proposal

Structural Accomplishments

- Developing four autonomous Committees; Member and Community Relations, Event Coordination and Project Management, Research and Policy, and Newsletter, Web and Media
- Including all interested Youth through the “Three C’s of Council Membership”
- Developing bi-monthly alternating Community and Council Member meetings

External Awareness Raising Accomplishments:

- Publishing six newsletters featuring the ‘Apple’ of the Month’ and stories from the Youth Community
- Being featured in numerous media outlets throughout the GTA
- Managing TYFPC list serve, Twitter Account and joint Facebook page with the TFPC

While the TYFPC has achieved several accomplishments, we have also experienced notable challenges related to the reality of the Youth experience and our organizational capacity. Based upon my personal perceptions as TYFPC organizer and personal interviews with FCM and NCM, I have identified several non-exhaustive challenges faced by the Council.

The TYFPC strives to bring Youth FPCs to a wider audience of young people. As such, it is important to depict the major themes uncovered in my research and participation with the TYFPC. The chart below summarizes the TYFPC model in terms of: 1) Replicable best practices, 2) Perceived challenges, 3) Strategies to overcome obstacles:

| <u>Best Practices of the TYFPC</u> | <u>Relevant Challenges of the TYFPC</u> | <u>Strategies identified to overcome Challenges</u> |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Provide multiple ways for Youth to become involved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Council Member <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Actively attend Council/Community meetings b. Active on 1 Committee 2) Community Member <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Community meetings b. Events c. Committee involvement d. Writing for newsletter 3) Consultant <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Food Strategy b. Future policy research | <p>Representation of ‘diverse’ Youth:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) ‘Marginalized’ Youth 2) High school Youth 3) Non-Food System thinkers | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Engage with key communities/organizations representing ‘marginalized’ Youth and invite them to present at Meetings 2) Organize Food Policy workshops in schools, engage students in events, create two permanent seats for younger Youth on the TYFPC, make Community Meetings more accessible. 3) Organize Food policy workshops and facilitate at conferences, deliver deputations and be present through media coverage (Food system thinking is necessary for Council Membership) |
| <p>Maintain formal connections with a FPC:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Create two permanent Youth seats 2) Propose mentorship relationship between Members of both Councils 3) Actively attend FPC meetings and advocate for Youth voice | <p>Communication and Participation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Email communication 2) Between-meeting participation 3) Individual prioritization of TYFPC Membership | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Require signing of Membership Agreement 2) Require consensus/quorum 3) Create Council Member check-ups 4) Organize social gatherings 5) Delegate responsibilities for events |
| <p>Provide networking space for Youth Community:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Share opportunities at Meetings 2) Hold participatory brainstorming sessions at Community meetings | <p>Bi-monthly meetings</p> | <p>Strategies not directly identified, but similar to above</p> |

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| 3) Engage Youth through social media, list serve, etc. | | |
| Attempt to influence municipal food policy by incorporating a Youth voice 1) Consult with Youth Community and become the ‘watchdog’ for Youth inclusions 2) Deliver public deputations and written endorsements | Perception of legitimacy: 1) Internally 2) Externally | 1) Finding solidarity and sense of pride among Members 2) Presenting at conferences and panels and creating interactive website for Community |
| Educate Youth on sustainable food-related topics 1) Annual events 2) Food policy workshops 3) Panel and conference presentations 4) Hosting Service Learning students | Limitations of the Strategic Plan: 1) FCM/NCM divide in ownership 2) Limited scope of analysis and emerging opportunities 3) Lack of outcome evaluation and ‘action plans’ | 1) Organize social gatherings, be more thoroughly prepared to welcome NCM, pair NCM with FCM 2) Hold Summer <i>Interim Committee</i> 3) Review the Strategic Plan, Membership Agreement, Completion of action plan |
| Create actively autonomous Committee Structure: 1) Event Coordination and Project Management 2) Research and Policy 3) Newsletter, Web and Media 4) Member and Community Relations | Council Member expansion: 1) Application format 2) Selection process | 1) Reconfigure application questions 2) Conduct interviews, make decisions as an entire Council, and balance diversity with individual performance |
| Define and Balance Membership Capacities: (described in section 5.2) 1) Training Organization 2) Resume-building Organization 3) Implementation Organization | Funding limitations | 1) Reassess previous grant application, meet with Laidlaw Foundation, apply for future grants, and rely on organizational connections and ‘petty cash’ from the TFPC |
| Collaborate with groups of Youth or FPCs wanting to incubate a Youth FPC (described in 5.3) | Connection to beaucracy | 1) Maintain reciprocal with the TFPC, make presence known in Public Health |

5.2 Defining and Balancing Membership Capacities

In order to overcome the key challenges highlighted in Chapter 4, the TYFPC needs to define and balance three distinct Membership capacities that are a direct result of the

Youth *and* organizational experience. They include the TYFPC as a 1) Training organization, 2) Resume-building organization, and 3) Implementation organization. Although the TYFPC is continually evolving, in the upcoming years we must develop the three capacities effectively and efficiently.

As a *training organization*, the TYFPC is preparing future leaders in the food movement, giving them a space to exercise their beliefs and facilitating numerous connections with experienced or elder leaders. According to TYFPC Co-founder Ashley Andrade, “The Council allows for Youth leadership and skill development. As a Council Member, [we] are learning social and intellectual competency” (2010, personal interview). As discussed throughout, the “Three C’s of Council Membership” allow for Youth to participate in the movement based upon their level of commitment and degree of food system thinking. While food system thinking may be mandatory for Council Members, new *foodies* have the opportunity to interact and grow along-side more knowledgeable Members.

Secondly, the TYFPC as a *resume-building* organization has been a major consideration when developing the Council structure; we seek to provide all participating Youth with skills that will better prepare them for their future endeavors. Sarah Mian says, “I’m hoping that Members of the TYFPC will have a valuable experience that will benefit them in the long run (2010, personal interview). Particularly Council Members active in the 2009-2010 term have had the opportunity to build a groundbreaking organization and obtain valuable skills that will help them when they enter the career world.

Finally, since the TYFPC does not have a direct connection to municipal government we have been less successful at navigating our role as an *implementation organization*. Still, the TYFPC has defiantly taken advantage of implementation opportunities presented through our relationship with the TFPC and other organizations, specifically through the FS consultation process and deputations to Markham City Council endorsing the Food Belt.

The TYFPC cannot exercise the three capacities simultaneously. Although the TYFPC can help Youth become future leaders and build their resume, it is unrealistic to expect those same Youth to deliver organizational or policy implementation. For example, our two Service Learning students did a large amount of work planning the YFF and learned a great deal about Toronto's food movement in the process. However, since they are new to the *Event Coordination and Project Management Committee*, they would not be prepared to implement the Committee's objectives outlined in the Strategic Plan or dictate its future course of action. Given this reality, the TYFPC must continually reorient and focus our energy towards the capacity that is meeting our current objectives.

5.3 Emergence of Youth Food Policy Councils elsewhere

The TYFPC believes that our existence could have larger implications on the future of the food movement. Furthermore, there appears to be a demand; the concept of Youth FPCs and the inclusion of Youth representatives within existing FPC structure are

beginning to be discussed outside of Toronto. For the L.A. Food Policy Task Force, “the importance of involving Youth has been a common theme in every discussion, listening session and large meeting” (Delwiche, 2010, personal interview). However, as FCM Tammara Soma states, “there is never a one size fits all model because every [group] has a different circumstance. The TYFPC could be replicated as a seed of conversation, but Youth Food Policy Councils elsewhere may be completely different” (Soma, 2010, personal interview). Considering the range of challenges and opportunities within the Youth reality I believe that future Youth FPCs will develop as one of three categories:

1. Youth forming from within an established FPC
2. Youth forming from outside an established FPC
3. Youth forming as a FPC ‘Hybrid’

In the following section, I will elaborate on the three categories of Youth FPC development and provide examples when appropriate.

1. Youth forming from within an established FPC

A large component of the reciprocal advisory relationship between the TYFPC and TFPC was the creation of two permanent Youth seats on the TFPC. I believe this will be an initial strategy for established FPCs attempting to include Youth voices. Rebecca Schiff says that existing FPCs (2010, personal interview):

“Certainly have the capacity to prioritize this. Council’s could arrange to have a specific number of Youth representatives. These representatives could also lead a standing sub-committee on Youth issues. This way, there could be some mechanism for ensuring that the Youth and non-Youth Members are working together, for comprehensive solutions, rather than siloing themselves into separate sectors”.

I have personally consulted with FPC organizers in Oakland California and North Carolina who are looking at different modes of Youth inclusion. Like the TYFPC’s 2009 organizational process, the Oakland FPC is now “meeting and networking with organizations working with Youth to plan informational presentations and discussions with Youth to ascertain how they would like to participate” (Huston. 2010, personal interview). According to a concept paper composed by the Council and Food First, the vision on Oakland’s Youth Initiative is to “ensure that Young people have a voice in the Oakland FPC, help develop Youth understanding of food policy and the effects it has on daily life and help Youth to discover and develop concrete actions they can take to affect food policy” (2009c., p.1). The proposal further outlines five modules for Youth engagement including representation, mentoring, internship, fellowship, and engagement. The initiative plans to accept new Youth annually and mentor them through the program.

The Oakland FPC Youth Initiative has a strong set of Youth engagement strategies built from *within* the existing Council structure. However, I see several pros and cons associated with this form of Youth FPC origination. According to the proposal, there is a great deal of collaboration projected between the Oakland FPC and external Youth

organization organizations, which could result in high recruitment rates, more diverse representation or increased operational support. Since there are five distinct modules, participating Youth may have a great deal of flexibility within the program and the ability to self-identify according to their individual strengths. Since the initiative trains incoming ‘freshmen’ annually there is the assumption of skill and leadership development from within the group. Finally, working with community allies may allow the initiative to involve younger Youth who are in the midst of developing consumption behaviors that will impact their future.

The cons of this approach are mainly related to the ‘top-down’ organizational approach of the initiative’s development. Unlike the TYFPC, whose structure and priorities were created by the Council Members themselves, the Oakland FPC Initiative was developed without taking into consideration the identities and skills of the participating Youth.

Wayne Robert’s agrees “Youth should always mobilize and organize themselves from the bottom-up” (Roberts, 2010, personal interview) and therefore the Oakland FPC should exercise caution when asserting a presupposed structure on a group of Youth. Other potential cons may include recruiting ‘non-food’ system thinkers, excluding self-identified Youth who may be outside the age requirements, losing internal momentum in the face of future funding or navigating through resource restrictions.

2. Youth forming from outside an established FPC

I have found no documented reference of Youth FPCs forming organically outside of an already established FPC. Although it seems unlikely that a government body would

instigate a Youth FPC without having an ‘Adult’ Council already in place, it potentially is an option for groups of Youth independent of government structures. However, unless the group had a guaranteed funding source or incubational NGO support, the Youth FPC is likely to face considerable advisory and implementation challenges.

Interested Youth do not necessarily need to develop formally as a ‘Food Policy Council’ to fulfill similar functions. In fact, as a Food Policy Roundtable, groups of Youth could gather to discuss relevant issues without the structural complications associated with being a ‘Council’. For example, FPCs could be incubated at universities and high schools to address the very specific food needs faced by the particular demographics of Youth. “Students at the UW-Madison could organize a Youth FPC to look at how food affects the university experience, what is the university doing about food-related courses, how food affects students on low income and how we get more local and sustainable food in the system” (Roberts, 2010, personal interview).

3. Youth forming as a FPC ‘Hybrid’

As I argued in section 3.4, the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council is an example of a ‘Hybrid’ Youth FPC model. While we recognize that our success is greatly dependent on the Staff support, resources and reputation of the TFPC, Roberts claims “[the TFPC] did not come in and train [the TYFPC]. You just figured out how to do it on your own... and you are the people that deserve credit for the success of your organization” (Roberts, 2010, personal interview). Therefore, I argue that the ‘Hybrid’ model is likely to be the

most effective given the limited amount of resources outside of the government, and the increased strength and scope of the FPC movement in North America.

I believe that the bottom-up development of the TYFPC has allowed its Members to feel a sense of pride and ownership over our accomplishments. As expressed by Council Members during my MRP interview process:

“I’m glad to be a part of, change, change is needed!” - Wadygmar, 2010

“We are actually part of something big” - Van Halem, 2010

“We have the same passion; we love Toronto and want to see change in the food system. That is what brings us together” - Andrade, 2010

“This is something real that is happening, its so much more than I expected a new organization could have accomplished in its first months” - Lewis, 2010

5.4 Continued Personal Research Agenda

While this MRP report marks the end of my Master’s curriculum in Environmental Studies at York University and my ten-month study of the TYFPC, I am thrilled to continue as the Chair of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council and as a member of the Toronto Food Policy Council. In addition, I readily anticipate both sharing my acquired

knowledge through consultant-work and exploring opportunities to learn from other food-system thinkers. I also have a strong desire to further study the Canadian and U.S. Food and Agricultural Policy framework so that I can be a more sophisticated and knowledgeable actor of sustainable change.

Conference Participation and Publishing

I will be sharing the TYFPC's story at two upcoming conferences – the Community Food Security Coalition's "Gumbo That Unites Us All" in New Orleans on October 16th to 19th, 2010 and Food Secure Canada's National Assembly in Montreal on November 26th to 28th 2010. The vision of both participatory workshops is to develop a best-practice model for Youth engagement using the collective expertise of everyone involved. Quite recently, the idea of the TYFPC organizing a City-wide Youth Food Conference in the spring of 2012 has been taking shape, although no formal plans have been identified. The collaborative conference would likely be a continuation of the Youth Food Fair, but would include panel discussions, keynote speakers, workshops and City-wide tours. Finally, I hope to publish my findings in academic journals or at academic conferences such as the Canadian Association for Food Studies.

Youth FPC Workbook

While the TYFPC is not a prescriptive model for the development of Youth FPCs elsewhere, I believe that others will benefit from the documented experiences and

structural composition of the TYFPC. Therefore, in combination with conference facilitation, I am planning to develop a workbook of best-practices for Youth FPC organization under the supervision of Dr. Rod MacRae. The workbook will take into consideration the three models of Youth FPC development outlined in section 5.2: 1) Youth forming from within an established FPC, 2) Youth forming from outside an established FPC, and, 3) Youth forming as FPC 'Hybrid'. I am hoping to publish and share the workbook with the networks I have developed throughout my research.

Product # 2: Timeline of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council

“The energy that young people bring to this stuff is infectious, and a lot of the interesting ideas don’t necessarily come from the old farts”

- Rod MacRae

Red = Major Research Project Activity

Blue = Council Member Reflection

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| Spring 2009 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early discussion with TFPC Staff about inclusion of Youth voices in municipal Food Policy discussions - Ryerson graduate student Ashley Andrade and York graduate student Tracy Phillippi begin Field Experience with TFPC |
| June/July 2009 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weekly Youth Steering Committee meetings held at Toronto Public Health and Metro Hall - Ongoing meetings with Youth and Food organizations throughout Toronto - Mentorship with TFPC Staff - Synthesizing of information and perspectives gathered <p>“During the Summer months, Tracy and I worked diligently to network and meet with Toronto’s interested youth. We really took feedback, analyzed it, and decided to form a steering committee”. (Andrade, 2010)</p> |
| August 2009 | <p><u>August 27th</u> – Initial meeting with founding TYFPC members, decide to form as Youth Food Policy Council.</p> <p>“I know that members of the TYFPC will have a valuable experience that will benefit them in the long run” (Mian, 2010).</p> |
| September 2009 | <p><u>September 9th</u> – Formal introduction of the TYFPC at City Hall, proposed formal working relationship with the TFPC.</p> <p><u>September 26th</u> – TYFPC members participate in <i>Meal Exchange Stomach This!</i> Food Security Training</p> <p><u>September 30th</u> – Strategic Planning Session</p> <p><u>September/October</u> Newsletter released by Newsletter, Web and Communication Committee</p> <p>“I was amazed by how many people showed up to the September 9th meeting, and how many familiar faces were in the crowd. There was a lot of diversity and different age groups... If that many people came out and were really excited and optimistic that the TYFPC could represent them, that that was a really good sign” (Lewis, 2010).</p> <p>“September 9th exceed my expectations, (the TYFPC) had a unified sense of ‘can-do’ enthusiasm and a critique of the larger food system and the obstacles to change” (Seccombe, 2010).</p> |
| October 2009 | <p><u>Ongoing</u> – Incoming “So You(th) Think You Can Cook” (SYTYCC) Applications</p> <p><u>October 5th</u> – Community Meeting, introduction to the TYFPC and brainstorming</p> <p><u>October 14th</u> – TFPC Informal Meeting</p> <p><u>October 16th</u> – Council Members facilitate Food Security Workshop at <i>Food</i></p> |

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| | <p><i>Share's Recipe for Change.</i></p> <p><u>October 17th</u> – Council Members visit Everdale Organic Farm</p> <p><u>October 23rd</u> – SYTYCC Applications Due</p> <p><u>October 26th</u> – Strategic Planning Session</p> <p><u>October 30th</u> – SYTYCC finalist notified</p> <p>“I was super impressed by the Strategic Planning process, it helped the TYFPC realize we are actually part of something big, it gave us a new unified identity” (Van Halem, 2010).</p> |
| November 2009 | <p><u>November 2nd</u> – TYFPC Community Meeting, Policy Panel</p> <p><u>November 4th</u> – Facilitate CIELAP Film</p> <p><u>November 7th</u> – SYTYCC Ages 14-17</p> <p><u>November 14th</u> – SYTYCC Ages 18-25</p> <p><u>November/December</u> Newsletter released by Newsletter, Web and Communication Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ongoing development of Member Agreement and New Member - Application by Member and Community Relations Committee - Begin working on MRP Proposal and Plan of Study <p><u>November 25th</u> - MES II-III Exam</p> <p>“The SYTYCC gave us a change to reach out to people across Ontario. The talent level (of the youth finalists) was absolutely amazing, hopefully this will raise more media attention and awareness for food curriculum” (Soma, 2010).</p> |
| December 2009 | <p><u>December 7th</u> – TYFPC Community Meeting, Everdale and Food Cycles</p> <p><u>December 8th</u> – Administration of New Member Application</p> <p>Ongoing development of Action Plans (not completed)</p> <p>Council Members decides to alternate Community and Council Member Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethics Review Process Complete and Approved |
| January 2010 | <p><u>January 13th</u> – TYFPC Workshop at Haverdal Collegiate Institute</p> <p><u>January 13th</u> – TFPC Meeting</p> <p><u>January 15th</u> New Member Applications due</p> <p><u>January 16th</u> – TYFPC Council Meeting, New Member decision process begins</p> <p><u>January 23rd</u> – Food Strategy Consultation held by <i>Research and Policy Committee</i></p> <p><u>January/February</u> Newsletter released by <i>Newsletter, Web and Communication Committee</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin planning the “Youth Food Systems Fair” (YFSF) - Discussed optional anonymity with Council Members - Drafted Interview Questions - Conducted Youth Interviews <p>“We are working to compile information on what youth want in a food strategy, so we can try really hard to get it incorporated in the Toronto Food Strategy” (Thornton, 2010).</p> |
| February 2010 | <p><u>February 1st</u> TYFPC Community Meeting, introduction of new Council Members, Afri-Can Food Basket, Food Strategy Open Space Technology event</p> <p><u>February 10th</u> – TFPC Meeting</p> <p><u>February 16th</u> – TYFPC deputation to Toronto Public Health endorsing the Toronto Food Strategy</p> <p><u>February 17th</u> – TYFPC deputation to Markham City Council endorsing the</p> |

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| | <p>Markham Food Belt</p> <p><u>February 23rd</u> – Planning session with <i>New Members of the Research and Policy Committee</i></p> <p><u>February 27th</u> TYFPC Council Member Pizza Party</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of Laidlaw Foundation Grant Application - Ongoing planning of YFSF with Service Learning Students - Conducted Youth and Adult Interviews - Ongoing meetings with Rod MacRae - Draft Introduction and MRP outline due <p>“The Toronto Food Strategy will make Toronto the only City in the world to nab the problem, there is a new sheriff in town” (Roberts, 2010).</p> |
| March 2010 | <p><u>March 4th</u> – TYFPC Presentation at Bring Food Home Conference</p> <p>Ongoing Planning of YFSF with Service Learning Students</p> <p><u>March 7th</u> – TYFPC website meeting held by <i>Newsletter, Web and Communication Committee</i></p> <p><u>March 9th</u> – Planning session with New Members of the <i>Event Coordination Committee</i></p> <p><u>March 10th</u> – Food Security presentation at Linden School</p> <p><u>March 12th</u> – Food Security presentation at Linden School</p> <p><u>March 13th</u> – Food Strategy Consultation held by <i>Research and Policy Committee</i></p> <p><u>March 15th</u> – Laidlaw Foundation Grant Due</p> <p><u>March 25th</u> – TYFPC Youth Food System Fair</p> <p><u>March 22nd</u> – TYFPC Council Meeting</p> <p><u>March 24th</u> – Food Strategy Consultation held with PACT</p> <p><u>March 30th</u> – Food Strategy Consultation with Toronto Public Health held by the <i>Research and Policy Committee</i></p> <p><u>March/April</u> Newsletter released by <i>Newsletter, Web and Media Committee</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Completed Youth and Adult Interviews - Completed Coursework in Facilitations in Environmental Studies, with a focus on MRP Methodology - Ongoing meetings with Rod MacRae <p>“I think that a lot of youth thought there are not enough jobs in the food world to have a fair. This event opens a lot of peoples eyes, and doors” (Qu, 2010).</p> |
| April 2010 | <p><u>April 12th</u> – TYFPC Community Meeting, Hot Yam and HiFIY, Community Food Mapping workshop</p> <p><u>April 10th</u> – TFPC Formal Meeting on Food Strategy</p> <p><u>April 21st</u> – <i>Newsletter, Web and Media Committee</i> meet to discuss future of the website and newsletter.</p> <p>April 12th – Meeting with Rod MacRae</p> <p>April 26th – MRP section Due</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transcribed Interviews - Begin writing MRP <p>“I’m very happy to be a part of the TYFPC, I see a lot of potential for making change in Toronto. The TYFPC is the first Youth Food Policy Council in the world, so it’s making history. I’m glad to be part of that, making change, change is needed (Wadgymar, 2010).</p> |
| May 2010 | <p><u>May 3rd</u> – TYFPC Council Meeting, looking ahead, feedback</p> <p><u>May 16th</u> – TFPC Strategic Planning Meeting #1</p> <p><u>May 17th</u> – <i>Event Coordination and Project Management Committee</i> meet</p> |

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| | <p>with interested Community Members to outline future course of action.</p> <p><u>May/June</u> Newsletter released by the <i>Newsletter, Web and Media Committee</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May 3rd – Meeting with Rod MacRae - May 10th – MRP Section Due - May 17th – Meeting with Rod MacRae - May 21st – MRP Section Due - May 31st – Meeting with Rod MacRae - Ongoing writing of MRP |
| June 2010 | <p><u>June 1st</u> – Food Strategy passes BOH</p> <p><u>June 7th</u> - TYFPC Community Meeting, Jamie Kennedy and brainstorming session</p> <p><u>June 9th</u> – TFPC Informal Meeting</p> <p><u>June 14th</u> – <i>Event Coordination and Project Management Committee</i> meet with representatives from <i>Food Share</i> and <i>Meal Exchange</i> to discuss Food Policy workshops</p> <p><u>June 14th</u> – Several TYFPC Members meet with delegates from two African Countries wishing to build connections with African Youth and Food Movements in Toronto.</p> <p><u>June 17th</u> – TFPC Strategic Planning Meeting #2</p> <p><u>June 18th</u> – Private Retirement Party for Wayne Roberts</p> <p><u>June 29th</u> – Public Retirement Party for Wayne Roberts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - June 7th MRP Section Due - June 14th Meeting with Rod MacRae - June 21st – Complete MRP draft due |
| July/August 2010 | <p><u>July 5th</u> – TYFPC Council Meeting and picnic</p> <p>Ongoing meetings of the <i>Summer Steering Committee</i></p> <p>TYCPC Summer Break</p> <p>“I know the TYFPC will be inspiring youth all across North America, It’s a combination of (the Council’s) passion for food issues and sense of community” (Alam, 2010)</p> |
| September 2010 | <p><u>September 6th</u> – TYFPC Community Meeting</p> <p>Begin new Council Member recruitment</p> <p>MES Exam Date</p> |

Product 3: Selected Research Journal Entries

September 2009 to March 2010, beginning on October 24th

Black = observations as Chair
Blue = observations as Researcher

11 September 2009

This journal will record my thoughts, feelings and observations as founding member and Chair of the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council. It will assist me in writing and creating my final paper/project for my MES at York University.

On Wednesday, September 9th, the TYFPC was unleashed! The World's first Youth Food Policy Council. Toronto is a city of youth:

- Canada's 1st and 3rd largest institutions
- 100 secondary schools in the TDSB
- 300,000 Youth between the ages of 17-24
- 1/5 of Youth have citizenship other than Canadian
- 8% of farmers are under the age of 35

The energy generated Wednesday was absolutely intoxicating. We had representatives from the TFPC, civil service, NGO's, Media, City Councilors, and of course many Youth. We currently have seven Youth Members and one policy consultant. Already, several Youth are starting to take responsibility themselves. XXX, XXX and XXX have been working independently; others may work best when advised what to do.

Personal I feel two ways about delegating responsibly:

- Glad people are taking initiative and making the TYFPC their own
- Difficulty if they take it some place other than I had imagined

I will have to learn to trust other, amalgamate our visions so we can move forward successfully. However, we really need to develop a plan with outputs and outcomes.

XXX warned me today – There may be proposed relationships that may such our energy without directly benefiting us, we need to negotiate relationships so they are mutually beneficial.

16 September 2009

I have been finding many emails from various organizations, setting up meetings and inviting folks to our October 5th meeting. The words seems to be spreading like wild fire – many folks have referenced 'wanting to come to the September 9th meeting' or 'wanting to know ways to get involved. I worry that we don't have the promotional material yet to be recognized for what we are doing.

Tension - I'm noticing personal tension in handing over power.... I'm worried that there will be conflicting messages moving forwards, and I also hope that Council Members are not bogged down by my many emails.

24 September 2009

I'm trying to figure out what caused my mid-week funk and lack of motivation. I really think it's caused by isolation from others given the amount of work I have now. However, when I am with the TYFPC Members I feed off others' energy and positive affirmation. XXX in particular really boosts my energy.

Resilience – the ability of an organization to absorb change and disturbance and still retain a variable state. I'm learning about thresholds of Social Ecological Systems, which mimic nature.

6 October 2009

My niche is public speaking and organizing, but it is incredibly and importantly time consuming.

21 October 2009

I am currently working through my research proposal and finding this dichotomy growing stronger. I realized that I must actually conduct some kind of field work/primary research that would not normally do as part of the TYFPC. So I am planning on conducting interview with TFPC and TYFPC members. Honestly I'm treading carefully and vaguely in the wording of my proposal, as I do not want to back myself into a research corner.

Last week I focused on my first draft and was incredibly thankful for the motivation that came over me. I have the motivation to educate myself holistically, as opposed to *just* getting the proposal done. I must say this is a near first for me in academic, but this same feeling of 'what I am doing ACTUALLY matters is why I am so incredibly sure that my research questions are on the right track.

22 October 2009

I'm observing how much inspiration and ideas I draw from other people. Sometimes it takes a fresh outside mind to see beyond. And I'm thankful I have the network around me.

I also notice I am either not giving myself enough credit or I am floating on TYFPC cloud nine – still I prefer the 'float' and the satisfaction it brings.

After seeing XXX comments on my second draft, I realized that I may be expecting to be too enlightened by the time I'm finished with my MRP. How many successes will there be to measure after 9 months? I must be realistic.

How are other experiences, outside the TYFPC, shaping my awareness and observations? HiFIY, 4011, trips to Everdale or FSC, they are all part of my reality.

24 October 2009

Last night I saw Patrick speak at the University of Toronto. It was an incredibly rainy, cold night, and only 9 people showed up. I was incredibly humbled by his handling of the situation. He was so grateful to each person there, for the chance to share his story and legacy. It seemed so symbolic – change the hearts of just one person and it can multiply. I will strive to carry his resilient grace as I move forward through the cycles of the TYFPC. I will not let unforeseen elements stop me from moving forward.

Thursday night was Vandana Shiva, I have been waiting to see her since taking Ecofeminism in my undergraduate. I always knew she was a beautiful activist, but I was particularly impressed by her extemporaneous speaking ability, especially in the Question and Answer section. She told it like it is, and not claim to have any more knowledge than anyone else in the room. She is incredibly successful.

I must keep this in mind as Chair of the TYFPC, and [know when to separate Tracy as the academic research. My privilege comes into play here, which is something I have always struggled to get a handle on. I have spent my life trying to achieve, when means setting myself apart from the ‘competition’. Now I am trying to achieve the establishment of a group who runs itself and breaks down demographic, economic, gender and ethnic barriers. Keep coming back to this Tracy and you will grow exponentially through the process.](#) I want the Youth Council to become a group that I can step away from at the end of the summer and it could still function as strongly, and people will still want to be apart of it or support it. This [is my goal!](#)

27 October 2009

Whooo my brain is cloudy; I just feel so much spinning in and out. Yesterday was our strategic planning session. I was initially bummed because three people backed out, but we had a very good group including XXX and XXX. We made it though the goals and objective, and a few of us started breaking it down into action plans based upon committees. Now we just need to find a time to meet again. Except the problem is that only XXX is likely to respond to my emails. I am so relieved and refreshed when we meet in person, but our Internet communication is not the best.

[Or perhaps that is just me wanting everything to happen so quickly. Slow it down Tracy, its important to be forward oriented, but one thing at a time. Success is a building block.](#)

[I am having a difficult time rewriting my POS, I feel a lot of pressure as it should represent my accumulated knowledge throughout MES.](#)

28 October 2009

[It's hard for me to envision how my research will take shape, if I have chosen the correct methods for the complexity of my subject. What keeps me on track and positive is my desire for my research to be useful and impact someone/system, to give someone a voice in the degrading and racist food system.](#)

In my POS I'm having a hard time getting all my thoughts out. I feel like my brain is in overload by facts and emotions that I have accumulated. Another thing – it seems like foodies are getting trapped by all the great events, panels and the focus on problems and what other people are doing, good or bad. The problem is, they all preach to the converted. How do we take the energy that is generated for education and enlightenment and that that into action?

Wow – it seems like all the Council Members (except XXX) have committed themselves to another meeting day. Reassuring! We really need a website – it should be the priority.

5 November 2009

Monday night was our policy panel discussion, I thought we had a great run and the crowd was a little more receptive than last time. I am learning from XXX that half of the battle and probably the most important part is getting people excited and wanting to engage and do more. Policy is about building relations and shaping ideas and helping people connect.

POS is chugging along, nearly done with the 'current thoughts and practices' section, and I find it easiest to concentrate on one systematic component at a time. How do I respond to questions I cannot answer?

10 November 2009

I'm finding it much easier to speak extemporaneously about the TYFPC, it feels GREAT> It is becoming part of me, building my confidence and backing my motivation. For example, I did a radio interview with News talk 1010 for 90,000 people and it felt so incredibly natural. Yesterday at the OCTA summit, I could have talked and kept up conversation confidently with any schmo in the food movement

Saturday was the first SYTYCC competition. A smashing success despite the temporary technical glitches. Seeing the smiles on the younger Youths faces was worth the whole lot. Especially XXX and XXX who are considered 'at risk Youth'; they were so proud and were able to take ownership over their accomplishments. That was probably the most rewarding moment of the TYFPC so far. XXX and I were able to share our food system knowledge while the contestants were cooking.

Ethics Review – How will I respect confidentiality, but not identify my participants without using markers that will give them away, particularly in private spaces such as meetings or individual correspondence?

There has been so much media attention in the past few weeks. The STAR did a story on the SYTYCC, which made me reflect on XXX as an 'at risk youth' – this is probably the first time in his life he shined. Jennifer Bain did a great job at making the article colorful, yet portraying the importance of nutritional literacy and knowledge.

18 November 2009

SYTYCC went very well on Saturday – less media coverage – but we certainly brought in a crowd. Each of the finalists were very well prepared, professional and brought their perceptions on food to the competition. XXX talked about how the diet of the animal affects the quality of food we put in our bodies. XXX spoke extensively about nutrition and the importance of families eating together.

19 November 2009

Everyone seemed to approve of the collective articulation of my research proposal. A few even want to have their names mentioned. However, for the sake of fairness, and not wanting them to feel as though their relationship with the TYFPC is in jeopardy, I would like to maintain about confidentiality.

On Monday the Council Members were very eager to put together a cookbook. I told them I did not want them to feel rushed, but they very deliberately began assigning tasking and taking on responsibly themselves. I really think that is strength of young people – no feeling constrains or being burdened by their inhibitions.

I got word from Yusuf today that the TFPC wants Youth reps – NOW! We will have to wait a few months before we get voting privileges. I will probably step down from the position nomination because I think there is great value in spreading out our Army. Then more Council Members will feel engaged and could be more likely to take on leadership roles. This is also for my own adaptive capacity – I don't want my eggs to be in every basket. I want to be focused.

26 November 2010

Yesterday was my II-III exam and I passed... Yippee. However, despite their compliments on my writing and expressed passion, Rebecca worries that I will run into problems in my final exam if I am not able to maneuver my three hats – organizer, Chair and researcher. I can't make things happen the way I WANT them to and use it as a research topic. I must let go of some CONTROL.

We also discussed giving participants' optional confidentiality, so they can receive credit for their contributions. Unless of course the ratio is so skewed that it will obviously not protect others who choose to remain unidentified.

Rod's comments really reinforced what I'm doing. My research has the potential to be far reaching and actually could lead to future consulting work. XXX also said that my POS is nutrient dense, there is so much info packed in that it make be difficult for a 'common person' to understand. For this purpose I must be sensitive to my language – as I change from Academic to Chair.

Talk is bubbling about the Youth Food System Employment and Opportunities Fair with Lauren Baker. XXX is leading a workshop at Havergal. XXX is great at focusing our group at the task at hand, specifically the TYFPC's niche (which I'm not completely sure I know).

It will be interesting to see how the Committees pull together their 'action plans' Tracy, don't pole, give a reminder in the agenda but don't tell XXX to get the ball rolling with the Policy Committee. Observe how it happens naturally.

I'm so impressed by the quiet diligence of XXX, she never misses a meeting and always takes advantage of the opportunities that are presented to her. I hope she feels she can take a leadership role, that she is confident. She seems to be vastly soaking up every food-related theme that comes her way.

I feel like I can count on certain Council Members in different ways. I know that XXX always pulls through in action and email, despite personal priorities that pull her time in all different directions. XXX and XXX are always present in email responses and Council responsibilities. Both are a little shy in personal interaction, but XXX especially knows her stuff and speaks when relevant. XXX and XXX are incredibly capable, but personally have other priorities in their lives. They are not always the best at email responses, which surprises me. Consensus will inevitably happen through email.

3 December 2009

The Food Strategy has also been on my mind this week, and last week's meeting with Wayne. The FS is a unique document that will set priorities for the development of infrastructure, which would make Toronto the first FOOD City in the world. The TYFPC will have the opportunity to provide a Youth perspective to the process – in essence, we will serve as a watchdog. It will allow the TYFPC to learn about policy procedures and be on the forefront of a 'frontier' issue.

5 January 2010

I'm back in Toronto after a wonderful three weeks of cleansing my mind in Wisconsin, with family and friends. Now back into the swing of things!

I hope everyone is as eager as I am to pick up where we left off. I am going to make it a priority to journal daily throughout my research phase, unless it is uneventful/relaxing weekend.

XXX and I have a unique relationship. We are great friends AND have the opportunity to discuss the TYFPC on the sidelines. I think she also understands the HUGE potential for the TYFPC and our situational capacity to really do something ground-breaking. She is absolutely not a procrastinator. I should focus on XXX in my interviews, and her development as a leader.

I have spent the day building some buzz around the membership applications and trying to visualize the upcoming weeks and months. Meetings all week. A lot of Youth are inquiring about being a Council Member.

I hope to learn more about these complex models of inclusion in facilitations. In this course, I need to push myself to use the TYFPC as a practical model rather than breezing through for the credits.

10 January 2010

Yesterday I had a great time showing around XXX and her partner XXX, from the LA Food Policy Task Force. Claire is in to do interview with the top *foodies* of Toronto for her thesis work in urban policy.

I'm really trying to figure out how I can complete my MRP by June so I can put academic lingering behind me. I made a timeline that I think is attainable. I'm a little disappointed by XXX, however I'm not going to contact her, and wait for her to take the initiative.

Today I responded from an email inquiry from XXX from the Oakland FPC, who is looking for a way to recruit Youth. She mentioned the TYFPC, which was quite encouraging, still waiting for a reply.

Lately I have really been tuned into what I want to do after I graduate. I feel bound to Toronto and the opportunities available to me here are second to none. However, Toronto does not feel like 'home' – if that even exists? I had such a wonderful time in Wisconsin, but now I wonder if that is just in comparison to Toronto. I also feel like I can't leave the TYFPC in the upcoming year, it must sustain its self.

12 January 2010

XXX and XXX are doing an awesome job organizing the Food Strategy steering committee. They have completely taken over responsibility and I'm stepping further back.

Today I outlined my research time line and due dates with Rod, including my tentative table of contents. It feels good to give myself due dates – personally; I know that timeliness of deadline completion is one of my strong points.

Today I met with XXX, who told me she needs to step down from the TYFPC. I am so incredibly impressed by her ability to see her Committee responsibilities through. Her decision is clean, and will allow for other Youth to fill her spot. Her energy and fresh perspective will be strongly missed. However, it brings up a good point – do we need an exit strategy?

13 January 2010

Today was the first closed TFPC meeting of the year to discuss the Food Strategy. XXX and I thought we were just going to be observing, but we were really offered a seat at the table. It was humbling and inspiring to share a space with these well-spoken minds. They also seemed very grateful to have us too!

17 January 2010

Yesterday we had a Council Meeting to discuss the FS and XXX was our guest speaker. We also discussed how we will review 30 + applications from very qualified applicants. We were left with sever questions to consider including:

- What is the ideal size of the TYFPC and needs of the Committees?
- Are applicants chosen based upon experience, diversity, enthusiasm, leadership potential?
- How do we know if applicants are willing to make a serious commitment?
- How do we foster leadership with new members and introduce them to the TYFPC?
- Do we give priority to Youth who have been participating with the TYFPC thus far?
- How do we engage all applicants with Committees and the Community

We decided to each choose our top 10, and I will see who has been nominated by the most votes. I will then pass the list to XXX who will make the final decision.

19 January 2010

I'm doing a bit of introductory readings on participatory inquiry; research with people rather than on people, reconnecting with true ways of knowing. I think that when undertaking this research, it is critical for me to remember my own limitations and sense of self. I must find peace with letting go of my nerves, insecurity and questions about the future. I must understand the value of my research and know it will get done with time. This is a time of self-exploration in other facets of my life.

20 January 2010

The founding Council Members seemed to take great pride in their responsibility to select new Council Members. It further solidified their role in organizing the group and creating its structure. Ownership and share interest are key. We ended up with slight discrepancies as far as HOW we created our list, but we tried to account for 'diversity' and leadership potential.

XXX and I met for coffee today to discuss the food strategy and funding, he offered some great advice:

- Make Laidlaw feel like they have 'accomplished something' by recognizing the need for Youth voices in food policy
- The potential of the TYFPC is to represent a large and under-noticed component of the population

I must remember that my relationships are a result of my hard work and persistence. I feel blessed to have the support and engorgement from such fantastic mentors.

22 January 2010

XXX and I met with Lauren Baker and some folks from new college to discuss the Youth Food Fair. The approval and energy behind it seemed really great, and we will have the help of service learning students. Lauren said that a lot of her students wanted to work with us; I hope this momentum stays alive. Sometimes I wonder if I have the same stamina and vision to continue on with Chair, but at moments like that, I don't give the TYFPC enough credit. The movement is only as strong as we believe it is, and as powerful as people perceive it to be.

24 January 2010

On Saturday we held a brainstorming session for the Food Strategy. XXX and XXX phrased it in a way like: “what would the food strategy look like if it were designed by youth?” We realized afterwards that we were discussing basic issues of food security, rather than how Youth are actually affected by food insecurity, OR what makes the Youth perspective unique. We also found it quite interesting that issues we brainstormed did not even surface – diabetes, vegetarianism, marketing, cultural differences.

Some voices were very dominating and over powering. XXX did a great job at paraphrasing and bringing the discussing back to the task at hand. I hoping we can bring out more discussion on February 1st through various brainstorming techniques including Open Space Technology.

XXX is slightly concerned about dominating the conversation. I think it is good that XXX has some responsibility, because she may be slightly intimidated by the group. I’m going to do my best to continue to encourage her to take leadership.

28 January 2010

Well, we have heard egger confirmation from all 7 candidates. I called XXX, at the suggestion of FCM. I feel as though it was the professional move to make. I explained to him the time commitment of Council Membership and what to do if he cannot make an event that he RSVPed for (we have had this problem with him in the past). XXX made a good point – we are all use to the expectations that come along with making a commitment to non profit and volunteer work, sort of the unwritten rules that may not be clear to others that have not been a part of that realm.

My strength is in my organizational capacity – I can get things done when people count on me.

I’m new to methods of popular education, group facilitations. This is an inevitable part of the learning experience for you. I’m really looking forward to the interview process. I feel as though I will be able to see my research much more clearly at that point.

2 February 2010

Last night was the first community meeting of the New Year. The turn out was pretty good, maybe 45 or 50 in attendance. We showcased the Afri-Can FoodBasket, who brought along two Youth who participate in the program. It was incredibly causal but largely effective.

Next we introduced the new members. I was sure to say how many qualified applications we received and how excited we were to extent Committee Membership, yet still I felt as though a divide was being created, or a perceived divide, which was what I wanted to avoid at all costs. I think there is still somewhat of an assumption that we are like the TFPC, the audience is there to observe rather than participate. There was also some miscommunication with the XXX Committee – it was unclear how many applications

were informed that they were not being offered membership, and how many were finding out at the meeting for the first time. I ran into a awkward situation on the stairs with XXX and I had to explain the touch decision in a way I was not prepared for.

The second half of the meeting we participated in OST, which I think went well. It seemed think there were many great points raised by a few new voices. It seemed like it gave Youth the change to make choices and be seen as equals in participation. There still are some dominating and self-promoting voices that always come and miss the point of the meeting.

10 February 2010

Today I had an interview with XXX. I went into it not knowing what to expect... No expectations, wondering if I had prepared the appropriate questions, hoping that I would have a better (and perhaps selfish) motivation on trying to figure XXX out.

This interview opened my eyes in so many ways:

- The power of giving someone the space to share their story in a supportive environment
- I know little about the personal lives and stories of the people I work with. What has shaped them, molded them, inspired them
- Persistence and dedication of Youth
- True power of food is to make connections
- I should not make assumptions about people based upon what I perceive
- I feel blessed for this eye-opening experience

11 February 2010

The TFPC meeting was packed with energy and people!!! I was amazed to see how many Youth were in the crowd – especially how many stayed after the ‘work day was done’ and how many adults had to leave.

Although XXX and I felt uncomfortable at first on the ‘adult’ Council, we were treated with the utmost respect by the TFPC Members and audience. When I gave my report on the TFPC there were some many faces smiling back (notably Harriet Friedman) – what a boost – YES, our existence is right!

Yusuf made a great point; I’m in a very unique position. I’m a personal friend of many around the table; I’m also the researcher.

Although the four hour meeting was quite energizing, several critiques stand out in my mind:

- The meetings are so structured. It seems as though everyone is just waiting for XXX to say something bold, XXX to ask a thoughtful question and for the rest of the Council to say ‘here-here’ or ‘hurray’
- Controversial topics are always ‘postponed’ until a later meeting, which further delays progress. For example, the prison farm issue... it just keeps getting pushed back and swallowed up by swine flu and restructuring. Many people come to the

- TFPC meetings to hear experts debate the issues, and I don't think they are truly getting it
- Some Council Members come to the table with three agenda items. No give and take, no exchange or compromise.

12 February 2010

I have found the interviews to be incredibly reinforcing and empowering. In the four interviews I had done with FCM, they all seem to be internalizing the structure and potential of the TYFPC. Its as though there is a fully group identity that is forming, it is unified in scope. A lot of times I get caught up thinking 'no one is into this' because of poor involvement in email discussion, but they are participating internally and soaking up the Council's vision.

XXX said that we are doing the best we can and learning as we go.

After interviewing XXX and XXX I'm feeling more confident in the future of the TYFPC. Perceptions are a huge key to successes although I really hope we can produce chance.

17 February 2010

Markham Food Belt proposal – wow! Talk about throwing me out of my foodie bubble. The issue on the table was what development plan Markham should adopt. Of the three, one is to freeze Markham's expansion into prime agricultural land, to save Canada's best farmland from urban development.

In reality, support for the Food Belt is probably very evenly split. However, the pro-development-side trucked in a large amount people from the Landowners Association from outside Ontario. They basically 'boo-ed' uncontrollably, condensending.

Honestly, I think the pro-Food Belt side by far brought a more intelligent and sustainable argument including scientists, professors, and elders. Still, it is sad because both sides are really fighting for the same thing – the opportunity to have their agricultural heritage respected

19 February 2010

My interview with XXX was quite interesting. It was as though he knew exactly what I was fishing for surrounding the TFPC, and he provided some very useful words of advice to Youthful generations: 'have fun with what you do, when you stop having fun, reprioritize'

24 February 2010

Last night was a meeting of the XXX Committee with two new members. We presented them with another opportunity surrounding the Food Strategy – to do some consultation work with 'marginalized' communities in Toronto. XXX has the ability to do what others cannot – be forceful in words. I just hope she did not intimidate XXX or XXX. However, in interviews XXX and XXX both claimed that they wanted tangible tasks to complete.

I feel like we dropped the ball in formally introducing the Council after the February 1st TYFPC meeting. Last night I emailed everyone a copy of the strategy plan and Committee synopsis. I hope everyone feels like they belong somewhere.

26 February 2010

Today I had an energizing experience in a class that I was not terribly fond of – facilitations. Honestly, I usually have a very negative association with York, but today I left feeling something quite different optimism.

Mo, a practitioner of Appreciative Inquiry led us through a workshop on the alternative facilitation technique. Basically, its foundation helps you to focus on what is RIGHT, what are your strengths, successes and dreams – all to form a collective common ground.

2 March 2010

Saturday night we had a TYFPC pizza party at our place, no business, just good old fun and *foodie* talk. I think it was an important exercise for group cohesiveness. Also, it allowed Council Members to view one another as friends first. ‘Friendship’ may help them feel more comfortable providing constructive criticism or voicing their concerns. XXX and XXX were there and were working on a promotional video for their service learning placement. XXX asked me “when my placement is done, can I still be involved with the TYFPC”? How wonderful to know that she has found something in the group that she does not want to leave.

4 March 2010

I’m having a hard time motivating this week, not sleeping well. Tracy, remember one week ago Mo walked about the power of positivism. What are you happy about, what are your strengths: I have great friends and a supportive family, I am an achiever and I’m helping to open doors for others.

XXX has been such a great roommate, colleague and friend. We can laugh together and yet keep each other motivated. Se is realistic and helps me to question my privileged position and ways of understanding my community.

6 March 2010

Yesterday was the Bring Food Home conference; I was on a FPC panel. For the first time I did not plan what I would say, but rather spoke passionately from my heart.

A few observations from the panel:

- Youth don’t necessarily identify as ‘youth’ in the context that the TYFPC’s functions.
- I may have reference Toronto specific details too much
- There was so much more I could have said during the question and answer session that would have addressed our legitimacy – luckily XXX continues to reinforce it

XXX and I are going to join forces for our Facilitations class to get our peers thinking critically about the food system and the urban Youth experience. It will be neat because our peers are critical thinkers and very socially conscious, but may not necessarily think from a food-system lens.

11 March 2010

XXX and XXX and I met to discuss the Event Coordination Committee. We prioritized:

- Having a developed program for our school engagements, to make sure we all agree as to the best way to represent the TYFPC
- Before events, have meetings to delegate responsibility, so that one person does not fill all the tasks
- Have more Council outings, parties, food-related trips

Yesterday – TFPC meeting, propose mentorship between members of the TFPC and TYFPC, so we can learn from their vast amount of knowledge.

Food Strategy – the TFPC seems incredibly confused as to their role in the FS and how it will actually be enforced and carried out. I told XXX that if you went around the TYFPC, we would all have a relatively agreed upon statement as to who we are and where we are going – but if you asked the TFPC, everyone would say something different. There is a HUGE difference in how the TFPC is perceived by outsiders and what they actually do. There is a strong need for a strategic planning session.

12 March 2010

What is my ‘community’? I don’t feel as though I have a vested interest in a particular neighborhood. Right now I am a ‘new-comer’, and academic, who resides in the food ‘community’. How might this change when I graduate?

My family and friends are in Wisconsin and I do feel comfort when I am there. Why? Is it financial security in a conservative environment of fear? Or is the Idea that my family will not let anything ‘bad’ happen to me?

When I go home, I’m overwhelmed by the incredibly amount of social-fiscally conservative beliefs – yet it does not seem ‘real’ to me – like their realities are un-enlightened. But when I’m ‘home’ I don’t go crazy because I know I will soon return to like-minded folks. This is why our elders are so wise, heightened. The older I get the more I realize how much I admire and respect my dad, whose views are so much unlike my own. We fall at opposite sides of the political spectrum, yet I admire his work ethic, his ability to question and think critically and his absolute genuine generosity. I wonder what he admires about me?!

18 March 2010

This morning XXX and I are doing a food strategy consultation with out Facilitations class. Thanks to FLEXABILTIY, which I am have learned to embrace, we are able to construct our own facilitations method for discussion – which is basically a combination of AI and OST. We are not going to highlight the flaws of the food system because we

want our classmates to speak from the context of their own realities. How do they experience the food system, what works, what doesn't, what are small action steps they can take?

I would like to make a note about Facilitations. This class from day 1 has frustrated me, although now I think it is from XXX unresponsiveness and lack of guidance. However, I am ending the class feeling liberated. Facilitation 'should' be easy. 'When control is given up, and the spirit emerges, prepared to be surprised'.

Next week is the Food Fair, until last Thursday I was worried about the organization. However, it has all come together!

26 March 2010

En route to Wiscow for a rejuvenating break from work! Last night was the YFF. The success exceeded my expectations and we had upwards of 300 people there. I tried to ask people how they felt as they were exiting and everyone left having made some connection. As the panelists said – the passion was in the room, it showed, this movement is surely contagious. Also Youth networking with Youth is so much more inviting – we are on the same page, focusing our energy in different forms, but yet we all come together.

I was SOOO impressed by No Man's Land – their focus was on food access, a topic that is often neglected by the privileged food movement.

Next year:

- Be more clear about dinner
- Have list of duties for volunteers
- Work better with service learning class – establish a relationship earlier
- Ensure feedback
- Make sure everyone learns what the TYFPC is!

Perhaps the most powerful – we cannot begin to quantify how many spares were ignited or connections were made. There was just so much positive feedback from Youth and organizations. I think also XXX and XXX really build their leadership skill and confidence.

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Major Research Project Appendix

Tracy Phillippi composed all appendices unless otherwise indicated

Research Process

Interviews conducted
Sample interview questions

Selected pieces of media coverage

CHOMP article *(written by Katrina Rozel)*
Toronto Star article *(written by Jennifer Bain)*
Toronto Observer article *(written by Jaclyn Desforges)*

Structural components

Strategic Plan *(composed by Yusuf Alam)*
Member Agreement
Joining Document with the Toronto Food Policy Council

Council Output

Sample newsletter *(written by Ashley Andrade)*
Laidlaw Grant Application *(written by Jessica Thornton and Tracy Phillippi)*
Food Strategy recommendations *(compiled and composed by Research and Policy Committee)*
Deputation to Board of Health endorsing the Food Strategy
Letter of support for the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee

Community Meeting components

Sample Agenda
Selected pieces of Community Member Feedback

Event Coordination

“So You(th) Think You Can Cook” application *(composed by Tammara Soma)*
“So You(th) Think You Can Cook” poster *(composed by Tammara Soma)*