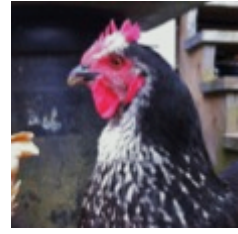


# SQUAMISH FOOD CHARTER



*Food Security exists when ALL members of the local communities have access to enough nutritious, safe, ecologically sustainable, and culturally appropriate food at all times.*

In 1976, Canada signed the United Nations Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, which includes “the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger.” The district of Squamish supports our national commitment by using a food security lens when addressing relevant community issues. This is done through pursuit of the vision.

## The Vision

Our food system will be economically viable and ecologically sustainable; our community will grow, harvest, process, preserve, and distribute food to all of its members while eliminating waste. A thriving local food culture that celebrates eating locally and eating together will support us in living healthier, happier, and richer lives connected to the land, to growers, and to each other.

We support this vision through the following principles:

### **Community Economic Development**

Greater reliance on local food systems strengthens our local and regional economies, creates employment, and increases food security, while providing a living wage to farmers. Land is allocated for small farm use.

### **Ecological and Human Health**

Suitable agricultural and wild lands are a necessity for a thriving food system. As such they are preserved and enhanced to promote health of the land and its people. A whole-system approach to food protects our natural resources and eliminates food waste by redirecting it to composting facilities; reducing the negative effects of climate change and contributing to the environmental stability and well-being of our local, regional, and global communities.

Localized food systems can contribute significantly to the health of the population by addressing the nutritional deficit that is prevalent in many American diets. Community members have the opportunity to learn about and participate in the production, processing and

consumption of nutritious foods.

### **Social Justice**

Food is a basic human right. All residents need accessible, affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food, leading to the alleviation of malnutrition and hunger.

### **Collaboration and Participation**

Sustainable food systems encourage civic engagement, promote responsibility, and strengthen communities. Community food security improves when local government collaborates with community groups and individuals, businesses, and other levels of government on sound food system planning, policies and practices.

### **Celebration**

Sharing food is a fundamental part of life and the human experience. Food brings people and communities together to celebrate both unity and diversity.

Therefore, in Squamish's food-secure future:

- Farmers are better connected to consumers through farm markets, Community Supported Agriculture, and school/work meal and information programs.
- Farmers' roles as environmental stewards are protected and financially supported.
- Agricultural resources including water, land, and the knowledge of farmers are protected.
- Regulations strengthen the capacity of local farmers to produce and reach their markets.
- Existing agricultural production and land is protected from genetically modified seed.
- A "buy local" campaign that promotes local food production and consumption has expanded.
- Traditional teachings about food preservation, seed saving, eating seasonally, and eating locally will be encouraged and supported.
- Institutional buyers such as hospitals and universities have the flexibility and incentive to buy more local products.
- Ongoing research ensures long-term food security in the face of a changing climate.
- First Nations and the district work together to create collaborative opportunities that provide learning and positive outcomes toward food security in the region.
- Squamish is committed to strengthening socially just and ecologically resilient food systems around the world.
- 'Waste' Food is re-distributed (including farmers, grocers, restaurants, farmers markets, homes, gardens) to feed those in need.
- Families, congregations and communities of interest have opportunities to gather, share food and celebrate their cultures
- Food programs progression is supported from survival needs to programs of self sufficiency for all community members.

## The Rationale

A charter is a declaration of the collective will of the city or community to protect and promote a healthy, just and ecologically resilient food system.

A Food Charter reminds the community of the primary importance of food. We live in a culture of plenty, and yet hunger persists in our midst. Over decades, people have come to understand that lasting solutions to hunger cannot come from charity alone. Over time, we have identified a series of interconnected problems that together conspire to allow hunger and malnutrition to persist, even in the midst of abundant food and wealth. A food charter lifts our sights towards a healthier and more abundant food future.

Hunger in Canada is linked to a lost culture – a lost ability to grow food, to cook nutritious and delicious meals, and a lost ability to gather as a family, a household, as neighbors and friends in community to share food.

Hunger is also linked to economic failures. Agriculture is a fundamental building block of economic activity. Our modern industrial agricultural system moves money and natural resources over ever-larger distances, with greater and greater resource and energy use (and waste). It undermines local production at the expense of biological diversity and knowledge of plants and growing conditions that are created over generations. Industrial agricultural systems also undermine local economies, making it hard for communities to capture a decent share of the benefits of a vibrant food system. A centralized food distribution system creates significant waste, too, which is ever more troubling in an age where we see both food and energy scarcity emerging as significant challenges for our children and us.

A Food Charter can be a valuable document to help guide town and city councils, policy makers, communities and residents when thinking about food and a healthy community. There are a number of Food Charters already in existence, in Canada and around the world. Charters typically emerge from public consultations and discussion groups where a wide range of stakeholders express their needs, concerns and visions for the food system where they live, including those aspects of the food system that might be located elsewhere and brought in through regional, national or global food distribution systems.

Examples of cities and communities in BC and across Canada that have adopted food charters include Vancouver, Toronto, Kaslo, Kamloops & Cowichan. Each community has had its distinct approach, but all have the effect of placing attention on the importance of rebuilding a local food economy. Charters can lead to such things as the establishment of food policy councils and community food system planning which lights the way for this transformation.

The Squamish Food Charter builds on the District's current Official Community Plan commitment to "promote local food production and agricultural opportunities" by expanding on the vision, principles and possible actions that such a commitment may entail.

The charter offers an opening to talk to one another about food: what we eat, where it comes from, who grew it, and how we can ensure that everyone in our community has access to the food they need for a healthy life. The charter focuses our attention: what is important about food? How can a community best express its commitment to eradicate hunger? How can a community, endowed as Squamish is with good land and knowledgeable farmers, best make use of those gifts and ensure that bounty for our children and their children?

At a time when food security, affordability and concerns about how to feed a growing population from an increasingly degraded resource base are at a high not seen since the Second World War, it is an opportune time to turn the interest and energy evident in Squamish towards building a vibrant, locally-rooted, healthy and sustainable food system for all those who live here.

## The History

- The idea came to CAN when the SMART funding did. Karen Clarke showed us an example of the Cowichan food charter as an example.
- The first draft was finished just before our last foodie meeting on Oct 28th. The charter was drafted by example; Vancouver, Cowichan, Kaslo, Toronto and others were all reviewed.
- The Foodie Group in October was the first public viewing.
- The charter was then opened up to the community for comment. Squamish CAN had the charter on its website ([squamishcan.net](http://squamishcan.net)), about a dozen people responded with comments.
- The final draft of the charter was created by consulting approximately 40 different stakeholder groups and individual community members. Including the Public Health Dietician, Squamish Nation, Squamish Business Association, Squamish Farmers Market and Squamish Helping Hands Society, and many other passionate individuals.
- We spoke with various councilors about the charter before presenting at a council meeting.
- We participated and spoke at community events about the charter to share about the importance and impact it has on all community members.
- The charter was brought to Council in 2011 with the intention of getting it endorsed by the District of Squamish. They endorsed it as a Squamish CAN initiative; therefore we were not successful in achieving our goal.
- In July 2015, the charter was brought forward to council again. It was officially endorsed as a District of Squamish Food charter.
- In November 2015 the Squamish Food Policy Council was created to further establish municipal food policy in Squamish.