

Gatineau's
Nutrition Policy
For healthy choices!





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Some interesting food for thought

1.

Over the last 30 years, the number of overweight or obese people in Canada, particularly children, has increased significantly. **The rate of childhood obesity among those aged 2 to 17, which in 1978 was 3%, rose to 9% in 2009.** In Quebec, close to one out of four of these young people carried extra weight in 2004.

Children are often the first victims of expressions of prejudice against obese people. Obese adolescents are also often socially marginalized.

2.

In Quebec, **two litres of soft drink cost less than two litres of milk.**

3.

Health Canada analyses based on Statistics Canada's Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) indicate that in Quebec, in 2004, 8.6% of households lived in situations of food insecurity, and 47.9% of households on social assistance lived in such situations.

In addition, this survey revealed that **the proportion of active youth is currently less than 50%.**

4.

Parks and green areas, as well as sports and outdoor facilities, play a key role in the quality of life, providing individuals of all ages, as well as families, safe and public environments in which to engage in physical activity.

1. Statistics Canada.

2. SHIELDS, Margot. "Overweight and obesity among children and youth" in *Health Reports*, Vol. 17, No. 3, August 2006, p. 27–42. [www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-003-x/2005003/article/9277-eng.pdf] (Consulted on March 1, 2012).

Ville de Gatineau is committed

In July 2010, Gatineau's Municipal Council adopted a declaration of commitment to promoting healthy lifestyles. In so doing, Gatineau made the decision to pursue and step up its efforts to create an environment that would foster a physically active lifestyle and healthy nutrition. More specifically, from the nutritional point of view, the proposed changes involve fostering and facilitating, in municipal facilities and throughout the territory, access to food with a high nutritional value, as determined by recognized facts on sound nutrition.

This resolution provided details on the previously stated objectives. For instance, Gatineau's policy on sports, recreation and the outdoors, under the axis on infrastructure development, says that in its effort to offer safe, accessible high quality facilities, Gatineau is "emphasizing access to healthy food in facilities and municipal parks."



In its policy on the family, entitled Towards an Ideal for Families, Gatineau set itself the objectives of encouraging all family members to get out and engage in physical activity, and to acquire healthy lifestyles, and of promoting access to healthy foods in municipal, sports and community facilities used by families.

The policy on social development, which was adopted in December 2010, highlighted Gatineau's commitment to health through measures that would complement the health and social services network by helping to create environments conducive to the development of better living conditions.

It is also important to note the work of the Commission Gatineau, Ville en santé, including its support for community and collective gardens, Gatineau's participation in efforts to introduce healthy foods in arena snack bars, as well as the line of thinking that became part of the project on urban planning and nutrition environment around schools.

These projects all share a new vision in regard to the importance of providing quality food in facilities run by Ville de Gatineau.

In so doing, Gatineau made the decision to pursue and step up its efforts to create an environment that would foster a physically active lifestyle and healthy nutrition.

A coherent approach

Despite the abundance and availability of nutritional, fresh and quality food, individuals and families alike have significantly increased their consumption of processed foods. These foods vary greatly in terms of quality. High fat, added sugar and salt, and low fibre, vitamin and mineral content are often the norm. And

these industrial foods strongly influence the nutritional choices of children and teens.

Fact:

families have significantly increased the amount of processed food they consumet.

In addition, the built environment, transportation modes and the tremendous popularity of TV and electronic games often reduce the opportunities for adults and children alike to be physically active.

Given the challenges posed by changing lifestyles, in 2006 the Government of Quebec adopted an action plan to promote healthy lifestyles and prevent weight-related problems, entitled Plan d'action gouvernemental de promotion des saines habitudes de vie et de prévention des problèmes reliés au poids.

On the heels of the release of this action plan, school boards took up its recommendations to introduce major changes in school cafeteria menus. A second stage of implementation of this action plan concerns changes in the food provided in health care facilities.

This action plan also encouraged municipal governments to address all of the issues related to food within their facilities and on their properties. This kind of partnership, involving a coherent approach that recognizes the different parties' respective responsibilities, is essential to ensuring that the shift that has begun is successfully followed through.

The conceptual framework

Recent scientific evidence confirms that prevention and health factors are closely tied to healthy nutrition and physical activity. Integrating the nutritional dimension is a natural and logical complement to these efforts when it comes to developing environments that are conducive to healthy lifestyles and fostering the personal and collective development of Gatineau's residents.

The main objective

To help improve the quality of the foods provided, create environments that are conducive to healthy nutrition, and promote access to healthy foods in Gatineau's municipal facilities, in accordance with its mission and responsibilities, and its intervention in the development of its territory and community, cultural, recreational, sports and outdoor facilities.

The guiding principles

- ▶ To promote a healthy and accessible nutrition environment.
- ▶ To introduce coherent measures that are consistent with the respective players' areas of responsibility.
- ▶ To acknowledge leadership as a model in the community.
- ▶ To adopt practices aimed at improving the nutrition environment and sustainable development.

The axes of intervention

THE COMPONENTS OF THE NUTRITION ENVIRONMENT

- ▶ **The food supply:**
 - ▷ the quality of the foods supplied, their presentation, accessibility and safety;
 - ▷ products that reflect clients' tastes and needs; and
 - ▷ a selection of nutritional and tasty foods that are consistent with the organization's mission.
- ▶ **The physical layout:**
 - ▷ the cleanliness of the food preparation area;
 - ▷ facilities that meet the criteria of universal accessibility; and
 - ▷ a pleasant atmosphere.
- ▶ **Commitment, action and partnerships:** the more inclusive the measure, leading to major partnerships with all concerned groups and people, the more sustainable the proposed changes will be.
- ▶ **Cultural, educational and promotional messages that are consistent with the orientations.**

HEALTHY NUTRITION

The goals of sound nutrition have already been clearly identified. They include:

- ▶ providing meals or snacks that are consistent with the principles of *Canada's Food Guide*;
- ▶ providing foods that are low in trans- and saturated fats, with a preference for polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats;
- ▶ providing high fibre foods;
- ▶ reducing the availability of high sodium foods and drinks;
- ▶ giving preference to water, milk and juices without added sugar;
- ▶ limiting foods high in added sugar; and
- ▶ promoting the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables.

The intervention strategies

Successful implementation of the policy depends on three intervention strategies and on the capacity of stakeholders to act in unity and partnership.

- 1. Drafting and producing action plans that are consistent with the policy***
- 2. Creating favourable environments***
- 3. Creating and strengthening partnerships and collaboration with the community***

The orientations

The nutrition policy will be expanded through action plans that will help to tangibly define the goals and measures that are to be implemented. These plans will be based on the following orientations:

- ▶ a gradual shift making it easier for all of the players and beneficiaries to be part of the proposed changes;
- ▶ the priority, in the first stage, on expanding the nutritional choices through the integration of both tasty and nutritional foods;
- ▶ intervention strategies based on a facility's key function, for instance sports activities;
- ▶ the importance of the implemented measures will be based on the frequency of the activities (daily, regular, occasional or exceptional);
- ▶ in some cases, foods with high sugar, salt or trans- or saturated fat content may be banned; and
- ▶ changes in the proposed choices will be achieved while preserving access to nutritional foods that are affordable.

The areas of application

SPORTS FACILITIES

- ▶ Change the supply of food in all of the sports facilities so as to provide healthy foods:
 - ▷ include raw vegetables and fresh fruits on the menu;
 - ▷ give preference to drinks such as water, milk and fruit juices without sugar added;
 - ▷ ban drinks with sugar added;
 - ▷ ban fried foods and those with high trans- and saturated fat content;
 - ▷ ban low nutritional value foods (chocolate, sweets and candies); and
 - ▷ reduce the sodium content of the foods provided.
- ▶ Improve the food preparation and distribution environment and equipment.

SNACK BARS AND VENDING MACHINES IN MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS, COMMUNITY CENTRES AND CULTURAL CENTRES

- ▶ Change the contents of vending machines in order to provide healthy foods:
 - ▷ introduce healthy foods;
 - ▷ give preference to drinks such as water, milk and fruit juices without sugar added;
 - ▷ ban drinks with sugar added; and
 - ▷ ban low nutritional value foods (chocolate, sweets and candies).

PUBLIC EVENTS AND FESTIVITIES

Promote the supply of healthy foods at events organized in collaboration with or by Ville de Gatineau:

- ▶ include healthy foods on the menu; and
- ▶ give preference to drinks such as water, milk and fruit juices without sugar added.

Conclusion

Through its nutrition policy, Gatineau aims to highlight the importance it attaches to the quality of life of its residents, in particular the nutritional value of the foods provided to them in its facilities and at public events and festivities.

In so doing, Gatineau is demonstrating its desire to join its efforts to those of the other levels of government in order to facilitate healthy food choices. The issues are important for all Gatineau residents, but mostly for children and adolescents.

The success of this policy rides on the concerted efforts of several partner organizations, including health, sport and recreation networks, which are encouraged to join their measures to those proposed under this policy, and to opt for healthy food choices!



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