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## **MEMORANDUM**

December 16, 2025

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Donny van Dyk, City Manager  
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager  
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager  
Sandra Singh, Deputy City Manager  
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk  
Tina Penney, Director, Legislative Operations  
Kevin Burris, Manager, Civic Agencies  
Councillor Pete Fry  
Councillor Sean Orr  
Commissioner Scott Jensen  
Trustee Preeti Faridkot  
Trustee Christopher Richardson  
Henry Lau, Staff Liaison  
Krista Voth, Park Board Staff Liaison  
Vanessa Lam, Vancouver Coastal Health Liaison

FROM: Vancouver Food Policy Council

SUBJECT: Vancouver Food Policy Council Report of Activities, 2024 – 2025

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### **PURPOSE**

To provide Vancouver City Council with a summary of the activities of the Vancouver Food Policy Council for the period of January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2025.

### **BACKGROUND**

The Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC) is a civic advisory body established by Vancouver City Council to provide advice and recommendations on food systems in Vancouver: related policy, programs, and initiatives. The VFPC supports the City's commitment to advancing equity, sustainability, public health, and reconciliation through a coordinated, systems-based approach to food policy. The VFPC serves as a forum for collaboration among community members, subject-matter experts, Indigenous partners, City staff, and other civic agencies.

The mandate of the Vancouver Food Policy Council is as follows:

- Supports the development of just and sustainable food systems in alignment with the Vancouver Food Charter
- Advises Council and staff on policies and plans affecting the food system (including the Vancouver Food Strategy and others) as they are developed, implemented, and updated
- Works collaboratively with counterparts from other civic agencies to identify opportunities for joint action on issues of mutual interest
- Works co-operatively with external agencies and groups whose activities affect constituent communities
- Engages in outreach to disseminate information and encourage participation from constituent communities

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Significant Activities

#### 1.1 Overview of Activities

During the 2024–2025 reporting period, the Vancouver Food Policy Council met regularly and undertook a broad range of activities to advance food system policy, support Council priorities, and provide informed, community-grounded advice on food access, equity, and resilience.

#### 1.2 Policy Advice and Engagement with Government

A central focus of the VFPC's work was providing input on food systems programming, funding, access, and infrastructure.

**Motion Development.** The VFPC supported and informed the development of the "[Closing the Gap](#)" [food systems funding motion](#) brought forward by Councillor Adriane Carr, which was unanimously adopted by City Council in July 2024. VFPC members contributed expertise on food insecurity, community food infrastructure, and equity considerations, helping to articulate the need for sustained municipal investment in food systems. As part of this work, the VFPC conducted a briefing session for City Councillors, sharing evidence and frontline perspectives on food system pressures, funding gaps, and opportunities to strengthen equitable access to food across Vancouver.

**Community Feedback.** The VFPC also prepared and submitted a formal feedback report in March 2024 on the Burrard Peninsula Area Transport Plan, applying a food access and equity lens to regional transportation planning. The VFPC surveyed community food organizations to gather on-the-ground perspectives, which were incorporated into the submission. This work highlighted how transit service levels, affordability, and accessibility directly affect residents' ability to access grocery stores, food hubs, food banks, and culturally appropriate food assets,

particularly in neighbourhoods facing structural barriers to mobility (e.g., South Vancouver). Several of the items outlined in the VFPC feedback report were also noted in the Burrard Peninsula Area Transport Plan.

**Government Engagement.** In March 2025, the VFPC formally wrote to the Province of British Columbia in support of the province entering into an agreement under the National School Food Program. The correspondence highlighted the importance of provincial–federal collaboration to sustain and expand school food programs in British Columbia and emphasized the role of school food programs in supporting student health and learning, reducing household food costs, and strengthening local food systems.

### **1.3. Hosted Events and Public-Facing Engagement**

#### ***Nourish to Flourish (Healthy School Food)***

In April 2025, the Vancouver Food Policy Council hosted “Nourish to Flourish (Healthy School Food)”, a virtual public session focused on advancing healthy, universal school food programs and aligning municipal, provincial, and federal action.

Presenters included:

- Celena Benndorf, Vicky Baker, and Kelin Emmett (Vancouver District Parent Advisory Council) – presenting on parent-led advocacy, local implementation considerations, and alignment with the Vancouver School Board Food Framework
- Brent Mansfield (Coalition for Healthy School Food) – presenting on the National School Food Policy, federal and provincial funding commitments, and opportunities for municipal leadership
- Vanessa Lam (Vancouver Coastal Health) – presenting on the newly released BC School Food Toolkit to support schools in creating and maintaining healthy school food environments
- Megan Vizlai (Farm to School BC) – presenting on school food programming, food literacy, Indigenous foodways, and opportunities to strengthen local food systems through schools

Councillor Rebecca Bligh attended the session, which helped facilitate the development of a subsequent Council motion put forward to Councillor Bligh and Councillor Fry, [Sustainable School Food Funding](#), related to restating support for a VSB-led Universal Healthy School Food Program to meet the needs of VSB students experiencing food insecurities.

#### ***Feeding Vancouver: Frontline Food Leaders on Growing Demand and Local Action***

In November 2025, the VFPC hosted “Feeding Vancouver: Frontline Food Leaders on Growing Demand and Local Action,” a public panel highlighting rising food insecurity in Vancouver and community-led programs and responses in the city.



Panelists included:

- Chef TJ Conwi, community meal program by Ono Vancouver / ReRoot
- Prabhi Deol, Reframing South Vancouver Initiative
- Kayla Dowd, Sole Food Street Farms
- Evan Reeks, DTES Emergency Food Hub
- Candy Tladi, Food Stash Foundation

Panelists shared first-hand insights on rising community demand; community-led responses (including community meals and programming, food recovery, and urban farming); program challenges (e.g., operational, infrastructure, and funding issues); and the importance and value of investing in food systems at the municipal level (current food funding is only 0.03% of the City budget). The event provided an opportunity to bring together frontline organizations, City staff, and elected officials to hear directly from those responding daily to food insecurity. By elevating operational experience, the session helped ground policy discussions in current conditions, highlighted both immediate pressures and longer-term system needs, and reinforced the role of community-based food infrastructure in supporting equity, resilience, and public health in Vancouver.

The VFPC was pleased that Councillors Sean Orr, Sarah Kirby-Yung, and Lenny Zhou attended the event, supporting dialogue between Council and community leaders working on the frontlines of Vancouver's food system.

#### **1.4 Guest Speakers & Knowledge Exchange**

Throughout the reporting period, the VFPC prioritized knowledge exchange through presentations from City departments, regional agencies, academic institutions, and community organizations. Speakers and presentations included:

- TransLink representatives – Burrard Peninsula Area Transport Plan
- Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability staff – Modernizing Home-Based Business Regulations; Villages Planning
- Arts, Culture, and Community Services staff – Food Retail Study; Food Systems Grants, Cultural Food Assets
- Mohamed Imam (Perkins+Will) – Building Integrated Agriculture
- Lily Raphael (City of Vancouver Solutions Lab) and Laura Kozak (Emily Carr University of Art + Design) – Circular Food Innovation Lab
- Anastasia French – Living Wage BC
- Isabela Bonnevera (ICTA-UAB & Simon Fraser University) and Dr. Wallapak Polasub (KPU Institute for Sustainable Food Systems) – Good Food Project (newcomer and immigrant food system perspectives)
- Vicky Baker – Healthy School Food initiatives and the Great Big Crunch
- Ian Marcuse (Vancouver Food Justice Coalition) – Investing in Food Systems as a Human Right

These public presentations ensured the VFPC's work was informed by research and cross-sector expertise.

### **1.5 Collaboration, Working Groups, and Liaisons**

The VFPC maintained regular engagement with City Council, City staff, Vancouver Coastal Health, and the Vancouver Park Board. The Council advanced its work through working groups focused on:

- Food Access and Equity
- Food Infrastructure
- Healthy School Food

These groups supported motion development, community feedback, event planning, and alignment with City initiatives.

## **2. Future Directions**

In 2026, the Vancouver Food Policy Council intends to continue implementing its approved 2023–2026 work plan, with particular emphasis on two objectives.

Under Objective 1, the VFPC will support decision makers and influencers across the food security landscape to foster aligned understanding and approaches to food access, equity, and security—where food is safe, nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate, and available to all. This work aligns with Council's strategic priorities (2023-2026) related to being healthy, inclusive, and equitable, advancing reconciliation, and supporting a vibrant and diverse city. The Food Access and Equity Working Group will continue to lead efforts related to food systems funding, healthy school food, cultural food assets, and food as a human right.

Under Objective 2, the VFPC will support decision makers and influencers in examining and identifying food infrastructure strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in Vancouver. This work aligns with Council priorities related to supporting business and city services and infrastructure, and will be led by the Food Infrastructure Working Group.

In addition, the VFPC anticipates increased engagement on municipal food systems budgeting and investment. As food insecurity and operational pressures on frontline food organizations continue to rise, the VFPC expects to support Council and staff in examining funding priorities, identifying gaps and opportunities within existing allocations, and advancing a longer-term approach to food systems investment that supports equity, public health, and community resilience.

### **3. Self-Assessment**

During the 2024–2025 period, the Vancouver Food Policy Council (VFPC) considers its work to be aligned with its Terms of Reference, approved work plan, and Council’s strategic priorities. The VFPC benefits from strong engagement with City staff (particularly Henry Lau, VFPC staff liaison) and external partners and values the diverse professional and lived experience that members bring to its work. Overall, the Council continues to function as an effective mechanism for providing informed, community-connected advice on food systems policy.

At the same time, the VFPC recognizes several factors that have affected its work. As a volunteer advisory body, members’ capacity to engage consistently can be constrained by professional and personal commitments. In addition, the resignation of the Council liaison in 2024 resulted in a temporary loss of continuity in Council liaison support. Rising food insecurity and increasing strain on community food organizations have required the VFPC to devote significant attention to municipal food systems funding, reflecting urgent conditions within Vancouver’s food system, but not always aligning equally with all members’ interests or areas of expertise. The VFPC has also noted a learning curve related to understanding City processes and decision-making pathways, with members at varying stages of familiarity. Finally, the pace and urgency of emerging food system issues have at times required responsiveness beyond the approved work plan, requiring an ongoing balance between long-term objectives and time-sensitive policy opportunities.

With respect to Objective 3 — supporting the growth, development, and maintenance of urban agriculture to strengthen a robust local food system and increase resilience in the face of increasingly unpredictable and changing conditions — the Urban Agriculture and Climate Resilience working group experienced challenges in advancing planned activities during the period due to limited member capacity and other priority areas of focus. While the objective remains strongly aligned with VFPC priorities, constrained availability limited the group’s ability to move from planning to implementation.

Overall, the VFPC continues to support City Council priorities and provide timely, relevant advice on food system issues affecting Vancouver residents.

### **CONCLUSION**

The foregoing is presented to Vancouver City Council for information.