



*Saskatoon
Community
Clinic*

Community Health Services (Saskatoon) Association Ltd.

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News Release
October 15, 2008

Food deserts in Saskatoon: A potential health issue, especially for low income residents

Saskatoon: The Saskatoon Community Clinic believes that Saskatoon citizens should be concerned about the potential health problem posed by the development of food deserts in the city. The Clinic's Board of Directors is hosting a public event on Thursday, October 16, 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at its 424 1st Avenue North meeting room to raise awareness and promote discussion of this issue.

"As a primary health care co-operative we want to raise awareness about the conditions and options that affect access to healthy food in the city," said Community Clinic Board member, Nancy Carmichael. "We are initiating this action during Poverty Awareness Week because we know the problem is especially serious for people with lower incomes."

A food desert is a term used for an area of a city where there is little healthy food for sale, especially at affordable prices. Work done so far by the City of Saskatoon and the Saskatoon Health Region, show that the west-side core neighbourhoods and the downtown area definitely have cause for concern.

The Board of the Clinic believes that preventing food deserts is an important public health issue because food is so important to health. The Clinic offers and participates in nutrition programs that are helping to alleviate this problem, such as the Good Food Box (Good Food Inc.), nutrition counselling and the collective kitchen partnership. However, its staff and Board are very aware that much more needs to be done on a larger scale.

"I see so many people at the Westside Clinic whose health problems are linked to poor diet. Diabetes is an example. We are seeing the rates increase, even in children." said Dr. Stephen Helliard, a physician at the Clinic.

"Many public policies, although outside of the health sector, can have a big impact on health. Such policies are very important in the case of food deserts." said Nancy Carmichael.

Various proposals will be discussed at the event for possible follow up. Among these are:

- Introduce zoning bylaws to promote population density and multi-purpose neighbourhoods, creating a critical mass of wealth to sustain sales in a location.

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- Provide support, such as incentive packages, to establish and encourage retail outlets to sell affordable healthy food in "Food Deserted" areas.
- Consider bylaws regulating the sale of junk food.
- Develop guidelines ensuring the availability of healthy foods in public facilities and schools.
- Promote urban community gardening and links with local farmers.

For more information contact: Nancy Carmichael, Community Clinic board member, 374-9476 or Laurie Stone, Saskatoon Community Clinic, 652-0300, ext. 250.

The information sheet to be handed out at the session is available at www.saskatooncommunityclinic.ca

The Community Clinic is a membership based co-operative which provides multi-disciplinary primary health care services to approximately 20,000 clients at the Saskatoon Community Clinic on Second Avenue and Community Clinic- Westside on 20th Street.

