



That the Council of the City of Richmond resolves to encourage Richmond residents:

- (i) as restaurants and caterers in both private and City operations, to highlight the support for and availability of certified organic, free-range eggs on their menus;
- (ii) as consumers, to request the option of purchasing certified organic, free-range eggs at retail food outlets and restaurants and, where available, choose the certified organic, free-range option;
- (iii) as wholesalers, to highlight the preference for and availability of certified organic, free-range eggs in their food supply inventories; and
- (iv) as retailers, to highlight the preference for and availability of certified organic, free-range eggs in their food stores.

## Staff Report

### Origin

At the Regular Council meeting of September 25, 2006, the following motion was adopted:

- (1) That the matter of cage free eggs be referred to staff to investigate, in consultation with the appropriate advisory committee, the feasibility of requiring caterers in City-run facilities to use eggs from cage-free chickens; and*
- (2) That staff prepare a discussion paper and policy options on steps, which could be taken to prevent battery cage farms from being established in the City.*

### Background

The delegation on September 25, 2006 from the Vancouver Humane Society provided some compelling material regarding the production of chicken eggs.

In a more natural environment, chickens spend most of their day foraging, pecking and scratching at the ground, dust bathing, and nesting if they are preparing for egg laying. Hens create complex social systems, which influence spacing and movement patterns. At night, most of their time is spent resting on perches, a genetic adaptation for avoiding predators.

The use of battery cages inhibits almost all of chickens' natural behaviours. Hens are confined to extremely small, barren spaces where they can barely move. Their bones are weak, feathers are chafed or pecked off, beaks are cut, and feet are plagued with lesions and deformities.

Despite these facts, Canada continues to use the battery cage system to produce 98% of its 6.9 billion eggs each year.

A number of agencies and institutions, including the University of Guelph (Canada's premier agricultural university), the University of BC, Simon Fraser University and BCIT are implementing programs to promote the choice of certified organic, free-range eggs.

### Findings of Fact

To address the issues raised in Council's motion:

- (1) Staff has conducted meetings with the management of the three full-time food service facilities within the direct contractual control of the City – the Seniors' Centre in Minoru Park, Heron Café at City Hall and Stanley's Restaurant at the Ice Centre. In all cases, they felt that any requirement by the City to specifically use certified organic or free-range eggs from cage-free chickens would have a detrimental effect on the costs to their members or customers and, in the case of processed or pre-mixed food, it is virtually impossible to identify the source or method of production of any

ingredients from chicken eggs. They also indicated that it was difficult to identify and order such products through the regular food suppliers.

In consultation with the City's Agricultural Advisory Committee in October, 2006, there was constructive and diverse debate regarding the role that the City should be taking in implementing ethical purchasing policies but the majority of members emphasized the importance of consumer choice and market dynamics. It was noted that strong consumer demand for certified organic products would exert more pressure on agricultural producers to respond.

- (2) At the present time, there are no egg-production facilities within the City of Richmond using battery cages for the control or confinement of chickens during their egg-producing life span. The existing egg producers, of any significant size in Richmond, are certified organic or use free-range chickens.

For future consideration, the prohibition of battery cage farms for the production of eggs is beyond the regulatory powers of a municipality in British Columbia. There are two pieces of legislation which place those powers outside of the City's direct influence:

*Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act*

*Section 12 (2)* "...the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations....respecting standards for the purpose of the definition of 'normal farm practice'"

*Section 12 (3)* "The minister may make regulations prescribing limits referred to in...the definition of 'farm operation'...and includes....processing or direct marketing by a farmer of...the products of a farm"

*Natural Products Marketing (BC) Act – British Columbia Egg Marketing Scheme*

*Section 37* "The board (BC Egg Marketing Board) shall have authority within the Province to promote, regulate and control the production, transportation, packing, storing and marketing, or any of them, of the regulated product, including the prohibition of such production, transportation, packing, storing and marketing, or any of them, in whole or in part...."

## Analysis

There would appear to be a number of options open to Council to address this issue:

- (1) **Status Quo (*Not Recommended*)** The compelling evidence which has been brought to light by organizations such as the Vancouver Humane Society and the Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals shows that the vast majority of egg producers in Canada use the battery cage production method in the name of efficiency and in response to

market demands. In its present form, the confinement of chickens in battery cages is, according to respected research polls, considered inhumane and unacceptable to a majority of Canadian consumers. In light of this, the majority of Richmond residents would expect Council to provide some leadership on this issue - in fact, staff have received over 65 pieces of correspondence since September applauding the City's initiative.

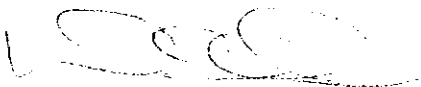
- (2) **Impose Restrictions on Caterers & Operators (*Not Recommended*)** Based on the input from operators and caterers within City-owned facilities, the imposition of certified organic, free-range eggs on the preparation and service of food within those facilities would have a detrimental effect on the pricing of their menus and, ultimately, on the customers or members. In practical terms, it would be almost impossible to regulate or enforce any directive when dealing with the number of events and gatherings involving food at City facilities.
- (3) **Encourage the Use of Certified Organic, Free-Range Eggs (*Recommended*)** Through a Council resolution, encourage Richmond residents:
- as restaurants and caterers in both private and City operations, to highlight the support for and availability of certified organic, free-range eggs on their menus;
  - as consumers, to request the option of purchasing certified organic, free-range eggs at retail food outlets and restaurants and, where available, choose the certified organic, free-range option;
  - as wholesalers, to highlight the preference for and availability of certified organic, free-range eggs in their food supply inventories; and
  - as retailers, to highlight the preference for and availability of free-range eggs in their food stores.

### Financial Impact

There would be no financial impact for the City with the recommended option.

### Conclusion

Staff recommends the adoption of the proposed resolution by Council.



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