

Community Focus Bulletin: ***Creating Community Conversations***



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A Call to Action: Food to be viewed as more important

Background:

In 2012 Sustainable Peterborough developed a vision for a sustainable community. One of the themes for the plan is Agriculture and Local food. The Sustainable Peterborough Plan established our 25-year Vision for our region. In terms of agriculture the plan calls for us to have a sustainable community that fosters healthy environments, people, and economies by 2035. Specifically the goal will be “we will feed ourselves sustainably with local, healthy foods.”

To do this the plan calls for the following strategic directions:

- Maintain adequate farmland availability to support our sustainable agricultural needs.
- Facilitate the production, storage, processing, distribution, and marketing of local, healthy food.
- Encourage farmers to practice good environmental stewardship.

The Future of Food & Farming Working Group, a sub-committee of Sustainable Peterborough, has been moving this goal forward through consultation and research. To date there have been 3 summits hosted whereby community stakeholders identified the issues, challenges and opportunities with which our food production system is dealing. A series of research papers has been completed that documented consumer expectations on local food, opportunities and limitations for grocery stores to purchase locally and our local ability to address guidelines developed by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.

In May the Working Group completed 2 additional significant research papers and supported the development of a local Food Charter that built on the work identified above. This work also aligns with the latest directions of the provincial and federal governments. The following three reports were presented to and endorsed by Sustainable Peterborough in June, 2017

Synopsis of our most recent initiatives:

Here is an overview of findings from “**Farmland, Farmers and Food Production in Peterborough County**” (which updates the original report completed in 2012)

What the report documents:

A. A review of historical data and trends in farmland use in the County from 1976 to 2016 inclusive, and a projection of farmland acres in the County through 2036, assuming trends continue.

B. A review of farm businesses, as well as numbers and demographics of farmers in the County over time, with possible projections through 2016.

C. An analysis of the level of land use planning protection provided to the farmland currently in production in the County; and

D. An estimate of how much active farmland and food would be required to feed Peterborough's population in 2011 and in 2036.

Here is an overview of findings from **"Farmland, Farmers and Food Production in Peterborough County"** (version 3.0, which updates the original report completed in 2014).

- Since 1976, the County has experienced a steady reduction in the overall amount of land on farms reported by farmers in the County. Approximately 92,000 acres, or 31% of the land on farms in 1976, is no longer being reported in the Census by farmers.
- If the average rate of shrinkage of farmed acres over the 40 years from 1976 to 2016 is assumed to continue into the future, then another 46,000 acres could be out of production by the time of the Census in 2036. This would result in a total reduction by 47% of the farmed acres in the County over a 60 year period.
- The number of farm businesses between 1976 and 2016 has declined by 44% over 40 years, as 741 fewer farm businesses are operating in 2016 than in 1976.
- The number of farmers under 35 has declined significantly over a 25 year period, while numbers have risen in the "over 55 years" category in every Census year. By 2016, more than half the farmers in the County were over the age of 55 and only 95 farmers (7%) were under the age of 35.
- 48% of the Peterborough land (reported by farmers as farmed land in the 2011 Census of Agriculture) is protected in Official Plans as "Agricultural" as opposed to the broader "Rural" designation.
- The County does not produce enough food to feed its current population and by 2036, the deficit would be very significant with projected growth in population. 3500 acres of additional production would be needed in fruit and vegetables, as well as additional dairy, meat and eggs.

Questions for discussion include:

1. Is ongoing reduction of farmed acreage a concern? Are there influences that will change the patterns experienced over the last 40 years? Should action be taken to prevent ongoing loss and/or put idle farmland back to work?
2. Is the reduction in the number of farmers and farm businesses a concern to our community? If so, what could be done to reverse current trends?
3. Are there actions that could be taken to increase the economic and practical feasibility of local food production to help Peterborough feed itself?

Here is an overview of findings from **"Cultivating a Fertile Environment for Urban Agriculture in the Greater Peterborough Area"**

What the report documents:

This report is designed to showcase historical and current work being done in the Greater Peterborough Area (GPA), broadly define, and identify the many opportunities that exist for Urban Agriculture to grow in our communities, as well as to provide guidance on how municipalities in the GPA, particularly the City of Peterborough, can incorporate local food policies into its land-use and development processes and establish a supportive civic environment for urban agriculture.

In order to contextualize the importance of supporting Urban Agriculture in our region, the following points provide a snapshot of the realities of the Greater Peterborough Area (GPA) and the role that urban agriculture can play in access to local food:

- in 2011, average individual incomes in Peterborough were approximately 12% lower than the provincial average (\$37,288 in Peterborough compared to \$42,264 provincially) (City of Peterborough, 2015).
- As a consequence, 8.7% of area residents relied on social assistance in 2011 and 23.6% of Peterborough households with children under 18 is food insecure in comparison to Ontario's 8.7% (City of Peterborough, 2015).
- Presently, Peterborough Public Health estimates that 17.6% of Peterborough-area households experience food insecurity
- Urban agriculture provides broad based benefits: as a communal activity it can enhance community engagement and inclusiveness by bringing people together to create productive urban green spaces. Participation in urban agriculture provides a number of health and education benefits including physical exercise, stress relief, planning and organizational skills, and a knowledge of food production that encourages lifelong healthy eating habits. By taking part in urban agriculture, people can "overcome various personal or cultural barriers such as age, ethnicity, class or gender while instilling pride in the environment around them"

Some key findings:

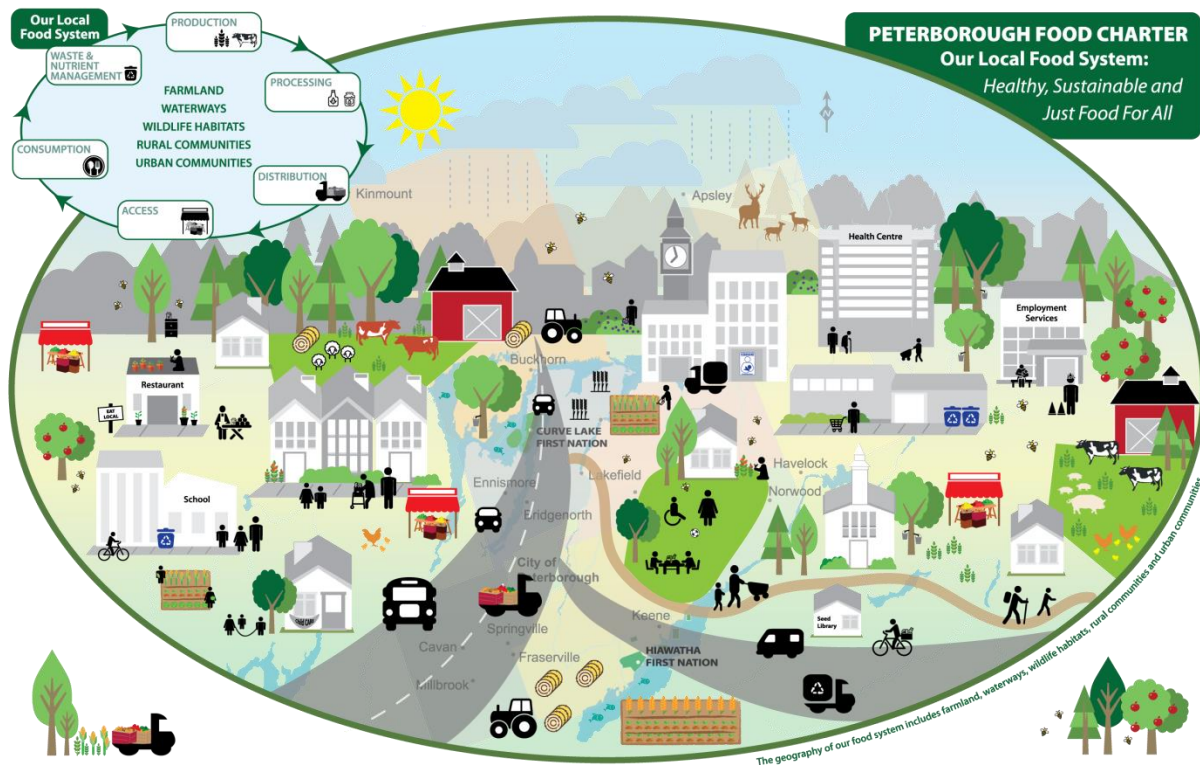
- In the past five years, the number of local community gardens has grown from 14 to 43.
- Peterborough Gleans, a local volunteer-based gleaning group, and Tree for the Picking, a program that matches fruit tree owners with gleaners, offer people with limited access to fresh food the opportunity to harvest healthy locally-grown produce. Peterborough Gleans provides gleaners with free bus transportation to nearby farms. Working together with dedicated volunteers, the program organizes trips to area farms to pick produce that farmers donate to gleaners. Currently there are about 400 city community members involved in the network and many others from the county. In the 2015 season alone, participants in the program gleaned the equivalent of over \$20,000 worth of local fresh produce (Peterborough Gleans, 2016).
- Typically, space is at a premium in cities, especially in built up areas. As the City of Peterborough grows, it is likely to become more densely populated, especially in the core. This anticipated growth provides an opportunity to plan for the future. Green roofs, the growing of vegetation on the roof of a structure, offer an opportunity to produce food in an often forgotten part of the city.

- The City is reviewing the requirements for backyard chickens in order to ensure safe and healthy environments for both people and the hens.
- The City itself does not own any appreciable amount of land that is still zoned for agricultural use. Almost no land has been permanently designated for agriculture in the City of Peterborough, except for a small area in the city's south end that is subject to flooding conditions. Most land within the City boundary that is zoned to permit agriculture is in waiting for eventual development, and is farmed as an interim use by the owner or a tenant.
- **Finally, the report poses the following questions:** Through broader consultation, it is hoped that this document can be refined into a tool that can assist both area municipal policy and decision makers and community groups, individuals with an interest in urban agriculture. It is hoped that their endorsement of this paper will be action-based and that we can work with these diverse stake-holders to build supports for a flourishing Urban Agriculture movement across the GP.
 1. Are these types of initiatives relevant and appropriate for the GPA, in the light of its "unique situation" ?
 2. What are the costs of implementation?
 3. Are the costs of implementation commensurate with the gains in terms of the benefits of urban agriculture?
 4. What are the implications of soil quality in urban areas like the City of Peterborough for food production?
 5. What are the implications of commercial production of food within urban areas?
 6. How do the opportunities presented in the report support neighbourhood-centred planning?
 7. What role should municipalities play in funding urban agriculture programs?
 8. What opportunities can current municipal grant programs provide to urban agriculture ventures?
 9. How can the municipality and the development community collaborate to support urban agriculture in new developments and in existing neighbourhoods?
 10. How can we enhance the partnership between the municipality and community groups to support the maintenance and stewardship of green spaces?
 11. How can urban agriculture be best positioned in upcoming projects, such as the Urban Park, Bethune St. reconstruction, and the Lily Lake Plan?

A Peterborough Food Charter: Healthy, Sustainable and Just Food for All

A food charter is a value, vision or principle statement and/or series of goals developed by a city, town or region that has a broad base of support and describes what a community wants their food system to look like.

Over the past two years, work has been undertaken to prepare a local food charter that builds on extensive community consultation that has been completed by many different sectors. Rather than going out and revisiting what is needed for a dynamic local food industry, the process built on discussions and research through the Peterborough Food Action Network, Sustainable Peterborough and work undertaken by Nourish Peterborough, Farms at Work, Peterborough Public Health, Peterborough Social Planning Council and Agricultural Advisory Committee of Peterborough Economic Development. Further consideration was given to work underway by the County and the City of Peterborough as they prepare new Official Plans.



The Food Charter encompasses the voices from these community discussions and describes the components of a dynamic local food industry and documents the various members of the food chain, from farmers to municipal representatives needed to shape and support the local food system.

Visionary statements are included in the Food Charter support the value of our local food system along with health, social justice, culture and community, education, economic sustainability and the environment. See www.foodinpeterborough.ca/foodcharter for more information. The Food Charter was endorsed by Peterborough Public Health in May, 2017.

Provincial and Federal governments supporting the need for improved food security: reinforcing what we have been saying locally

In his mandate letter to the Honourable Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Prime Minister Trudeau tasked the Minister with “developing a food policy that promotes healthy living and safe food”. According to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), Canadian farmers endorse this initiative. OFA’s interest in improving awareness of safe, local and healthy food, improving food safety and promoting healthy living was captured in the National Food Strategy (NFS).

Specifically the letter states:

“As Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, your overarching goal will be to support the agricultural sector in a way that allows it to be a **leader in job creation and innovation**. You will implement our government’s plan to help Canada’s agriculture sector be more **innovative, safer, and stronger**. Canada’s farmers, ranchers and food processors are the foundation of our food sector. Government must use its policy and financial tools to support the agricultural sector in its vital work. This includes helping the sector, including getting product to market, water management, research and innovation, food safety and export support.

Finally, the Minister was tasked with developing a food policy that promotes healthy living and safe food by putting more healthy, high-quality food, produced by Canadian ranchers and farmers, on the tables of families across the country.

On April 19th, 2017, Chris Ballard, Provincial Minister of Housing and Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy announced he will be leading discussions across the province on the development of a strategy that will emphasize community-led approaches to achieving food security through partnerships. From the government’s perspectives these partnerships will include the Minister of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs, Minister Responsible for Small Business and the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

The Province has identified 4 broad focus areas for the Food Security Strategy:

1. Empowered communities with custom-made solutions. Food security challenges and solutions differ across the province. Communities need tools to help mobilize solutions and supports to individuals and communities based on their needs.
2. Integrated food initiatives that use knowledge to drive collective impact. We recognize the need for a shared vision, clear goals, common metrics and a set of connected, mutually reinforcing activities based on the best available knowledge. We can increase food security in our province by working together towards a shared vision.
3. Food Security is about more than food. Income, the cost of food and other basic necessities matter. There are lots of ways to increase economic access and reduce the frequency of trading off one basic need against others at the household level.

4. Driving innovation. To tackle significant challenges and issues we need new ways to get to solutions. We will support, encourage and learn from creative, innovative disruptors who will help us find them.

A Call to Action:

Our local reports document our local issues. The Provincial and Federal governments are providing guidance and policies that support the need to see food as a critical factor to our quality of life and to provide improved access to food and its production. Our call to action is to move from discussion to action through partnerships, commitment and resources.

Questions to consider:

1. What planning tables should be involved in moving forward the discussions on food access and production?
2. How can you get involved in moving the conversation forward?

For sources & more information go to:

- Provincial Food Security Strategy: [News Bulletin \(April 19, 2017\)](#)
- [Discussion Paper “Building Ontario’s First Food Security Strategy”](#)
- Food Security Consultation [on-line survey](#)
- <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-agriculture-and-agri-food-mandate-letter#sthash.56RcjDtd.dpuf>

For more information about our upcoming Community Focus Bulletins go to

<http://www.merriam-associates.com/contact-us>

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