

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



Prepared by Merriam & Associates

No. 03-16

## **Is Food Production To Be Viewed as More Important?**

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.

In particular, I will expect you to work with your colleagues and through established legislative, regulatory, and Cabinet processes to deliver on your top priorities:

- Invest in an Agri-Food Value Added Investment Fund to attract investment and create good jobs in food processing. This will provide technical and marketing assistance to help food processors develop new value-added products that reflect changing tastes and market opportunities.
- Develop 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.
- Invest in agricultural research to support discovery science and innovation in the sector. To better allocate research funding, you should establish a transparent process that involves food producers.

- Promote Canadian agricultural interests during future trade negotiations.
- Work with producers and provincial governments to assess whether the suite of farm income safety nets meets the needs of Canadian farmers when they are faced with serious challenges beyond their control, including implementing a new multi-year agricultural policy framework to replace Growing Forward 2 (GF2), which will expire in 2018.
- Work with provinces, territories, and other willing partners, to help the sector adjust to climate change and better address water and soil conservation and development issues.
- Canadian farmers must be able to get their product to market and so you will support the Minister of Transport in undertaking a full review of the Canadian grain transportation system in the context of responding to the *Canadian Transportation Act* review.
- Support the Minister of Infrastructure and Communities to ensure that we make significant investments in transportation infrastructure, including short-line rail spurs and inland and port loading terminals to improve efficiency, remove bottlenecks and increase system capacity.
- Support the Ministers of Natural Resources and the Environment and Climate Change in making investments that will make our resource sectors world leaders in the use and development of clean and sustainable technology and processes. “

See more at: <http://pm.gc.ca/eng/minister-agriculture-and-agri-food-mandate-letter#sthash.56RcjDtd.dpuf>

### **How does this mandate support the work of our local planning initiatives?**

In March, 2015, Sustainable Peterborough’s Future of Food & Farming Working Group hosted “**Peterborough: The Future of Food & Farming Summit 3**”

The results of the discussion included the need for the following to take place if we are to have a vibrant food industry :

#### Education of Consumers about:

- where food comes from,
- the importance of food production to the local economy,
- the value of nutritious food

#### Education of Farmers and Producers:

- increase supports and training opportunities for new farmers,
- develop mentorship opportunities for older and experienced farmers to share knowledge

Education of Youth about:

- about from where food comes,
- increase learning in the school curriculum and the role schools play in that education

Education of Food Service Providers (Grocery stores, large institutions such as Trent, Fleming, hospital, elementary school nutrition programs) about:

- opportunities to buy local
- importance of food to the local economy

Education of Policy-Makers (or Related to Policy) about:

- Top/down with direction from provincial government to set a standard starting point
- Full food system direction and policy
- Implications of food regulations all government levels
- Clear direction from Province to develop a local food standard
- Advocacy – senior levels of government need to consider and monitor impact of policy
- Urgency for action on food security (community/global)
- The role of food in localized economic development

Participants at the Summit identified the highest priority initiatives needed (over the next 3 years) to create a more vibrant local food system that meets the needs of all participants? These were as follows:

#### A. HIGHEST PRIORITY INITIATIVES:

Food Access/Security:

- Subsidizing low income earners to be able to buy/afford more local products
- Increase (minimum) wages to meet basic needs: food, water, essential items
- Prioritize and support Nourish Peterborough
- Minimize waste diversion

Processing/Storage/Distribution/Marketing:

- Fill in the steps between growing and eating... processing, freezing, grading, labeling, trucking and distribution, abattoirs including mobile
- Shared production infrastructure
- Shared distribution avenues (e.g. co-ops, RJ's produce, Chartwells)
- Master plans – need a complete food system inventory/plan
- Promotion of 'Kawartha Choice' e.g. open houses
- Promote local farmers markets (to farmers and consumers)

Production:

- Financial support for new start-ups and retention of local food producers
- Access to farmland for new producers
- Policy adjustments to make entry into farming easier (eg. easing quota access)
- Support for traditional access to natural lands for First Nations to obtain local food (e.g. wild rice, deer, moose, wild mushrooms, native plants, medicine)
- Preservation and protection of land which is suitable for use in agriculture – both cropping and livestock
- Enhanced policies to support small, family-scale farming/rural development in official plan

For the full report go to: <http://sustainablepeterborough.ca/about-us/working-groups/future-of-food-and-farming-working-group/>

Finally, the mandate letter to the federal minister is consistent with the mandate given by Premier Kathleen Wynne to Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

Questions for us to consider locally:

1. How can more food be produced locally 'and' processed locally, thus increasing employment and reducing transportation cost and environmental implications?
2. What role can Sustainable Peterborough's Climate Change initiative have in helping with planning for a vibrant food system of the future?

**Sources:**

<http://www.ofa.on.ca/>

<http://sustainablepeterborough.ca/about-us/working-groups/future-of-food-and-farming-working-group/>

For more information about our upcoming Community Focus Bulletins go to

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

Or email Dawn Berry Merriam at [dawnbm@merriam-associates.com](mailto:dawnbm@merriam-associates.com) or call 705-743-8050.

March, 2016