

Ontario Elections 2010

Putting healthy, local, sustainable food
on the municipal plate.



Photo: Tammara Soma



the alliance for healthy food & farming



Ontario Elections 2010 Toolkit



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Across Ontario, farm and food leaders are putting their issues on the municipal elections agenda. This toolkit outlines priority farm and food issues, and provides some helpful hints for organizing events and meetings with elections candidates throughout the lead up to the 2010 municipal elections. We hope you will adapt these ideas to your regional context and put healthy, local, sustainable food on the municipal plate.

Food Connects Us All

Municipalities have tremendous influence and power related to farming and food issues. Farming and food influence many aspects of daily life in our local communities. At the municipal level Public Health Units, Planning, Parks and Recreation, and Economic Development Departments work on farm and food issues. Elected officials – mayors and councillors – can take leadership on farm and food issues that will have positive impacts on farm incomes, farmland preservation, biodiversity, health, poverty, hunger, employment and community development.



Photo: Shewat Zeru

Why make farming and food an election priority?

- Between 1996 and 2006, Ontario lost 15% of its farms.
- The number of people using food banks rose by 19% in 2009.
- According to Statistics Canada, in 2004 26% of children aged 6 to 11 were overweight or obese.
- In 2010 Ontario is spending 37% of its budget on Healthcare. This figure could reach 80% by 2030.
- Ontario imports \$4 billion more in food than it exports.

Putting healthy, local, sustainable food on the election agenda will improve economic opportunities, food security and health for Ontarians.

- More than 752,000 jobs in Ontario rely on a solid food and farm sector. Making food and farming a priority means economic spin offs across the economy.
- Making fresh, local food available in our communities will result in better health.
- Farmer' markets, gardens, and other food projects strengthen local communities.

Municipalities have already taken bold steps.

- Markham developed Ontario's first local, sustainable food procurement policy.
- Toronto adopted Ontario's first municipal food strategy.
- Waterloo Region and other communities have started good food markets in priority neighbourhoods.
- The City of Thunder Bay and other municipalities have signed food charters.
- The City of Brampton permitted backyard chickens.
- Stratford Perth County Culinary Tourism festival is one of many culinary tourism efforts across the province.



Photo: Tammara Soma

Five categories of food priorities to bring to your Municipal candidates' attention

Municipal leaders can put healthy, local, sustainable food on the municipal plate. Ask candidates how they will work on the following farm and food priorities.

1 Healthy food for all

- Ensure access to fresh, affordable, local fruit and vegetables in all communities.
- Support school food programs and student nutrition so that all children have access to healthy food at school and learn food skills.
- Create a grants program for community food projects such as good food markets in low-income neighbourhoods, community gardens, and student nutrition programs.

2 Viable, sustainable farming

- Support farmland preservation programs/policies.
- Implement policies that addresses agriculture or food-related zoning and taxation reform.
- Help new farmers access land to farm.
- Include agriculture in planning and decision-making frameworks.
- Expand local farmers' markets.

3 Economic development, infrastructure and tourism

- Implement a local sustainable food procurement policy.
- Support food enterprises by eliminating zoning re-

strictions and providing tax incentives.

- Make public space available for farmers' markets.
- Work with entrepreneurs to build infrastructure that supports the local food economy: abattoirs, processing and storage facilities.
- Become a culinary tourism destination.
- Host an agriculture and food fair.

4 Community gardening and urban agriculture

- Make space available in parks for community gardens.
- Identify land suitable for urban agriculture and assist groups who would like to access that land.
- Encourage municipal and home composting.

5 Municipal decision making & Governance

- Start a municipal or regional food policy council or roundtable.
- Lead the development of a Food Charter or support programs that implement the existing Food Charter.
- Work with other levels of government to develop policies that result in food security and sustainable agriculture for Ontario.



Photo: Tammara Soma

Engage your Municipal candidates on Food and Farm issues.

1 Ask Questions

- Make a list of your questions. Keep questions short and straight to the point.
- Stick to a few key issues.
- Write a letter, send an email, call, or make an appointment to meet with your candidate in person. Add a personal touch outlining your experience or concerns.
- If you want a political candidate to listen and address a particular issue, work with others. Numbers count in politics.
- Provide facts and have background information ready.
- Be specific with the actions you want candidates to take.
- Talk about what other candidates have committed to working on



Photo: Deborah Barndt

The Local Cafe bus “a roving kitchen” owned and operated by Carole Ferrari is an example of a FUN and creative way to raise awareness about food and farming issues.

2 Plan a FUN event to raise awareness about food and farming!

- Paint a mural.
- Do a skit or a play.
- Organize a concert at a farmers market.
- Organize a movie screening or a puppet show.
- Create a food and farming poster campaign.
- Most importantly, invite your municipal candidates’ to attend.

3 Plan a formal meeting with candidates

- Organize a team of people who are interested in farm and food issues.
- Make a list of the Mayoral or municipal candidates you would like to meet.
- Create a phone or e-mail script stating that you are emailing/calling to arrange a meeting to discuss issues you’ve identified as a priority.
- Confirm the time and how long you will be meeting.
- Create an agenda/timeline for the event and share with candidates.
- Follow up a few days before the meeting to confirm candidates participation.
- Limit the discussion to a few key issues and and provide personal examples.
- Provide a declaration candidates can sign.
- Invite local media.
- Send a thank you letter to the candidates.
- Reiterate key points discussed and any commitment(s) made by the candidates.



Photo: Tammara Soma

Sample of food-related questions to ask Municipal candidates.

“20% of Children in our region go to bed hungry, do you find this acceptable? How would you address this situation as Mayor?”

“If you are elected, how will you ensure that children in this city have access to affordable nutritious foods at school?”

“Municipalities close to home (like Markham) and across North America cities are implementing local and sustainable food procurement policies to support farmers and the local economy. As potential Mayor of our city, would you support a local food procurement policy?”

“Urban agriculture is important to us and that includes being able to raise backyard chickens for eggs. What is your policy about raising backyard chickens in the city?”

“70% of people in our city live in high rise buildings, yet the composting program applies only to those living in houses. What will you do as Mayor to ensure that we divert more waste and include the 70% of residents living in high-rise buildings”

“How will you ensure that our city becomes a culinary tourist destination comparable to other global cities?”

For more information see the following Food Solutions papers published by the Metcalf Foundation
(www.metcalffoundation.com)

“Menu 2020: Ten Good Food Ideas for Ontario”

“Nurturing On-Farm and Farmer-Owned Fruit and Vegetable Processing”

“New Farmers and Alternative Markets Working within the Supply Managed System”

“Building Infrastructure Required for Scaling up Urban Agriculture in Toronto”

“In Every Community, A Place for Food? The Community Food Centre Model”

Also visit our web site at www.sustainontario.com



Photo Credit: Tammara Soma

**ASK YOUR MUNICIPAL CANDIDATE TO JOIN OTHER CANDIDATES ACROSS
THE PROVINCE AND SIGN THE FOLLOWING DECLARATION:**

I,.....municipal elections candidate for the City/Town/County of
..... hereby commit to make farming and food a central part of my platform-
should I be elected into office:

I will work towards:

HEALTHY FOOD FOR ALL

VIABLE, SUSTAINABLE FARMING

FARM AND FOOD ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND TOURSIM

COMMUNITY GARDENS AND URBAN AGRICULTURE

FOOD SYSTEMS GOVERNANCE

I WILL DO THIS BY:

(TAILOR THIS TO YOUR REGION'S PRIORITIES.)

Signature.....

Date.....



the alliance for healthy food & farming

Sustain Ontario is a province-wide, cross-sectoral alliance that promotes healthy food and farming.

Sustain Ontario advocates for a food system that is healthy, ecological, equitable and financially viable.

This election toolkit was developed in partnership with:

- Caledon Countryside Alliance
- Food Forward
- Food Security Research Network
- FoodShare Toronto
- Holland Marsh Growers Association
- Just Food Ottawa
- London Resources Centre
- The Foodshed Project
- Toronto Youth Food Policy Council

For more information about this food election toolkit and the Menu 2020 good food campaign for Ontario, please contact:

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