

## Food Charters: Designing Our Own Local Food System



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There's been a lot in the news lately about local food and farming and so

last week's celebrations for Ontario's fifth annual Local Food Week seems perfectly timed to promote the good things that are grown, made and harvested right here in Peterborough and in Ontario. I am hoping that everyone will take the opportunity to buy locally grown and processed foods to support local and Ontario farmers, farm organizations, food processors and agribusiness. Local Peterborough partners including the Nourish Project note that research shows us that when 100 people shift \$10 a week to support local sustainable food for a year, they reduce greenhouse gases by the equivalent of nearly ten cars and create one local job in the process.

Our board of health has kicked off the development of a local food charter that we hope will both inspire and motivate. Food charters, gaining in popularity across North America are "a value, vision or principle statement and/or a 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." Food charters can serve as reference documents for municipal decision makers. They can help to raise awareness and education about food issues at the same time as forming a basis for action. The hope is that food charters will facilitate collaboration and help to guide food policy development.

To find ours, go to [www.foodinpeterborough.ca/food-charter](http://www.foodinpeterborough.ca/food-charter). Besides Peterborough Public Health, groups like the Peterborough Food Action Network, Sustainable Peterborough Coordinating Committee, YWCA Peterborough Haliburton, and Healthy Kids Community Challenge Peterborough have endorsed it. Perhaps you know others who would like to help promote this vision of a food secure community.

The local food charter integrates research from multiple fronts, such as local food insecurity and experiences, community food security goals, support for local agriculture and food production, health and education priorities, practices that support our environment, economic sustainability and culture. These are incorporated into a food charter to encourage the development of policies and support for programs that promote a healthy and just local food system. Our local food charter notes the importance of a localized food system that references the production, processing, distribution, access and consumption of local and healthy food. It also notes the importance of waste and nutrient management as part of the food system.



# Peterborough Public Health

The geography of our food system includes farmland, waterways, wildlife habitats, rural communities and urban communities. These pieces and places of the food system link together in the vision for a healthy, sustainable food system that allows dignified access to food for all in our community. A health equity approach is embedded in this work resulting in access to nutritious, safe and culturally appropriate food for everyone.

Peterborough Public Health is supportive of community food security, reducing food insecurity and ensuring safe food and water in our communities. Our staff has submitted our recommendations to both the City and County of Peterborough for their Official Plans. If accepted, this would see:

- Enhanced agricultural and the agri-food sector (includes protection of farmland and growth of urban agriculture);
- Increased access to healthy, local foods for all residents in all communities; and,
- Improved community scale infrastructure to support the local food system.

We can't talk about agriculture without acknowledging the threat of climate change. Public health is collaborating with local partners to launch a campaign titled "Food: Too good to waste" in September. The goal is to reduce household food waste by supporting our community with food literacy awareness including menu planning, shopping tips, food skills and nutrition education. Nationally, 47% of wasted food happens at the household level at a value of \$27 billion. There are serious environmental consequences to sending food (and also organic materials) to landfill because they directly contribute to climate change by producing methane. Some municipalities have moved to clear garbage bags so that organics can be identified. Given the proposed provincial ban on food and organics in Ontario landfills, stay tuned for more information on local efforts!

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