

Letter of Intent

Any initiative that aspires to build a resilient community around sustainable food systems must begin with a broad based consensus on the need of such an initiative, what form it should take and the anticipated benefits that would accrue from its implementation. Such a consensus can only develop from people's actually seeing the results of smaller projects operating in the community. During the past eleven years, Toward Balance Support Network, along with its partner organizations, has initiated and encouraged activities designed to ensure clean, safe water; clean, safe food; clean, safe air; and a clean, safe community. One of these activities, the Kawartha Lakes Food Charter, developed over two years of public meetings and endorsed unanimously by city council, defines a just and sustainable food system as one that is, "rooted in healthy communities, in which no one is hungry and everyone has access to healthy, nutritious food. It is an economically viable, diverse and ecologically sustainable system to grow, harvest, process, transport and distribute food while minimizing waste." This presentation represents the synthesis of several projects envisioned or already operating within the city.

This first section deals with improving access to fresh, healthy produce through waste reduction. With forty percent of fresh produce entering grocery chains and restaurants destined for the landfill, timely diversion becomes our first goal. The timely withdrawal of unsold and unused produce from shelves, along with delivery to the local Food Source for sorting as usable or discard, becomes the first step. Once sorted, the useful produce goes immediately to the various food banks in the area. The remaining produce goes to the city's compost facility. Finished compost can be bagged at no cost when ready.

A second source of waste recapture can be found throughout the city. Almost every family farm has apple trees planted throughout the last century. Most of these apples are left to waste. With farmers' permission, these trees can be harvested by volunteers, with one third to the farmer, one third to the picker and one third to the Food Source where, again, they would be sorted for delivery to food banks or compost facility. This could also lead to gleaning other food crops.

This second section involves increasing the volume of food produced locally through farms and gardens. "Plant a row; grow a row," already operates in the city offering tax relief for food delivered to support agencies. Sir Sandford Fleming College boasts the most progressive sustainable farming programme in Ontario. Students come from around the world to study farming techniques at Fleming

College. The college also has the city's largest community garden with more than 100 garden plots. This garden is the flagship of the community garden network.

The city already has community gardens operating in most of its towns and villages. The role of community gardens has been to build community resilience and cultural diversity through shared gardening experiences. In 2016, Kawartha Lakes United Way introduced an intergenerational pairing option to their gardens. Through this option, seniors and youths were paired to share in the gardening experience. The result of the community garden network has been an improved sense of self-worth as well as food for the table. The rural landscape of Kawartha Lakes offers an abundance of suitable land for establishing community gardens. Our vision is to locate a community garden within walking distance of every interested gardener.

This third section involves supporting local restaurants and markets that use and sell locally grown food. These businesses become the focal point in local food city festivals. Ancillary industries such as local abattoirs and locally made products join the food industry in making Kawartha Lakes a destination point for tourists as well as building a strong, local industry sufficiently lucrative to encourage young people to stay in the community and to provide a basis for the city's marketing strategy. Economic rewards come through increased tourism for local fare and money staying within the community.

This final section defines the glue that will hold the entire programme together. The Time Bank, initiated by Edgar Cahn in 1980, allows the opportunity for volunteers to be rewarded for their hours of service. Any interested resident may join the bank which will be featured on the city's web site. The volunteer may then log in any unpaid hours spent in service of others; whether that is driving, sorting, weeding, babysitting, teaching a skill, or any other service. Such activities encourage members of the community, whether they be elderly, youth, disadvantaged, disabled or fully engaged, to share their skills while benefitting by redeeming their volunteer hours for services that they may need. Food security, cultural diversity and community resilience go hand in hand in hand.