May 28, 2015

Land Use Planning Review

c/o Richard Stromberg, Manager

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

Ontario Growth Secretariat

777 Bay Street

Toronto, ON M5G 2E5

Dear Mr. Stromberg:

The Ontario Society of Nutrition Professionals in Public Health (OSNPPH) commends the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for undertaking the 2015 Co-ordinated Review of four plans relating to the Greater Golden Horseshoe and for inviting input from the field. We are pleased to offer our particular expertise in food and nutrition, and to apply this to land use planning.

OSNPPH is the independent and official voice of registered dietitians working in Ontario’s public health system. OSNPPH supports evidence-based nutrition information to enable healthy eating at every stage of life; advocates for and provides support for creating healthier eating environments; as well as implements nutrition education and skill building programs.

As public health nutrition professionals we believe community food security exists when all residents can obtain a safe, personally acceptable, nutritious diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes healthy choices, community self-reliance and equal access for everyone[[1]](#footnote-0). Food is integral in multiple ways to life in Ontario communities, including that it is a basic necessity for health and disease prevention. As well as the importance of healthy food, safe water is a key factor in agricultural and other food system purposes, as well as being an essential nutrient.

Today’s food system reflects a perspective from a previous era, that a focus on increased food production would automatically improve health and serve the public’s interests. However, varied research has shown that the current food system contributes to climate change emissions and pollution, and has led to unhealthy,”obesogenic” food environments. Disconnects are prevalent throughout the food system, with high levels of specialization leading to silo’ing of jurisdictions, stakeholders, and issues. This is the antithesis of the inherent nature of food to connect everything, from health and social, to environmental, economic, and cultural goals.[[2]](#footnote-1)

We recognize that planning activities and decisions can affect the ability of communities to achieve food (including water) security. Accordingly, we are appreciative of the opportunity to comment on the six goals of the 2015 Co-ordinated Land Use Planning Review. We have prepared a separate document that describes our comments. As part of this, we have compiled recommendations, which for convenient reference are listed below.

**Recommendations:**

* Act through land use planning and policies to prevent further loss of agricultural lands and to protect water resources.
* Make safe, affordable, multi-modal access to healthy food a priority in land use plans.
* Add healthy food access as one of people’s daily needs to the definition of complete communities.
* Incorporate action items into land use plans to avoid food deserts and food swamps and to ensure a supportive ratio of healthy to less healthy food outlets.
* Encourage and support alternative models for food access, such as neighbourhood food centres.
* Increase the availability of affordable rental housing in communities to improve the ability of low- and moderate-income households to afford all basic necessities, including healthy food.
* Work with the economic development sector to increase current levels of local and healthy agricultural and food production.
* Encourage agriculture that supports a shift in eating patterns to more plant-based diets.
* Allow for and support urban agriculture.
* Foster and implement a systems approach to food that is comprehensive, cyclical, and coordinated.
* Support collaborative work to develop and implement an Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy.
* Encourage municipalities to develop local-level food system plans.

Please see our separate document for discussion accompanying each of our recommendations.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for this opportunity to comment on this review. To discuss our submission or other related matters, please feel free to contact us.

Regards,



Rebecca Davids Evelyn Vaccari

Co-Chair Year 1 Co-Chair Year 2

1. Hamm, MW and Bellows, AC. (2003). Community Food Security and Nutrition Educators. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behaviour*, 35:37-43. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Toronto Public Health. (2010). *Food Connections: Toward a healthy and sustainable food system for Toronto. A Consultation Report.* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)