

Holland Marsh Growers' Association Presentation to  
the City of Toronto Government Management Committee

Re: Local Food Procurement Program

On behalf of the Holland Marsh Growers' Association, a local farmer-based organization that is dedicated to improving the local marketplace for its membership and the rest of the agricultural industry in Ontario, I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to speak towards this new policy.

Obviously, it goes without saying, that we fully endorse the move towards a local food procurement policy that is both timely and environmentally conscious. However, without targets or even a low-ball target of 50 per cent not indicated in the report, we would like to indicate that more can be done.

I have been asked to speak, briefly, about sustainability and availability. Ontario – and specifically within 100-miles of Toronto, has some of the greatest diversity known in the country. More than 150 different crops and livestock are locally available, in season, for our fellow citizens. Included in that figure are more than 100 different fruits and vegetables that grow in nearby places like the Holland Marsh, Prince Edward County, Niagara Region, and in the surrounding areas. There are more than a 1,000 farmers able to provide for those within the city who are provided with sustenance by this council; seniors, children, and those who are in need of shelters.

The supply is there – now. There are year-round products, store crops, but the emphasis should be on in-season with its freshness and just pick taste that invokes a sense of nostalgia in seniors and cultivates new customers in our children. And those that can least afford it should be provided with the opportunity to healthy, safe products as our fellow citizens.

By invoking an aggressive local food procurement policy, you are transforming Toronto the Good into Toronto the Bold – shaking the tired bonds of mediocrity and showing the leadership and potential that all municipalities that want environmental change are capable of. Your constituents are leading an active Buy Local campaign because they want food security – not the food insecurity that is being detailed in the media day after day. People want to know that the food they eat won't make the sick – and by buying local, you are giving our future, our children, and our past, our seniors, the assurance that a healthy, safe, and nutritious meal is just that. Buying local is more than environmental, more than nostalgia, and more than reducing one's carbon footprint; it's about taste and freshness; about harvesting product in the morning for your table that night.

It's about making sure that everyone is able to enjoy the products of our farmer's labours.

Jamie Reaume  
Executive Director  
Holland Marsh Growers' Association

Newmarket, Ontario  
/ jreaume@rogers.com