

October 20, 2023

City of Toronto

Chair Alejandra Bravo

Economic and Community Development Committee



My name is **Hilda Nouri-Sabzikar** and I represent **The Stop Community Food Centre** and our market at the Wychwood Barns. In this capacity, I am pleased to support marketcityTO request for the development of the first City of Toronto Public Market Action Plan.

Toronto boasts over 105 public food markets, bolstering over 2,500 urban and rural entrepreneurs (2019 data). This number has likely increased as the COVID-19 pandemic fueled a surge in start-ups, particularly among millennials, launching businesses from home. Though long-treasured by city-dwellers as a way to connect to local growers and traders while surrounded by a festive atmosphere, entertainment and access to arts, crafts, street food and fresh produce, the widespread benefits of public food markets still need to be discovered and appreciated. As such, many public markets exist on the margins.

The Stop Community Food Centre strives to increase access to healthy food in a manner that maintains dignity, builds health and community, and challenges inequality. Part of that work is also creating pathway for local and sustainable food to be offered through our farmer's market, where we support local farmers and entrepreneurs bringing in food that represents diverse cultural backgrounds and supports the local economy. We have over 50 vendors at our farmers market, with more than half of them being farmers, while being one of the few markets that continues to run year-round. We are currently operating at a deficit. Developing a Public Market Action Plan would mean so much to us in terms of visibility on a municipal level and garnering more support for what we do.

Toronto has an opportunity to be a leader again in sustainable food and inclusive economies. Since 2015, a group of public market organizations and market managers, supported by the Toronto Food Policy Council, have been advancing the work required to increase awareness and understanding of Toronto public markets and their role in city-building. It is now the time to have an Action Plan that allows city staff, Councillors, market managers, vendors, the private sector, academia and the not-for-profit sector to work together and build the sector for the benefit of the markets, regulators and the city at large.

Please feel free to contact me directly at hilda@thestop.org if you would like to discuss **The Stop Community Food Centre's** support of this initiative further.

Sincerely,

Hilda Nouri-Sabzikar

The Stop Community Food Centre