

Dear Community Partner

We are pleased to provide you with our discussion document: **“The Future: Peterborough Food & Farming”**. This paper has been developed by the Peterborough Social Planning Council in partnership with Farms at Work, a non profit group that promotes active healthy farming.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to raise awareness about our changing farm community within the context of local food production. It serves to pose questions about change in the Peterborough area, as well as provide a picture of the evolution that has occurred in the past decade. We hope that by asking questions, we increase the interest of the public about the important role that agriculture plays in our economic and social fabric. Further, this paper is a tool to educate decision makers that there must be more co-ordination across sectors if we are to save and sustain our food producing lands and the rural communities within Peterborough County. Finally, this paper is intended as an awareness raising document that will support the intent of the upcoming **“Bring Food Home”** conference scheduled in Peterborough for October 27 to 29, 2011.

In November, 2010, the Peterborough Social Planning Council (PSPC) hosted a meeting with a number of food producers to discuss the report **“Menu 2020: Ten Good Food Ideas for Ontario”**.

Following that meeting, the Peterborough Social Planning Council working in partnership with Farms at Work, reviewed the demographic trends from Statistics Canada regarding the agricultural community. The researchers conferred with representatives from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food & Rural Affairs and Sustain Ontario, and referred to Statistics Canada’s Census of Agriculture. A review of work completed by the Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corporation provided an overview of the impact of agriculture on the local economy.

The outcome of our documentation process has been to identify a series of strategic questions. These questions should be considered by local, provincial and federal decision makers as well as community change agents, as we look at the planning of Peterborough county and city.

The next step is to take this discussion paper out to the public. We will be sharing this paper with local organizations to engage them in addressing these strategic questions

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and how we as a community can ensure that we build and develop our rural community of the future, collectively. These community partners include (but are not limited to):

- County of Peterborough
- Women's Institute of Peterborough County
- Community Food Network
- Agriculture Advisory Committee of the Greater Peterborough Area Economic Development Corporation
- City of Peterborough re the official plan review
- Workforce Development Board
- Community Futures Development Corporation
- Peterborough and District Co-op
- Sustainable Peterborough

By sharing this discussion document with this broad group of community change agents we hope to kick start a process by which we can work together to take a serious look at the implications of our changing rural community on our social fabric. This includes the impact on the education, health and social systems. While the data describes the changing face of farming and food production, it has serious implications for the culture of our rural communities.

We look forward to keeping you apprised of the outcomes of this community dialogue on food and farming in our community. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me or Dawn Berry Merriam, our Research and Policy Analyst at 705-743-5915.

Yours very truly,

*Brenda Dales*

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