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Region of Peel
Working for you

REPORT
Meeting Date: June 23, 2011
Regional Council

For Information

DATE: May 2, 2011

REPORT TITLE: **GREATER TORONTO AREA AGRICULTURAL ACTION COMMITTEE 2010 ANNUAL REPORT AND 2011 WORK PLAN**

FROM: Norma Trim, Chief Financial Officer and Commissioner of Corporate Services

OBJECTIVE

To provide a summary of the progress and activities of the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC) in 2010 and an overview of the 2011 work plan.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2010, the GTA AAC:
  - Advocated for agriculture and agri-business in the GTA by commenting on provincial and local plans, policies and budgets.
  - Collaborated with partners for the successful development and execution of new project initiatives, conferences and events which promoted agriculture and agri-business in the GTA.
  - Updated its Terms of Reference based on requested changes to the Board's membership.
  - Completed the "Profile of Agriculture and Agri-business Attributes in the GTA" and a corresponding communication plan for the study findings was developed.
- In 2011, the GTA AAC's primary focus is the development of a ten-year agriculture and agri-food strategy and action plan for the Golden Horseshoe.

DISCUSSION

1. Background

The GTA AAC was established in 2005 to facilitate and co-ordinate the collaborative efforts of GTA municipalities (Durham, Halton, Peel and York, and City of Toronto), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), GTA Federations of Agriculture and agricultural stakeholders, to implement the GTA Agricultural Action Plan.

The GTA Agricultural Action Plan identified 37 actions to address issues related to economic development, education, marketing and land use planning. The purpose of these action items is to foster a positive environment for farming in the GTA and improve the competitiveness of the industry. These actions are revisited to ensure that they are being met and continue to be relevant.

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a) Municipal Representation to the GTA AAC

Membership on the GTA AAC Board includes one member appointed from each Regional Council in the GTA. The Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario (RPCO) GTA Caucus also sits as an advisor to the GTA AAC Board to provide guidance and direction on the implementation of the GTA Agricultural Action Plan. They co-ordinate Regional staff assistance through a GTA Regional Agricultural Working Group to ensure that progress is made on Regional led action outcomes.

2. 2010 Annual Report

In 2010, the following deliverables were completed:

a) Advocacy

i) Provincial Policy Statement 5 Year Review
With support from the GTA Regional Agricultural Working Group, the GTA AAC provided comment to MMAH for the 5-year review of the Provincial Policy Statement.

ii) Planning Template for Agricultural Policy Review
At their request, the GTA Regional Agricultural Working Group created a template for the GTA AAC to utilize when responding to municipal requests for the review of local policies and plans. This was used in the GTA AAC's review of the Town of Markham's Community Sustainability Plan.

iii) Provincial Pre-Budget Submission
The GTA AAC submitted a briefing to the Province on agricultural policy and program priorities that the Government should be considering in the 2011 Ontario budget. A copy of the submission is attached as Appendix I.

b) Project Collaboration

i) Durham Farm Fresh Indoor Market
The GTA AAC provided funding to Durham Farm Fresh to support a consultant in researching demographics, site selection and to create a business plan that can be used as a template for the development of indoor farm markets in the GTA. The pilot project for this initiative is the Durham Farm Fresh Indoor Market.

ii) Greenbelt Fresh Website
On request of the Friends of the Greenbelt, the GTA AAC participated in consultations to create a website that would foster a relationship between local producers and bulk buyers. The new website will be launched in 2011 as 'greenbeltfresh.ca'.

iii) Royal Agricultural Winter Fair
In partnership with the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair Board (the Royal), the GTA AAC hosted a farmers market at the Royal. Booths were made available for the sale of locally grown produce to value-added goods. The GTA AAC will partner with organizations to host this market again at the Royal in 2011.

iv) Ontario Culinary Tourism Summit

The GTA AAC sponsored the 2010 Ontario Culinary Tourism Summit hosted by the Ontario Culinary Tourism Association. The summit focused on Ontario's food distribution system, sessions with food industry leaders and the showcase of Ontario products by celebrity chiefs. The next summit is scheduled for October 2012.

c) Change in Board Membership

The GTA AAC Board's membership is set out in its Terms of Reference. In 2010, the GTA AAC accommodated a request by the Federal and Provincial representatives to change their status on the Board from voting to non-voting members. The Terms of Reference were revised and ratified at the GTA AAC's annual meeting on March 30, 2011, to state that the Board would be comprised of:

- Four members from the four respective GTA Federations of Agriculture
- Four members from the GTA Regional Municipalities (Regional Chairs or delegates)
- One member from the City of Toronto
- One member from the Toronto Food Policy Council
- Five members-at-large appointed by the GTA AAC from the agri-food sector (e.g., processors, retailers, food service, consumers, etc.)
- One Provincial government representative (non-voting)
- One Federal government representative (non-voting)

Representation from the agri-food sector was increased to obtain a broader cross-section of the industry.

d) Profile of Agriculture and Agri-Business Attributes in the GTA

In March 2010, the GTA AAC, with partner funding from the Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance, released the study "Profile of Agriculture and Agri-business Attributes in the GTA", completed by PlanScape. Participants of the Ontario Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program assisted the GTA AAC in creating a communications plan to broadly release and promote the results of the study.

The communication plan identified opportunities and tactics to raise awareness of the GTA AAC and its role in promoting the significance, economics, issues, opportunities and challenges of the agriculture sector in the GTA.

e) Farm Tour

On July 15, 2010, the GTA AAC hosted a bus tour that showcased agriculture and agri-businesses in the GTA. The tour took participants to see Toronto food processor 'Real Food for Real Kids' and producers in the Holland Marsh. Peel Region was showcased as well:

- Armstrong Manor – A state-of-the-art dairy farm with a new Feed-In-Tariff solar installation
- Spirit Tree Cidery – A value-added orchard and cidery featuring agri-environmental stewardship practices, straw bale construction and geothermal heating

- McVean Farm – An incubator farm supporting beginning farmers at Claireville Conservation Area, created through a partnership between FarmStart and Toronto and Region Conservation

3. 2011 Work Plan

a) Country to City – City to Country Forum

The GTA AAC is exploring a partnership with Sustain Ontario and the Metcalf Foundation for an open-dialogue forum between rural and urban participants. The partnership is being confirmed and a date for the event will be set. The GTA AAC will assist with event co-ordination and communication.

b) Golden Horseshoe Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy and Action Plan

In 2010, the GTA AAC, in partnership with the Region of Niagara, the City of Hamilton and the Holland Marsh Growers Association, initiated preparation of an agriculture and agri-food strategy for the Golden Horseshoe entitled "Golden Horseshoe Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy and Action Plan" (the Strategy). The Strategy will be the primary focus of the GTA AAC for 2011.

Funding has been provided through Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program (CAAP), the GTA AAC and partner member contributions. The objective is to develop a strategy and 10-year action plan to promote and enhance the agriculture and agri-food business cluster in the Golden Horseshoe.

A steering committee has been formulated to oversee each phase of the Strategy. This steering committee is comprised of representatives from the GTA AAC, the Region of Niagara, City of Hamilton, the Holland Marsh Growers Association and the Friends of the Greenbelt.

The Strategy is being carried out in three phases:

Phase I – Background Report and Discussion Paper

Phase II – Consultations to obtain input for the Strategy

Phase III – Preparation of a 10-year Strategy and Action Plan

In January 2011, Phase I of the Strategy was released providing an examination and account of the current status of agriculture and food processing in the Golden Horseshoe. The economic analysis in the discussion paper indicates that the agriculture and agri-food cluster is large and complex involving industries from all facets of the economy. The analysis estimates that primary agricultural production and associated processing in the Golden Horseshoe amounts to more than $10 billion Gross Domestic Product (GDP) annually.

Phase II of the Strategy is underway. On March 30th, 2011, the Summit "Food & Farming: An Action Plan for 2021" was held. Over 100 participants from government, the agri-food processing industry, retailers, Non-governmental Organization's (NGO) and producers attended. Open dialogue and direction was provided so that the Strategy can articulate what is needed in terms of policy, program and organizational supports to

continue to stimulate the agri-food cluster and address issues related to farming viability in the Golden Horseshoe. Consultation will continue for Phase II through spring 2011.

The Phase III draft report is anticipated for fall 2011 with November 2011 the expected completion date. Presentations to Region Councils of the draft report will be conducted.

The GTA AAC will be hiring a public relations firm to promote outcomes of the Strategy and to assist with engaging various audiences to move actions forward.

CONCLUSION

The continuation of the GTA AAC and its implementation of the GTA Agricultural Action Plan is dependent on the on-going partnership of the Board members and new collaboration. The GTA AAC's partnership to develop the "Golden Horseshoe Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy and Action Plan" will be important for the GTA AAC in moving forward in the future. A staff report will be brought to Regional Council once the Strategy has been completed.

for Norma Trim
Chief Financial Officer
and Commissioner of Corporate Services

Approved for Submission:

D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

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c. Legislative Services

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Appendix I
Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee 2010 Annual Report and 2011 Work Plan
May 2, 2011

Budget Submission - 2011

The Greater Toronto and Area Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC) is unique partnership of both municipal and agricultural leaders and representatives of the Provincial and Federal Governments within the GTA . Our issues deal with the concept of urban and near-urban agriculture, examining how sustainable farming practices can be balanced off in the shadow of urbanization.

With nearly 700,000 residents living in the communities of the GTA, we are seeking to develop farm based and community economic development solutions to provide food, energy and bio-based inputs to the food processing cluster and consumers within Ontario and beyond our borders.

The scope of the GTA-AAC includes providing leadership and advice on such matters involving the shaping and implementation of Federal, Provincial and Regional policy programs that support the agrifood industry in the GTA.

Finally, the GTA AAC has undertaken a major project to develop a 10-Year Strategic Plan for those within this area to determine the viability of farming in the area. Economically, farmers across Canada have struggled with low commodity prices and skyrocking input costs. With increased regulation , we need to find a way to ensure that land use regulations are resolved in an amicable and timely fashion. This is something that has become increasingly difficult in the face of business expansion and urban sprawl.

While the Ministry of Finance report – Ontario's Long-Term Report on the Economy – argues that agriculture is important to the province and is the "economic backbone of many rural communities", it appears that the true economic value of the food and food processing sector is vastly underestimated in this province. During the development of a Food and Farming Strategy for the Golden Horseshoe, our research revealed some startling statistics. Agricultural production and processing in the Golden Horseshoe was over $12 billion and total output in the broader provincial and national economies was almost $35 billion, with more than $7 billion in labour income, creating or maintaining more than 212, 000 jobs in 2008.

Even though these results are conservative (ie. Wholesale, retail and foodservice was not considered) they lend substantial weight to the notion that farmland in near-urban areas of the Golden Horseshoe is something that should be protected. When the total output multipliers or spin-off effect is taken into account, primary agriculture and food

and related processing in the study area showed a total output of more than $127 billion nationally in 2005 values compared to $159 billion for the auto industry.

With most of all Class One agricultural land in Canada located in the Golden Horseshoe, it is evident that every acre that leaves food production will have a profound effect on the rest of the economy in Ontario. Agricultural lands are a finite resource. We need to ensure that this resource is managed and protected for the future.

Ontario is a net IMPORTER of food. If the borders were to close, when the countries whose names we can't pronounce stop shipping their cheaply produced food to us in order to feed their own citizens, what will we eat? Canadian farmers although less than one per cent of the population, are producing the resources to fuel the economic engine that is the food and food processing sector.

Sustainability in agriculture means not only practices that protect the future of the land resource but also an economic framework that protects the viability of future farming and food production operations. Most importantly we must recognize the value of this sector to the communities of the GTA.

Our recommendations are as follows

1. Acceptance and Implementation of a Business Risk Management (BRM) program for the edible horticultural sector

In the Golden Horseshoe region, there are 220 crops or livestock raised, grown, and harvested . The acceptance by the government of a BRM program for the grains and oilseeds sector (and the subsequent recent announcement of its renewal) gave a strong indication that there was interest in pursuing new BRM programs for the rest of the industry. Minister Carol Mitchell, asked that the collective voice for these farmers (OASC – Ontario Agricultural Sustainable Committee) bring together their proposals. The edible horticulture side, led by the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association, presented a modified Self-Directed Risk Management program (SDRM-like). This program, with minimal cost compared to the multitude of others (approximately $20 million), is the culmination of nearly a decade of effort by grassroot farmers from the fruit and vegetable industry to incorporate a program that involved both levels of government (federal and provincial) and the farmer. This program is also the easiest of all BRM program to implement and administer.

2. The Passage and Implementation of Bill 78 – Taxation Amendment Act (Food Bank Donation Tax Credit for Farmers)

This is a bill that, despite it being a private members bill, will have a huge impact not only for the farmers of the Golden Horseshoe and throughout Ontario and individuals and families who require food banks to gain access to healthy local food options.

Through the bill, farmers would be encouraged to harvest food that may otherwise be left to rot in the fields. In our opinion, this bill is a win-win for society.

Passage of this bill, through committee right now (awaiting third reading), would go a long way to fix a distribution system to the most needy in our society.

3. A Rural Secretariat To Coordinate Legislation from Ministries that Intersect with Farming and Food in the province

The development of a Rural Secretariat may seem to be a redundant governmental agency (or body) but it would be vital to both the farming community and the rural countryside. Despite opinions to the contrary, there is a rural-urban divide and the development of a Rural Secretariat (one that reports directly to the Premier's office, independent of the rest of the ministries) would co-ordinate all of the legislation with an eye to determining impacts upon the rural and farming communities.

This secretariat should have the power to review every piece of legislation affecting agriculture and food and help to remove the silo mentalities that exist in the predominantly territorial ministries, and ensure that potentially destructive legislation is examined for the real world impact it will have.

In this way, a number of items of legislation that have been passed that have greatly impacted upon the farming community in ways not imagined would have been partially or even completely averted. The Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act and the creation of the Oak Ridges Morraine, have created layers of unacknowledged red-tape and bureaucracy that continues to frustrate farmers seeking to comply.

Ontario is not Open for Business when the business of food and food processing is strangled by red tape issues not comprehended by the various governmental ministries.

It must be acknowledged that farming and food, co-exists under the realm of a minimum of 20 ministries either directly or indirectly, making it the only sector able to work under such a heavy governmental regime.

Ontario Ministries – Impacting Agriculture

Premier – Dalton McGuinty
Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs – Carol Mitchell
Minister of Education – Leona Dombrowsky
Minister of Health Promotions – Margarett Best
Attorney General – Chris Bentley
Minister of Transportation – Kathleen Wynne

Minister of Natural Resources – Linda Jeffrey
Minister of Health – Deb Matthews
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration – Eric Hoskins
Minister of Labour – Charles Sousa
Minister of Environment – John Wilkinson
Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities – John Milloy
Minister of Research and Innovation – Glen Murray
Minister of Economic Development and Trade – Sandra Pupatello
Minister of Energy and Infrastructure – Brad Duguid
Minister of Infrastructure – Bob Chiarelli
Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing – Rick Bartolucci
Minister of Revenue – Sophia Aggelontis

Proximity due to issues:

Minister Responsible for Seniors – Gerry Phillips
Minister of Finance – Dwight Duncan
Minister of Tourism – Michael Chan
Minister of Consumer Services – John Gerretsen
Minister of Community and Social Services – Madeline Meilleur

4. Understanding the farm perspective in dealing the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)

The PPS document, at its core, is about land use compatibility issues and protecting a land base. What is missing is a common definition of agriculture that all Ministries can use. In the case of provincially mandated statements, there must be an opportunity to work with stakeholders and arrive at definitions that allow for specific usages under such existing terms as "agriculture-related, agri-tourism, value-added, on-farm diversification, further processing – and a whole host of "permissions" based upon the unique requirements of the farming community.

As well, a clear definition would resolve outstanding municipal discussions (what is a greenhouse?), value-added and value-retention should be included (storing an apple or carrot is the same as grain), and MPAC would no longer be able to pick at pieces of the property in the hopes of getting more money through taxation. Value-added is a requirement for today's food and farming sectors because of the ever-changing demands of consumers and retailers. Taxing the farmer or worse, classifying the farm operation as commercial or industrial does a huge disservice to the integrity of the farmers earning a living in an underserviced countryside.

This document could do much more to promote sustainable, smart growth that looks at the realistic expectations of individuals (citizens) and corporations well into the future.

It could incorporate environmental conditions that need to be adhered towards; views of water and farmland usage that is in sync with the realities of an ever-changing landscape of climatic extremes. It could be used to address the question of using brown and grey fields, areas where manufacturing previously existed but now are abandoned with no hope of employment returning. Convert those into housing, infill as required, and work upwards – not outwards.

We would hope that such a document, advocating the absolute respect of the land, could be used as a proactive tool for smart growth in this province instead of always being reactive to situations that arise due to incompetence, neglect, or bias. Strengthen it, favour the farming side so that our future generations can enjoy the same luxury of eating as we have, and ensure that farmers – the key landowners in the province with the most at stake – are brought forward in consultation of future endeavours and land use policy discussion.

5.A Provincial-Wide Food Policy

Consumers are turning on to the idea of local food (even if that definition differs from person to person) – and they want a say in what they are consuming and where it comes from. While it is unreasonable to expect that all the food that our population requires can be grown in Ontario, the province can be instrumental in developing food policy that will encourage consumption of fresh and frozen, locally produced foods. By encouraging the demand for Ontario grown foods, infrastructure to deliver that local food to retailers, foodservice operators and consumers will be enhanced.

Provincial food procurement policies should place value on foods that are produced and processed as part of the local and provincial economies, have a reduced carbon footprint and are under the auspices of world class food safety protocols.

6 .Ensure that farmers continue to be good stewards of the land through the encouragement funding through the Environmental Farm Plan, long term leases on rented land, sustainable agricultural practices on public land

More could be done on the farm level to recognize the value provided by the province's largest land-owner base – the farming community – to enhance the environment. Farmers provide benefits to the public in providing food safety systems, environmental stewardship initiatives, protection of habitat, and preservation of the rural landscape. Sustainable agricultural practices ensure that the land base will be kept a high quality resource for generations to come.

Farmers are making contributions towards energy, biomass conversion, protecting water sources, developing environmental farm plans that showcase and highlight the conservationist nature of the industry, while, at the same time, providing food and fibre.

Credit Valley Conservation Authority is currently doing fine work on defining the value of ecological goods and services provided to society by farmers. In addition, there is a pilot project operating in Norfolk County (ALUS – Alternative Land Use Services) that provides value to farmers, benefits to society, and a huge boon to the environment – a win-win-win situation in a time when climate change and radical environmental aspects are taking place in other countries.

7. Enhanced Foodland Ontario Funding

We encourage the continued support of the Foodland Ontario Program. This campaign benefits all segments of the food sector and with the new items added in the current campaign, to include protein and other items grown in Ontario, is a constant reminder to consumers about local availability. It is the one sure fire program that seems to resonate with consumers, assist retailers in moving "local" Ontario product, and provide marketing value to farmers at minimal cost.

8.Education, Public Health and the Buy Local movement

In 2008 the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute commissioned the McGill World Platform for Health and Economic Convergence to prepare a paper on the development of an integrated health and agri-food strategy. This paper was the response to two real and impending challenges, the low income farm crisis and the rising cost of health care crisis. Although the industry faces some serious challenges, the agriculture and food and beverage processing industry in the Golden Horseshoe is now the main driving economic engine of the Province of Ontario. By working together, the healthcare system and the agri-food industry, can simultaneously improve the health of Ontarians, reduce health care budgets, stimulate agri-food innovation and improve the economic viability of the agricultural industry. Through strategic public and private sector partnerships and creative policy, safe, nutritious and accessible food, healthy eating habits, innovation and economic sustainability will be achieved.

A major emphasis needs to be placed upon the education of consumers regarding food and food options, starting at the primary education system level and moving into the community through Public Health Units. Food Literacy skills have disappeared for many parents and their children as families balance work, schools and after school activities. Our take-out society have been raised on empty calories and high fat choices when there are other healthier alternatives available.

Our goal should be well-informed consumers, eating healthy foods, following healthy habits that will relieve the burden to our healthcare system - a proactive approach to what we do.

Wal-Mart (America) recently announced that, as a major retailer, they agree that ALL citizens should have access to fresh fruits and vegetables and that this corporation will do everything it can to assist in the process of providing affordable health – this must be applauded. The unfortunate corollary effect that goes with this announcement is that Wal-Mart (America) also announced that it would lower the prices of fresh produce by a billion dollars a year annually. Instead of increasing the incomes of farmers all over the world, this announcement will put increased pressure on unsustainable production.

Educating consumers of the value of eating healthy foods and portions is a proactive approach to obesity in our society. The long term benefit will be reduced healthcare costs and higher quality of life for our citizens

Increasing food literacy would allow for a number of initiatives being proposed by other like-minded urban organizations, such as:

- Plant Urban Ontario
- Initiatives by the Toronto Food Policy Committee
- Implementation of a school food program (akin to the one run by the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association in the Northern School program), while embedding food literacy in the curriculum
- Ensure food security for all communities, while recognizing the link between good food and good health

9. *Establish local food infrastructure through regional food clusters, including a proposal that the Holland Marsh Growers' Association has written regarding the need for a regional distribution centre*

The Holland Marsh Growers' Association is working towards building farmer and farmer product capacity for the development of a Regional Food Distribution Centre. The HMGA believes that such a project would not only benefit farmers in the region by developing a sustainable market for their product but lead to the creation of new jobs at the facility and build into the long-term goal of sustainable agriculture in the area. Food product would be in three sub-sections – organic, Local Food Plus (LFP) certified, and conventional.

This project is about capacity building of farmers and farm products. It is about ensuring that farmers have a secure marketplace for their products, that retailers have access and diversity of locally produced products.

A Regional food "Hub" would assist Ontario farmers in recapturing market share from imported products in an increasingly monopolized retail sector. When the economic

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conditions that improve for farmers by gaining new/old markets, this economic benefit passes through the community.

We believe that farming in the greater areas of Toronto is vital to the continued economic value in Ontario – and for the benefit of the citizens, who have bestowed their faith in our farmers. But, given that the age of farmers in this area is pushing an average of 60; given the land development pressures being exerted onto farmers through a multitude of municipalities, developers, even local residents; and given that governments tend to ignore the fact that farming does, indeed, take place within the shadows of the country's largest city; we need to make sure that there is a viable, practical, and sustainable industry now and for decades to come.

As has been seen in countries throughout the world, food, water, and land use are all of primary importance and will continue to be so in the future. The GTA AAC acknowledges that urban sprawl, massive development, and an influx of populous (whether from rural areas, other provinces, or through immigration) will continue – but it should be clearly noted that the best land in Canada is now under pavement and diminishing, even eliminating our finite resource will lead to unforeseen problems for future generations.

Thank you for consideration of these issues.

Sincerely

Nick Ferri
Chair
Greater Toronto Area
Agriculture Action Committee