
For Information

REPORT TITLE: Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group Update and Related Initiatives

FROM: Kealy Dedman, Commissioner of Public Works

OBJECTIVE

To provide an update on the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group, the Peel Rural Water Quality Program, the Alternative Land Use System Peel Pilot, Grown in Peel Local Food Guide and the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2021 the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group:
 - Reviewed and commented on the Regional Official Plan Peel 2051 draft policies and mapping;
 - Approved Peel Rural Water Quality Program grants totaling \$47,600 supporting 10 on-farm stewardship projects and leveraging an additional \$95,000 in funding; and,
 - Assisted in the development of the Alternative Land Use System (ALUS) Peel Pilot Project and program guidelines.
 - In 2022, the Memorandum of Understanding between the Region of Peel, ALUS Canada, Credit Valley Conservation and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority was signed, launching the ALUS Peel Pilot which will complement the existing Peel Rural Water Quality Program, increasing support for on-farm environmental stewardship projects at no additional cost to the Region.
 - The Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance and the Region of Peel continue to collaborate on agriculture and agri-food initiatives relevant to the Region.
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DISCUSSION

1. Background

The Region of Peel recognizes the contributions of the agricultural sector to the local economy, to environmental conservation and to the cultural heritage of the Region. In 1997, the Region established the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (“PAAWG”) to act as an advisory body to Regional Council and to build closer connections to the farming community. A 2020 study by the Greenbelt Foundation found that such advisory bodies play an important role helping to facilitate the exchange of information between municipalities and the agricultural sector and a better understanding of the issues facing farmers.

Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group Update and Related Initiatives

This report provides summaries of PAAWG's activities in 2021, the Peel Rural Water Quality Program ("PRWQP"), the Alternative Land Use Services Peel Pilot ("ALUS Peel"), which launched in 2022, the Grown in Peel local food guide and the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance ("GHFFA"), which is supported with funding from the Region of Peel and other partners.

2. Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group

PAAWG is appointed by Council to assist the Region in protecting agricultural lands and supporting the agricultural industry in Peel. Its membership consists of three Regional or Local Municipal Councillors plus nine additional members representing a range of agricultural interests in Peel. PAAWG continued its regular schedule of meeting during COVID-19, holding virtual meetings.

PAAWG keeps the Region informed of issues and concerns of the agricultural community and provides the agricultural sector with an opportunity to learn about and provide input to regional initiatives. The Working Group played a major role in helping develop the Peel ALUS Pilot and providing input to the Peel 2051 Regional Official Plan and contributes to the Region's efforts to achieve its agricultural goals, objectives and policies.

a) 2021 Programs and Projects

i) Peel 2051 Regional Official Plan Review

PAAWG was provided with regular updates on the Peel 2051 Regional Official Plan Review. It received presentations and provided comments on:

- Agricultural and Rural Systems Policies and Mapping;
- Greenlands System Policies and Mapping; and,
- The Settlement Area Boundary Expansion Study (SABE), with a focus on the Agricultural Impact Assessment component of the Study.

ii) Peel Rural Water Quality Program

The Region, in partnership with Credit Valley Conservation ("CVC") and Toronto and Region Conservation Authority ("TRCA"), has implemented the PRWQP since 2004. The PRWQP provides technical and financial resources to farmers to encourage stewardship focused on protecting and enhancing water quality and the natural environment. PAAWG is the approval authority for grant applications submitted under the program.

In 2021, PAAWG approved approximately \$47,600 in grants supporting the implementation of 10 voluntary farm stewardship projects. The grants leveraged an additional \$95,000 from project proponents and other funders (e.g., Provincial Species at Risk Stewardship Program, Conservation Authority restoration services, etc.) to help complete these projects. The projects included tree planting, cover crop, erosion control, nutrient management, livestock fencing and public education on agricultural practices in Peel Region, to protect watercourses and other environmentally sensitive features. Appendix I provides more information about the program's accomplishments.

Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group Update and Related Initiatives

iii) Grown in Peel

The Grown in Peel Local Food Guide has been published by the Region since 2006. It is a joint initiative with the Planning and Development Services Division and Peel's Healthy Eating Team within the Region's Health Services Department.

Grown in Peel is a local food marketing initiative to promote local agriculture, connect residents to the farmers who produce their food, and increase residents' access to safe, healthy and affordable food in Peel Region. Grown in Peel displays information about participating farms and Farmers' markets, lists the products sold at each farm and farmer's market, and provides information about healthy eating.

The Grown in Peel program was paused in March 2020 due to COVID-19 redeployments of staff. The Guide is being relaunched in May 2022 with a new, online format for the 2022 farm and farm market year.

iv) Other Topics

The following additional topics and projects in 2021 were reviewed by PAAWG for discussion and feedback.

- Refresh of the Grown in Peel Local Food Guide program and website
- Approval of ALUS Peel program guidelines and funding application review process
- Brampton Stormwater Charge By-law
- Town of Caledon Official Plan Review – Agricultural Trends Study
- Farm Etiquette Awareness Communication Campaign
- Toronto and Region Conservation Authority – Draft Update to TRCA Agricultural Land Policy for TRCA owned Lands
- Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance – Draft Event Barn Position Paper
- Town of Caledon Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments respecting cannabis cultivation
- Ontario Soil Online Road Trip – enabling farmers to learn about soil conservation practices on farms in Peel and across Ontario.

b) 2022 PAAWG Work Plan

The following action items have been identified in the 2022 PAAWG work plan. Appendix II provides more detailed information about the work plan.

Policy Research, Development and Monitoring

- Peel 2051 Regional Official Plan Review – updates on statutory consultation, adoption and Provincial approval of the new Region of Peel Official Plan;
- Local Municipal Official Plan Reviews;
- Review of the Toronto and Region Conservation's Natural Heritage System and Water Resource System Update and Mapping;
- Review of the Agricultural Census 2021 release; and,
- Review of the release of Provincial Agricultural Impact Assessment guidelines.

Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group Update and Related Initiatives

Policy and Program Implementation

- Review and approval of PRWQP funding applications;
- Review and approval of the ALUS Peel projects;
- Participate in and provide advice on the Grown in Peel local food guide;
- Implementation of Peel 2051 Regional Official Plan related projects and programming; and,
- Participate in action items identified in the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan.

Regional Projects and Initiatives

- Advise on opportunities to develop an agriculture and agri-food strategy;
- Support the Peel Food Action Council and implementation of the Peel Food Charter;
- Review and comment on proposed Regional capital infrastructure development projects and initiatives; and,
- Review and comment on partner (e.g., Conservation Authority, Local Municipal, etc.) programs and projects impacting Peel's agricultural community

Communication and Outreach

- Assist in developing Peel Region farm tours (pending COVID-19) and other communication and outreach initiatives

3. ALUS Peel Pilot

a) Background

ALUS Canada is a Canadian non-profit organization that works with farmers to restore natural habitat and provide erosion control and flood mitigation on marginal farmland by providing annual financial support to farmers through local, community-led programs.

ALUS Canada shares many of the goals and principles of the PRWQP. Like the PRWQP, ALUS focuses on supporting voluntary stewardship among farmers, with farmers playing a key role in designing and delivering the program at the community level.

In May 2021, Regional Council endorsed a three-year ALUS Peel Pilot and authorized the Commissioner of Public Works to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ALUS Canada, CVC and the TRCA to implement the ALUS Peel Pilot. In 2022, the MOU was signed, creating the first partnership of its kind in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, reflecting the Region's leadership in supporting the environmental stewardship work of farmers.

b) The ALUS Peel Pilot

Through the MOU, ALUS Canada has committed a minimum level of base funding of \$164,500 over the three years of the pilot. The funding provided by ALUS Canada will, at a minimum, cover the costs of annual payments to farmers for natural habitat restoration projects. In 2021, ALUS Canada received partner funding in the amount of \$54,500 from the Greenbelt Foundation for the first year of the pilot.

PAAWG supports the ALUS Peel Pilot and will provide advice to staff on the implementation of the program as well as approve funding for project applications. In 2021, PAAWG

Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group Update and Related Initiatives

assisted in the development of the ALUS Peel program guidelines and the program was launched to Peel's agricultural community in March 2022.

Staff will report back on the outcomes of ALUS Peel with recommendations on whether to extend the pilot beyond the initial three-year term.

4. Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance

The GHFFA was formed in 2012 as a partnership among the Regional Municipalities and Federations of Agriculture in the Golden Horseshoe and the single tier municipalities of Hamilton and Toronto. The GHFFA also includes representation from other stakeholders such as the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Greenbelt Foundation and colleges and universities with an interest in agriculture and food.

In 2020, the GHFFA developed a new Action Plan to guide the GHFFA over the next five years, from 2021 to 2026. The agri-food system in the Golden Horseshoe is facing new challenges with COVID-19, unprecedented levels of food insecurity, the urgency of climate change, labour issues and supply-chain disruptions adding to the existing pressures on the system. The new Action Plan has the following goals with priority actions attached to each:

- The GHFFA is recognized as the leading organization with expertise on food and farming issues and opportunities in the Golden Horseshoe Region of Ontario;
- Establish the Golden Horseshoe as Canada's leading innovative agriculture and agri-food cluster; and,
- Enable the agri-food cluster to support sustainability outcomes.

Each municipal partner has supported the GHFFA and the implementation of the Action Plan through in-kind staff time and a financial contribution of \$30,000 per year. The funding provided by the municipal partners assists in leveraging provincial and other funding to implement the Action Plan. Through this collaboration, the Region is able to cost-share and leverage resources on projects having greater impact to the Region and the regional agricultural system.

a) Accomplishments 2021

During 2021, the GHFFA undertook the following in support of the Action Plan:

- Updated "ConnectON" (formerly the agri-asset mapping) to include the Golden Horseshoe's connections to the agricultural system with the municipalities in Northern Ontario;
- Completion of the "Serving Up Local 2" initiative to increase the amount of local food procured in municipally owned long-term care facilities;
- Provided comment to the Province on:
 - Growing of the Greenbelt Plan area across the Golden Horseshoe; and,
 - Provincial use of Ministerial Zoning Orders.
- Continued sharing of best practices in economic development and land use planning among staff members of the partner municipalities (e.g., presentations on ALUS Peel, City of Toronto food hall incubator project, York and Durham Region's new farmer initiative, etc.);
- Released a draft position paper on "Event Barns as On-Farm Diversified Uses" and consulted with the Regional agricultural advisory groups; and,
- Hosted a training for municipalities staff on land use planning for cannabis production.

Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group Update and Related Initiatives

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The PRWQP, with an annual grant budget of \$75,000, provides direct grants to farmers undertaking approved environmental stewardship projects funded from CVC and TRCA Special Levy projects. ALUS Peel will not result in additional costs to the Region or the Conservation Authorities.

The Region has been supporting the GHFFA through its annual operating budget of \$30,000 since 2014. This funding was approved by Regional Council to continue for a period of five years from 2022 to 2026, the term of the GHFFA's new Action Plan, subject to annual Regional Council Budget approvals.

CONCLUSION

The Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group and the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance facilitate and enhance relationships between the Region and agricultural groups, other municipalities and stakeholders within Peel Region, across the Golden Horseshoe and with the Province. Both organizations make important contributions supporting farmers and the agricultural system in Peel Region. The ALUS Peel Pilot complements the existing Peel Rural Water Quality Program, providing incentives for farmers to increase their environmental stewardship activities. The Grown in Peel Local Food Guide continues to connect Peel residents to Peel's vibrant agricultural business promoting local food access opportunities.

APPENDICES

Appendix I - Peel Rural Water Quality Program 2021 Status Report

Appendix II - Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group 2022 Work Plan

Authored By: Melanie Williams, Principal Planner



Kealy Dedman, Commissioner of Public Works



Memo

To: Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group

From: Mark Eastman, Credit Valley Conservation
Patrick Esson, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority

Date: January 13, 2022

Re: Peel Rural Water Quality Program – 2021 Status Report

The year 2021 marked the seventeenth complete program year for the Peel Rural Water Quality Program (PRWQP). This status report summarizes the program's accomplishments over the past seventeen years, with an emphasis placed on the 2021 program year.

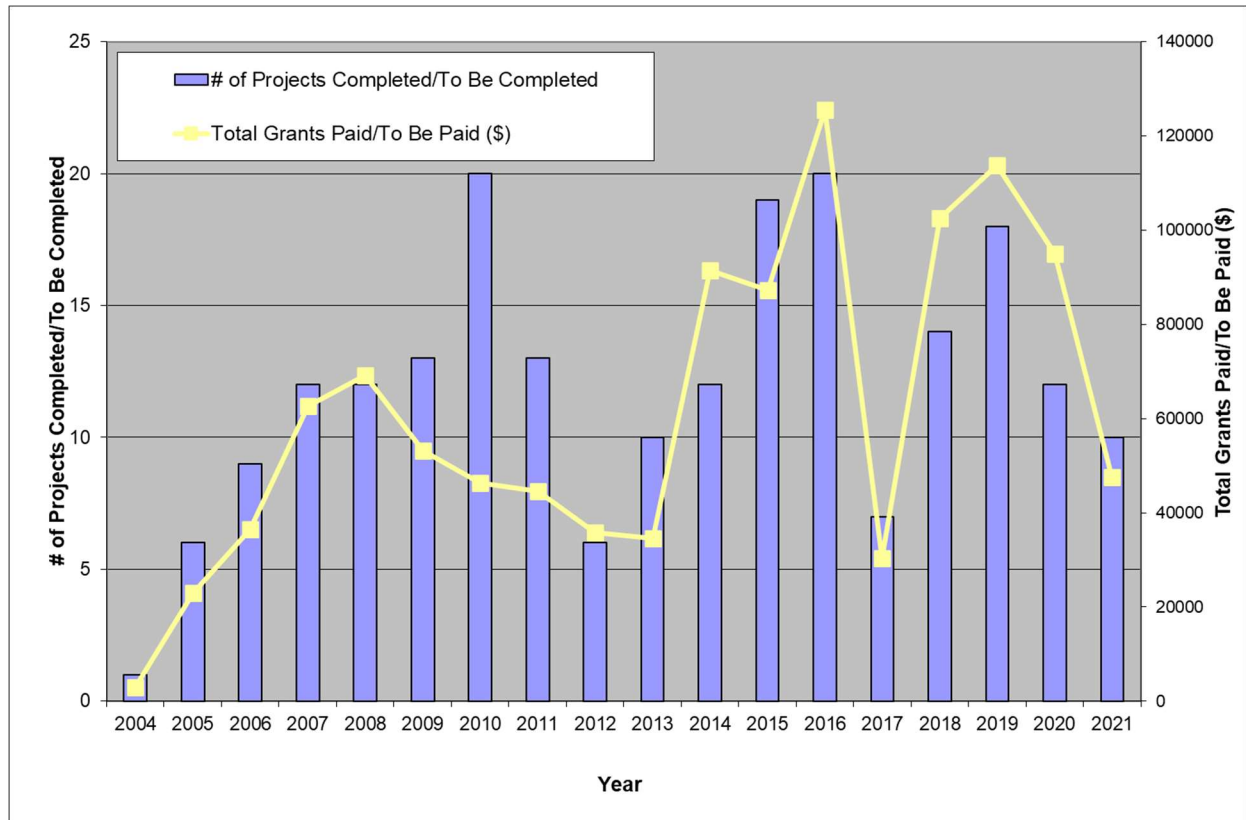
Types and Number of projects approved in 2021:

Cover Crop	1
Education and Training	3
Erosion Control Structure	1
Livestock Access Restriction	1
Nutrient Management Plan	1
Tree Planting	3
TOTAL PROJECTS APPROVED	10

Grants paid and/or to be paid on 2021 projects: \$47,592.36

Annual program activity:

In 2021, ten projects were approved, and three of these projects have been completed to date. Total grants paid/to be paid is \$47,592.36. This financial support has leveraged an additional \$94,910.88 from project proponents and other funders to assist with the completion of these ten projects. The graph below illustrates the programs performance for each year since 2004.



Notes: -2004 was not a complete program year.
 -Statistical discrepancies between annual status reports are a result of approved projects not proceeding with construction, therefore resulting in a withdrawal of applications.

As illustrated by the graph, the number of completed/to be completed projects and total grants paid/to be paid were the lowest recorded since 2017. The 10 projects completed/to be completed in the 2021 program year fell just below the long-term average of 12 projects per year. The 2021 grants paid/to be paid was \$47,592.36 which was less than the long-term average of \$61,212.00.

Program stakeholders agreed that the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to increased farm business operational and financial stress, making it difficult for farmers to advance agri-environmental projects that are often seen as ancillary to the core operations of the farm business. In addition, any outreach that involved person-to-person contact such as workshops, farm tours, and/or door-to-door outreach were not possible due to government sanctioned pandemic restrictions. Despite these limitations, however, program staff remained accessible for program inquiries and site visits with interested applicants (site visits followed current COVID-19 Protocols).

Program accomplishments:

Between 2004 and 2021, the PRWQP has engaged 82 individual farm businesses and has paid/allocated a total of \$1,101,817.47 in funding towards 214 agri-environmental projects.

These funds have leveraged an additional \$3,693,145.88 to contribute to the completion of projects valued at \$4,794,963.35.

Environmental benefits of BMPs:

Over the past seventeen years, agri-environmental projects completed with technical and financial assistance from the PRWQP have helped to:

Safely store 377,290m³ of livestock manure to reduce the risk of nutrient, pathogen and bacteria contaminating drinking water, streams, and wetlands.



This equates to 47,161 dump trucks of manure!

Install 21.97 km of livestock fencing to improve the habitat quality of our streams, wetlands, and woodlots and to reduce water quality impacts caused by sediment, nutrient, and pathogen/bacteria.



Plant 69,370 trees and shrubs to restore degraded habitats, reduce erosion, and to sequester carbon dioxide.



Restore, protect and/or manage 393 ha of land to improve water, air, soil, and habitat quality.



This is an area equal to 707 football fields!

In 2021, program promotion included:

- a newspaper advertisement placed in the Caledon Enterprise newspaper
- a post-card promoting erosion control was distributed to farmers using Canada Post's Unaddressed Admail Service.
- two Rural Water Quality Program radio ad campaigns promoting the Rural Water Quality Program were run on Erin Radio (listenership in Peel); and,
- Over 10 social media posts were released throughout the year.

Staff encourage Peel Agriculture Advisory Working Group members to continue promoting the program to friends, neighbours, and peers. Peer-to-peer promotion of the program is the best form of advertisement, and we depend on you to help spread the word. This is especially important given the arrival of the ALUS Peel Pilot. This Pilot has set ambitious acreage targets and staff need your help with promoting this limited opportunity.

If you have any questions regarding the 2021 program year, please contact Program staff.

Sincerely,



Mark Eastman

Credit Valley Conservation



Patrick Esson

Toronto and Region Conservation

PEEL AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY WORKING GROUP

2022 WORK PLAN

Category	Description of Activities	Action Items
<p>Policy Research, Development & Monitoring</p>	<p>Provide ongoing input, comment and advice to the Region of Peel on policy research, development and monitoring initiatives for agricultural, agricultural-related issues and rural matters, with a view to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Protect prime agricultural lands from non-conforming agricultural uses, lot fragmentation and loss of the agricultural land base b) Enhance the financial viability of the Region’s agricultural sector c) Promote practices of good agricultural land stewardship and provision of Ecological Goods & Services d) Support agricultural practices that promote on-farm diversity and innovation e) Foster a just, sustainable and secure food system f) Policy research, development and monitoring <p><i>Example of Areas for Comment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Region of Peel Official Plan • Region of Peel Climate Change Strategy • Local official plan reviews • Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan • Provincial Acts, Regulations and Plans • Environmental Registry of Ontario postings • Public health initiatives and programs <p>Any other relevant policy matters affecting the agricultural sector in</p>	<p><u>Peel 2051 Regional Official Plan Review</u> Support and comment on the final review and approval of the Regional Official Plan, specifically on the Agriculture System, Greenlands System, Settlement Area Boundary Expansion and Aggregates components of Peel 2051 as they advance through Council adoption and Provincial approval steps.</p> <p><u>Local Municipal Official Plan Review</u> Support the Region’s review of the Local Municipal Official Plan reviews, specifically on the Agriculture System and Natural Heritage System components.</p> <p><u>Agricultural Census 2021</u> Provide comment on trends and statistical data from the release of the Agricultural Census 2021.</p> <p><u>Provincial Release of Agricultural Impact Assessment Guidelines</u> Review and provide comment on the Regional and Local Municipal implementation of provincial Agricultural Impact Assessment guidelines and development of guidelines for</p>

PEEL AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY WORKING GROUP

2022 WORK PLAN

Category	Description of Activities	Action Items
	the Region of Peel.	non-farm development, including edge planning for farming.
Policy and Program Implementation Initiatives (see also PRWQP, ALUS Peel Pilot and Support Agri-Food & Agri-Business Opportunities categories below)	Provide guidance to support the development of programs and tools that implement the Peel 2051 policies.	<p><u>Peel 2051 Implementation</u> Advise on the development of programs and tools to support the Agricultural System and Greenlands Systems in Peel Region and the implementation of the Regional Official Plan policies.</p> <p><u>Urban Agriculture Guidance</u> Provide guidance to the development of guidelines or protocols to provide more detailed direction on the implementation of the Regional Official Plan urban agricultural policies.</p>
Peel Rural Water Quality Program and the Peel ALUS Pilot Project	<p>Provide guidance to Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) and Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) staff on the implementation of their jointly administered Peel Rural Water Quality Program (PRWQP) and the Peel ALUS Pilot Project.</p> <p>Advise and assist CVC and TRCA in administering PRWQP funds on a priority basis in accordance with the PRWQP guidelines.</p>	<p>Review and provide advice on the delivery of the ALUS Peel Pilot Project (e.g., program guidelines, budget, community engagement and communications).</p> <p>Review and approve PRWQP Water Quality Improvement and ALUS Peel Pilot applications and corresponding project funding.</p>

PEEL AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY WORKING GROUP

2022 WORK PLAN

Category	Description of Activities	Action Items
	<p>Represent the ALUS Peel Pilot ALUS Participant Advisory Committee and provide approval in administering ALUS Peel Pilot funds on priority basis in accordance with the ALUS Peel Pilot guidelines.</p> <p>Support the Region of Peel Source Water Protection Incentive Program.</p>	<p>Review and provide advice on projects submitted to the Source Water Protection Incentive Program.</p>
<p>Support Agri-Food & Agri-Business Opportunities</p>	<p>Strengthen partnerships with the local municipalities to promote agricultural and related industry, activities and land uses in Peel Region.</p> <p>Support opportunities related to agri-food and agri-business in Peel Region.</p> <p>Contribute to and comment on research into direct and indirect opportunities aimed at the enhancement of profitability of the agriculture industry for both the Region of Peel and the greater agriculture and agri-food network which supports the Region’s agricultural sector.</p> <p>Support research and development in emerging areas of the agricultural sector.</p> <p>Support opportunities that enable the Region’s agricultural sector to meet changing demographics and emerging social, health and economic patterns within Peel Region.</p>	<p><u>Grown in Peel Relaunch</u> Participate in the relaunch of ‘Grown in Peel’ in 2022 and provide direction to the development of the 2023 ‘Grown In Peel’ program.</p> <p>Promote, through your organizations, local farms, farmers’ markets and agri-tourism through the promotion of the ‘Grown in Peel’ guide and website.</p> <p><u>Agricultural and Agri-Food Strategy</u> Working with the Town of Caledon and Local Municipalities, advise on opportunities to develop a strategy to support the viability of the agriculture and agri-food sector in Peel Region.</p>

PEEL AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY WORKING GROUP

2022 WORK PLAN

Category	Description of Activities	Action Items
	<p>Provide comment on the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan and corresponding action items/activities/projects in Peel Region.</p>	<p><u>Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan</u> Participate in and comment on action items/activities/projects identified in the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan, as they correspond to Peel Region.</p> <p><u>Peel Food Charter and Peel Food Action Council</u> Support the Peel Food Action Council and the implementation of the Peel Food Charter. Work jointly on initiatives to integrate food systems planning, land use planning and economic development planning.</p>
<p>Regional Projects & Initiatives</p>	<p>Review and comment on proposed Regional capital development projects that may affect Peel Region’s agricultural sector, e.g. Regional roads and infrastructure.</p> <p>Review and comment on proposed Regional initiatives that may provide opportunities for Peel Region’s agricultural sector (e.g. Snow Fence programs, Long-Range Transportation Plan, Food Waste, etc.).</p> <p>Review and comment on Region of Peel food system planning initiatives (e.g., local food procurement in long term care homes, guidance for built environments to improve access to fresh, healthy food, urban agriculture research to improve public health, food and</p>	<p>Review and comment on proposed Regional capital infrastructure development projects and initiatives.</p> <p>Identify keynote speakers and/or topics of interest for agendas. Topics are to be identified and confirmed subject to need and agenda priorities.</p>

PEEL AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY WORKING GROUP
2022 WORK PLAN

Category	Description of Activities	Action Items
	nutrition).	
Communication & Outreach	<p>Collaborate with agricultural focused organizations (e.g., Peel Federation of Agriculture, Peel Soil and Crop Improvement Association, Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Alliance, etc.) for information-sharing.</p> <p>Support annual tours showcasing agriculture in Peel Region.</p>	<p><u>Peel Farm Tour</u> Assist in developing or recommending content, topics and speaker ideas for Peel Region farm tours and other communication and outreach initiatives (COVID Pending).</p> <p>Continue to establish working relationships and dialogue with Regional and Local Municipal partners on agriculture and agri-food matters of mutual interest (e.g., agricultural actions in climate change strategies, etc.)</p> <p><u>Training</u> Attend workshops and similar opportunities as a PAAWG representative to bring new areas of knowledge and expertise to the working group to meet the goals established in the PAAWG Terms of Reference and Work Plan.</p>