
For Information

DATE: May 31, 2016

REPORT TITLE: **PEEL AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY WORKING GROUP, GREATER TORONTO AREA AGRICULTURE ACTION COMMITTEE AND GOLDEN HORSESHOE FOOD & FARMING ALLIANCE ANNUAL UPDATE**

FROM: Lorraine Graham-Watson, Commissioner of Corporate Services

OBJECTIVE

To provide an annual update on the Region of Peel's Agricultural Advisory Working Group, the Greater Toronto Area Agriculture Action Committee and the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- In 2015 the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group:
 - Collaborated on the development of the 2015 Grown in Peel guide
 - Reviewed and commented on the Region of Peel's programs and initiatives providing input to the Region of Peel Official Plan Review
 - Approved Peel Rural Water Quality Program cost-share grants, allocating \$102,577 to 21 rural water quality projects
- Over the same time period, the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee and the Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Alliance has initiated and completed strategic projects to implement the 'Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Action Plan: 2021'
- Initial research by the Alliance has provided a better understanding of the regional agricultural and food system influencing Peel Region
- The strategic multiple partner approach enables the Region to better understand and respond to agricultural issues from a broader regional food and agricultural system perspective.

1. Background

The Region of Peel (Region) recognizes and values the contribution of the agricultural sector to the local economy and cultural heritage of the Region. As such, in 1997 the Region established the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group (PAAWG) to create a closer link between the agricultural community and the Region.

The Region is also partner to two organizations that support broader collaboration among regional agricultural interests: the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC) and the Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Alliance (GHFFA).

2. Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group

PAAWG is a working group appointed by Regional Council to assist Peel in its efforts to protect agricultural and rural lands, support farming and promote the importance of the agricultural industry to the region. PAAWG keeps the Region informed of issues and concerns of the agricultural community. It plays a major role in providing input to the Regional Official Plan and contributes to the Region's efforts in achieving its agricultural goals, objectives and policies.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs encourages the formation of Local Advisory Committees for the purposes of consultation and community engagement on agriculture and rural issues. Examples of similar agricultural committees include those at the Regions of Halton, Durham and York.

Currently, based on appointments made by Regional Council in 2015, PAAWG is comprised of one political representative, Councillor Innis, and nine public volunteers who are appointed for a four-year Term of Council. Volunteers represent farming organizations as well as food and farming sector representatives within Peel.

a) 2015 PAAWG Programs and Projects

i. Peel Rural Water Quality Program

The Region, in partnership with Credit Valley Conservation and Toronto and Region Conservation, implemented the Peel Rural Water Quality Program (PRWQP) in 2004. This program provides technical and financial resources to landowners to encourage stewardship efforts focused on protecting and enhancing water quality and the natural environment in near-urban rural areas. PAAWG plays a critical role in the PRWQP grant allocation decision-making process through their agricultural and environmental expertise.

In 2015, the PRWQP had the highest number of projects approved in its eleven year program history. This success can be attributed to increased participation from the field crop sector; specifically in the category of cover crops. For 2015, \$102,577 in grants was approved to support the implementation of projects. An additional \$89,731 was leveraged from project proponents and other funders to assist with the completion of these projects.

Since 2004, the PRWQP has allocated a total of \$619,849 in cost-share grant funding towards 136 agri-environmental projects. These projects have a total value of just over \$4.1 million in on-farm stewardship enhancements in Peel.

Promotion of the PRWQP continued throughout 2015 at agricultural fairs and conferences, regional agricultural workshops and demonstration tours, and through local media and agricultural associations. Program staff also completed a redesign of the program brochure to reflect the expanded scope of the program, new categories and corresponding grant rates/caps that were approved in 2014.

A detailed performance summary for the PRWQP is attached as Appendix I.

ii. Grown in Peel Guide

PAAWG representatives continued to collaborate with Integrated Planning and Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention Division staff to develop the 2015 Grown in Peel Guide. The Grown in Peel Guide promotes local farms, retailers and farmers' markets.

Approximately 24,700 copies of the 2015 edition were distributed across the Peel Region with the help of over 100 community partners including local municipalities, Regional Councillors, educational institutions and agricultural associations. An expanded version of the Guide also continues to be available online at GrownInPeel.ca. The 2016 Guide was recently released and can also be found on the noted website.

iii. Special Topics

PAAWG was consulted on a variety of special topics, including:

- Region of Peel and Town of Caledon joint Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) Study to identify prime agricultural areas in Peel
- Region of Peel and Town of Caledon joint Edge Planning for Agriculture Discussion Paper
- Climate Change Vulnerability Risk Assessment for Agriculture
- Region of Peel Snow Fencing Program
- Proposed Food Charter developed by the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy's Food Security Task Force
- Provincial Co-ordinated Plans Review
- Food and Place – Exploring the relationship between the built environment and eating behaviour

b) 2016 PAAWG Work Plan

The 2015/2016 PAAWG work plan was reviewed by members to confirm the current work priorities for staff. The following action items remain as current priorities in the work plan:

Policy Research and Development:

- Peel 2041 Regional Official Plan Review: Agriculture Focus Area
- Land Evaluation and Area Review Study - finalize review and endorsement
- Edge Planning for Agriculture - continue advisory role
- Coordinated Plans Review – consultation and advice on provincial amendments
- Peel Food Charter and Food Task Force – advice and support of final charter

Peel Rural Water Quality Program:

- Review and approval of PRWQP funding applications

Support Agri-Food and Agri-Business:

- Participate on the 'Grown in Peel' Working Group and provide direction to the 'Grown in Peel Program'
- Assist in developing Peel Region Farm Tour

3. The Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee

The Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC) was established in 2005 to implement the GTA Agricultural Action Plan to foster a positive environment for farming and improve the competitiveness of the industry by addressing local issues related to economic development, education, marketing and land use planning. The Plan can be found at: rpco.ca/files/GTA_Agricultural_Action_Plan.pdf

The GTA AAC is composed of the GTA regional municipalities, agriculture and food related associations, and Provincial ministries. Regional staff attends meetings in an advisory capacity to provide advice on matters relevant to Peel and the GTA. Councillor Shaughnessy is Regional Council's representative on the GTA AAC.

a) Update on the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee

In 2015, the GTA AAC reviewed its role and mandate in relation to ongoing agricultural interests and needs within the GTA, the implementation of the 'Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Action Plan: 2021', and the role and function of the GHFFA. This resulted in updated terms of reference in July 2015.

The GTA AAC scope of activities is now more focused on advocacy, issues resolution, advice and knowledge sharing on matters related to agriculture in the GTA. Both the GTA AAC and GHFFA work together in their respective roles to support and implement the Action Plan. The GTA AAC's composition of predominantly representatives from the GTA federations of agriculture, industry and government enable it to continue to have a strong voice and influence to advance projects identified through the Action Plan in collaboration with the GHFFA. The GTA AAC continued to comment and provide public awareness on agricultural issues that reflect the needs of its membership. Recent topics of interest to the GTA AAC included the Provincial Coordinated Plans Review, Municipal Property Assessment Corporation's (MPAC) property evaluation and assessment of agricultural lands and agricultural systems planning.

4. The Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance

In 2012, the GHFFA was formed to implement the 'Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Action Plan: 2021' (Action Plan). The Action Plan was endorsed by each Region in the Golden Horseshoe and the Cities of Toronto and Hamilton. The Action Plan is posted on the GHFFA webpage at foodandfarming.ca/food-and-farming-action-plan/.

The GHFFA is comprised of a Council representative from each of the Golden Horseshoe Regions, and the Cities of Hamilton and Toronto. There is also representation from agriculture related industry associations, non-profits and other stakeholders. Mayor Thompson is Regional Council's representative to the Alliance. This multiple partner approach enables the Region to better understand and respond to agricultural issues from a broader regional food and agricultural system perspective.

Municipal partners each support the implementation of the Action Plan through in-kind staff time and a financial commitment of \$30,000 per year over 5 years (2014-2018). The municipal partner funding assists in leveraging provincial and other partner funding to further enable implementation of the Action Plan. Through this collaboration, the

10.1-5
PAAWG, GTA AAC AND GHFFA ANNUAL REPORT

Region is able to cost-share and leverage resources on projects having greater impact to the Region and the regional agricultural system.

a) Update on the Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Alliance

i. 2014 & 2015 Implementation and Support of the Action Plan

The achievements of the GHFFA in 2014 & 2015 include projects, outreach and engagement initiatives and communications.

Projects:

- Food and Farming Asset Mapping Phase I - project to map agri-food supply chain assets across the Golden Horseshoe
- Municipal Local Food Procurement Phase I - initiative to assist municipalities in implementing local food procurement policies
- Golden Horseshoe Agriculture and Agri-Food Profile Study

Significant engagement initiatives:

- Queens' Park Day 2014 to engage Ministers and MPP's on the Action Plan and the food & farming sector in the Golden Horseshoe
- Agriculture value-added workshop series for planners and economic developers
- 'Linking Food, Farming & Health' annual meeting with Public Health

Engagement, policy review and communication initiatives:

- Response to Parks Canada's Management Strategy for the Rouge Park
- Response to the Provincial Co-ordinated Plans Review and associated Advisory Panel report
- Online e-newsletters and stories showcasing agriculture in the Golden Horseshoe. This included articles on activities within Peel Region.

b) 2016 Implementation and Support of the Action Plan

The GHFFA has identified several priority activities for 2016 which aim to complete several long-term projects, continue with successful outreach and engagement initiatives, and provide response to important provincial policy and plan reviews.

Projects:

- Food and Farming Asset Mapping Phase II
- Municipal Local Food Procurement Phase II
- City-Region Food System Assessment Project partnership to develop indicators of resilient agriculture systems
- Climate change and agricultural beneficial management practices with the TRCA and the Ontario Climate Consortium
- Development of a Report Card to demonstrate progress towards achieving the goals of the Action Plan

10.1-6
PAAWG, GTA AAC AND GHFFA ANNUAL REPORT

Engagement, policy review and communication initiatives:

- Queen's Park Day, held February 29, 2016
- Queen's Park MPP Lunch and Learn event scheduled for October 5, 2016
- Municipal Agriculture Economic Development Forum to be hosted with the Town of Caledon
- The Provincial Co-Ordinated Plans review
- Workshop on 'Edge Planning for Agriculture' with the Greenbelt Foundation.
- Online e-newsletters and stories showcasing agriculture in the Golden Horseshoe

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Between 2004 and 2015, the PRWQP has allocated a total of \$619,849 in direct project funding representing an average annual funding amount of \$51,654. This funding has supported 136 agri-environmental projects having a total value of just over \$4.1 million in on-farm stewardship enhancements in Peel. The Region has identified a commitment of \$30,000 over five years (2014-2018) to support implementation of the Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Action Plan. The continued operation of PAAWG, the PRWQP, the publication of the Grown in Peel Guide, and the Region's participation in GTA AAC and GHFFA is supported through Regional and conservation authority staff support. Staffing costs are not included in the above amounts.

CONCLUSION

PAAWG, GTA AAC and the GHFFA continue to facilitate and enhance the relationships between the Region as well as agricultural groups and community members within Peel, across the Golden Horseshoe and the Province. Each is a valuable contributor to realizing the agricultural goals and policies of the Region. PAAWG facilitates an effective direct working relationship with the Region's agricultural community and supports water quality improvements through its approval role in the Peel Rural Water Quality Program. The Region's participation in the GTA AAC and GHFFA enables strategic engagement and resource sharing with partners across the GTA and Golden Horseshoe. These collective activities help ensure that Peel's agricultural sector is supported and viable.



Lorraine Graham-Watson, Commissioner of Corporate Services

Approved for Submission:



D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

APPENDICES

Appendix I - Peel Rural Water Quality Program 2015 Status Report

For further information regarding this report, please contact Arvin Prasad, Director, Integrated Planning Division, ext. 4251 or arvin.prasad@peelregion.ca

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