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**For Information**


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DATE: March 22, 2017

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

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**OBJECTIVE**

To provide the required 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 2016 the Peel Agricultural Advisory Working Group:
  - Collaborated on the development of the 2016 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 \$127,718.39 to 21 rural water quality projects.
- Over the same time period, the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC) and the Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Alliance (GHFFA) has initiated and completed strategic projects to implement the 'Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Action Plan: 2021'.
- The GTA AAC moved to dissolve and focus collaboration on agriculture through the GHFFA.
- Initial project work by the GHFFA has provided a better understanding of the regional agricultural and food system influencing Peel Region.
- The partnership with the GHFFA enables the Region of Peel 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.

Currently, based on appointments made by Regional Council in 2016, PAAWG is comprised of one political representative, Councillor Innis, and ten 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) 2016 PAAWG Programs and Projects**

#### **i. Peel Rural Water Quality Program**

The Region, in partnership with Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) and Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA), has implemented the Peel Rural Water Quality Program (PRWQP) since 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. PAAWG is the approval authority for PRWQP grant applications.

In 2016, the PRWQP had the highest number of projects and total grant dollars approved in its 12 year program history. This success can be attributed to increased interest in the tree and shrub planting project category. For 2016, \$127,718 in grants was approved to support the implementation of projects. An additional \$244,634 was leveraged from project proponents and other funders to assist with the completion of these projects.

Since initiation, the PRWQP has allocated a total of \$720,995 in cost-share grant funding towards 154 agri-environmental projects. These projects have a total value of just over \$4.4 million in on-farm stewardship enhancements in Peel.

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

#### **ii. Grown in Peel Guide**

PAAWG representatives continued to collaborate with Regional staff to develop the 2016 Grown in Peel Guide. The Grown in Peel Guide promotes local farms, retailers and farmers' markets.

Approximately 22,650 copies of the 2016 edition were distributed across 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](http://GrownInPeel.ca). The 2017 Guide is currently in production for an early spring release.

The Guide will be reviewed in 2017 to identify potential revisions to the design and website in 2018.

### **iii. Special Topics**

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

- Region of Peel and Town of Caledon joint Edge Planning for Agriculture Discussion Paper
- Proposed Food Charter developed by the Peel Poverty Reduction Strategy's Food Security Task Force
- Provincial Co-ordinated Plans Review
- New Provincial Guidelines on Permitted Uses in Ontario's Prime Agricultural Areas
- Proposed Region of Peel Anaerobic Digestion Facility
- Proposed Provincial Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Strategy
- Rural water quality monitoring in Credit Valley Conservation watershed
- RUAF Foundations' City-Region Food System Assessment Project
- GHFFA's Agri-Food Asset Mapping Project

### **b) 2017 PAAWG Work Plan**

In 2017, it is anticipated that the Province, through the Provincial Coordinated Plans Review, will identify and map Prime Agricultural Areas as part of an Agricultural System for the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will be undertaking a Land Evaluation and Area Review (LEAR) to support provincial mapping with the expectation there will be further consultation on the provincial LEAR and subsequent refinement of the Prime Agricultural Area through the provincial process and/or local conformity exercises. Therefore, a key focus of PAAWG in 2017 will be to provide guidance on the identification of the Agricultural System for the Region.

The following additional action items also remain as priorities in PAAWG's work plan for 2017:

#### **Policy, Research and Development**

- Peel 2041 Regional Official Plan Review: Agriculture Focus Area
- LEAR Study and Edge Planning for Agriculture - continued advisory role
- Provincial Co-ordinated Four Plans – consultation and advice on provincial amendments
- Peel Food Charter and Food Task Force – advice and support of final charter
- Census of Agriculture – update and analyze results

#### **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 a Peel Region Farm Tour

**3. The Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC)**

The 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.

In November 2016, the GTA AAC reviewed its role and mandate in relation to ongoing agricultural needs within the GTA and the implementation of the ‘Golden Horseshoe Food & Farming Action Plan: 2021’ (Action Plan). It resolved to dissolve and focus representation of the agricultural community and implement the Action Plan through the GHFFA.

Over its lifetime, some of the GTA AAC’s accomplishments include:

- Helped facilitate evolution of agriculture and food systems planning to a larger regional scale
- Supported implementation of two Food and Farming Action Plans
- Demonstrated leadership and capacity to advance and influence policy such as opportunities for more on-farm diversified and agriculture-related uses in Prime Agricultural Areas in the 2014 Provincial Policy Statement

**4. The Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Alliance (GHFFA)**

In 2012, the GHFFA was formed to implement the 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/](http://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 and Councillor Downey are the Regional Council’s representatives to the GHFFA. 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 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. 2016 Implementation and Support of the Action Plan**

The achievements of the GHFFA in 2016 include projects, outreach and engagement initiatives and communications.

**Projects:**

- Food and Farming Asset Mapping Phase II - an ongoing project to map agri-food supply chain assets across the Golden Horseshoe
- Municipal Local Food Procurement Phase II - initiated project to develop best practices and tools to assist municipalities in implementing local food procurement policies
- City-Region Food System Assessment Project – initiated collaborative project partnership to develop indicators of resilient agriculture systems and report on them

**Significant engagement initiatives:**

- Queens' Park Days - engaged Ministers and MPP's on the Action Plan and the food & farming sector in the Golden Horseshoe
- Edge Planning for Agriculture workshop for planners (partner delivery)
- Ontario Climate Consortium conference on Climate change and agricultural beneficial management practices (partner delivery)
- Municipal Agriculture Economic Development Forum hosted with the Town of Caledon (partner delivery)
- 'Linking Food, Farming & Health' annual meeting with Public Health

**Engagement, policy review and communication initiatives:**

- Responded to the Provincial Co-ordinated Plans Review
- Consulted with Province on identification and mapping of agricultural system for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
- Published online e-newsletters and stories showcasing agriculture in the Golden Horseshoe. This included articles on activities within Peel Region.

**b) 2017 Implementation and Support of the Action Plan**

The GHFFA has identified priority activities for 2017 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. These include:

- Continuation of Municipal Local Food Procurement Phase II
- Development of a Report Card to demonstrate progress towards achieving the goals of the Action Plan
- Agriculture profile update from Agriculture Census release
- Review of Golden Horseshoe Official Plans to identify best practice policies that enable on-farm diversification and agriculture-related uses, as well as identify opportunities to streamline planning application processes
- Canada 150 Farm and Farm Family project

**Engagement, policy review and communication initiatives:**

- Queen's Park Days
- Comment on amendments to Provincial Co-Ordinated Four Plans review
- Consult with Province on identification and mapping of agricultural system for the Greater Golden Horseshoe
- Consult with Province on Provincial guidelines for Agriculture Impact Assessments and Edge Planning for Agriculture
- Online e-newsletters and stories showcasing agriculture in the Golden Horseshoe

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Between 2004 and 2016, the PRWQP has allocated a total of \$720,995 in direct project funding representing an average annual funding amount of \$60,000 funded from CVC and TRCA Special Levy project budgets. This funding has supported 154 agri-environmental projects having a total value of just over \$4.4 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 (Council Resolution 2013-999). Funding to the GHFFA is provided through the Integrated Planning Division's operating budget. The continued operation of PAAWG, the PRWQP, the publication of the Grown in Peel Guide, and the Region's participation in the GHFFA is supported through Regional and conservation authority staff support. Staffing costs are not included in the above amounts.

**CONCLUSION**

PAAWG and the GHFFA continue to facilitate and enhance the relationships between the Region as well as agricultural groups and community members within Peel, 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 the voluntary implementation of agricultural beneficial management practices through its approval role in the Peel Rural Water Quality Program. The Region's participation in the 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.



Lisa Duarte for Lorraine Graham-Watson, Commissioner of Corporate Services

**Approved for Submission:**



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D. Szwarc, Chief Administrative Officer

**APPENDICES**

Appendix I – Peel Rural Water Quality Program 2016 Status Report

*For further information regarding this report, please contact Arvin Prasad, Director, Integrated Planning, extension 4251, [arvin.prasad@peelregion.ca](mailto:arvin.prasad@peelregion.ca).*

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