



*Enhancing  
and Energizing  
the GTA Local Food System*

# Message from the chair

May 9, 2011

## Green Bin Compost

A municipal initiative that is gaining a lot of interest is green bin compost material. Municipal green bin compost is a high organic matter product with a good balance of available nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K) and micronutrients. Home gardeners are showing interest in the product, but there is also strong interest from the farming community for its agricultural land application purposes.

Several municipalities, including the Region of Peel, have undertaken active green bin projects and in the last couple of weeks there have been several articles in Ontario Farmer, (April 19: page B12, and May 3: pages A12 and A13) the province's weekly farm newspaper, about green bin compost.

According to Christine Brown, the nutrient management field crops program lead with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), agricultural land application of municipal green bin compost can be a win-win for both municipalities and the farm community.

From the municipal perspective, diverting organic residue from landfills will save on costly tipping fees and converting it to a saleable product with value provides additional revenue opportunities.

For the farm community, this nutrient rich material (described as having a similar consistency to dry dairy manure) could bring tremendous value. Brown is undertaking co-operator producer trials in several municipalities, including Peel, and she says that in side-by-side research comparisons it is very easy to see which side had compost applied to it and which did not.

Despite these benefits, some challenges remain to make this a viable product in the farming community, notably logistics—getting the product from the curing facility to the farm fields, easily, cheaply and exactly when the farmer needs it before planting.

Research work continues and it could be a very exciting partnership opportunity for the municipalities and the farmers. A tour focusing on municipal green bin compost and the benefits to the farm community held in Peel Region in early April attracted over 110 people from throughout the Golden Horseshoe area and beyond, including farmers, municipal representatives and government officials. Attendees report it was a very exciting tour and it will be interesting to see how this project advances as more research work is completed.

## Sustain Ontario

I recently attended an advisory council meeting of Sustain Ontario. The Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee (GTAAAC) is a member and sits on that council. The following is a description taken from their web site:

*"Sustain Ontario is a province-wide, cross-sectoral alliance that promotes healthy food and farming. Sustain Ontario takes a collaborative approach to research, policy development and action by addressing the intersecting issues related to healthy food and local sustainable agriculture. Sustain Ontario is working towards a food system that is healthy, ecological, equitable and financially viable."*

It was refreshing to find that the members of the council share the same concerns about food and farming. One item of discussion was the upcoming provincial election and whether Sustain Ontario should take a position on food and farming issues. It was unanimously decided that Sustain Ontario would participate in some way using its Ontario Food Act to provide platform suggestions to send to candidates. The members present were also asked to provide input and I forwarded the platform issues and actions developed from the Golden Horseshoe Strategy and Action Plan.

## Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy and Action Plan update

Work on the Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy and Action Plan continues. The Planscape team is preparing a draft strategic plan template summarizing the 12 to 15 actions that were recommended as the base for the action plan with suggestions of partners to implement actions, steps to be taken, time lines, goals, and measurements of success. The steering committee, the Regional planners working group and the Planscape team will be meeting on May 12, 2011 to comment on the draft strategy and identify what consultations should be conducted to finalize the draft plan. Meetings will also be scheduled with key government ministries and opposition party MPs to present the pre-election platform slide deck.

Respectfully,  
Nick Ferri, Chair, GTAAAC

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