



Message from the chair

March 11, 2011

Legislative impacts on farming

You have to wonder if the government ever listens to stakeholders during consultations. A recent story in the *Vancouver Sun* relates that Metro Vancouver, as part of its Regional Food Strategy, is going to inventory lands in its Agricultural Land Reserve that are not being actively farmed. In fact, it is the top priority. Apparently there is a proliferation of estate homes on large parcels of idle agricultural land, agricultural support services such as veterinarians, feed and agricultural supply businesses are relocating and food processing facilities are closing. Trying to find solutions for this they are consulting with local food processors who suggest that farmers should be given incentives to increase production and also with farmers who complain about poor access to processing facilities. Metro Vancouver has decided to identify lands suitable for agricultural-related industry and increase opportunities for farmers to market directly to consumers to help improve financial viability.

Isn't that wonderful. I wonder if there was a consultation process with stakeholders when the Agricultural Land Preserve was being conceived? If so, what were they thinking? Perhaps it was similar to the Greenbelt consultations.

This past week in her Mayor's Report, Mayor Marolyn Morrison, of the Town of Caledon reiterated a statement that we in the farm community have been saying for a long time. It was, "If you want to save farm land, you have to save the farmer". In Ontario legislation such as the Places to Grow Act, 2005 and the Greenbelt Act, 2005 have had a negative impact on farming and in addition to those legislations, some farmers have to deal with the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2001, the Niagara Escarpment Commission and an almost insurmountable mountain of paper when trying to expand or add value to their products to improve farm income. Mayor Morrison understands it and actually, many of

the municipal staff and elected officials in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) get it. Let's just hope that the provincial government starts to get it or else, like Vancouver, there will be a lot of estate homes starting to pop up in the centre of large tracts of agricultural land in the greenbelt. There is an old saying, "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure".

Action Required: RSVP to Summit

The first deadline to RSVP to the Summit for the Golden Horseshoe Agriculture and Agrifood Strategy and Action Plan 2021 has just passed. We are pleased with the response thus far, but still need more representatives from farmers, food processors, conservation authorities and food and agricultural organizations. It is important to make your voice heard and your ideas for the future of food and farming in the Golden Horseshoe a reality.

You can make a difference. There will be a workbook sent to you prior to the meeting in which you record your thoughts and ideas. Table groups will help to formulate direction during the summit. The room will be buzzing with great ideas.

We have the opportunity to reshape the economy of the Golden Horseshoe and turn it into a powerhouse of agriculture and food processing. We have the power to change health, education and environmental policy so residents will enjoy healthy prosperous lives with clean water, an abundance of safe and nutritious food and a pristine environment.

Let's finish the job that the Greenbelt Plan started and let's get it right. Please RSVP with your attendance!

Respectfully,
Nick Ferri, Chair, GTAAAC

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