



Message from the chair

February 11, 2011

Food and Agriculture Strategy update

In my last message I described our board meeting of Wed. Jan. 19, 2011 and the presentation of the draft Agriculture and Food Strategy for the Golden Horseshoe. After the meeting I encouraged participants to send their comments by email. I am pleased to report that the response was very good. Some of the comments and recommendations were quite detailed and one suggested that our timeline was too tight. After considerable discussion the Strategy Working Group decided that the summit planned for Thurs. March 10, 2011 should be moved back to give our team more time to include the excellent comments and recommendations. The format of the rescheduled presentation will be changed to a workshop and the number of invited stakeholders reduced to make it manageable. The new date will be **Wed. March 30**, during the day, followed by our Annual General Meeting in the evening. The Strategy Working Group will meet a couple of times with Margaret Walton's Planscape team before the workshop to ensure the strategy is on the right track.

Comments also indicated that the strategy should be a living document, flexible to change as the stakeholders and priorities change.

I would like to thank everyone who has sent their comments and recommendations in and emphasize that it is not too late for those who are still contemplating replying.

If you have not had a chance to review the draft strategy I invite you to visit our website (www.gtaaac.ca) and click on the "Food and Farming Strategy" page for information on how to access a downloadable copy of the document. Submissions for consideration by our strategy team should be forwarded to Janet Horner, our GTA AAC Coordinator by email at janet@whitfieldfarms.com.

I believe the timing is right for a comprehensive agriculture and food strategy. A number of other organizations are also working on similar projects-- Sustain Ontario is working on *The Ontario Food Act*, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) is working on an *Ontario Food Strategy*, the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute published a report last year, *Toward an Integrated Health and Agri-food Strategy for Canada*, and a new one just announced, *Canada's Agri-Food Destination*. Many other jurisdictions have already completed strategies.

There is a provincial election this fall. What better time to present candidates with solutions to health care and education, environmental problems and fluctuating farm income. Let's boast about agriculture and the agri-food industry becoming the driving engine of the Ontario economy.

Respectfully,
Nick Ferri, Chair, GTAAAC

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