



*Enhancing
and Energizing
the GTA Local Food System*

Message from the chair

March 28, 2011

Global Greenbelts Conference

I had the opportunity to attend the Global Greenbelts Conference last week. It was interesting to hear from presenters around the world about their greenbelts--how and why they were established and the various challenges they face. There were presenters from Frankfurt, Germany; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Warsaw, Poland; San Francisco, United States; Copenhagen, Denmark; The Hague, Netherlands; London, England; the European Green Belt; Vancouver, Canada; Ottawa, Canada; and Ontario's Greenbelt. All of these protected areas were established to maintain green space, protect agricultural land, protect water sources and provide space for future infrastructure. Most of the representatives from other greenbelts seemed to be genuinely jealous of Ontario's Greenbelt. Their greenbelts evolved over a long period of time and regulations to preserve them were piecemeal and their boundaries were, in some cases, not well defined. Ontario, on the other hand, had its greenbelt legislated with defined polices and borders from the beginning. They also had a well-funded organization, The Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation, put in place to help promote the idea of a Greenbelt and encourage activities that support the environment and agriculture within it.

The conference was very informative and it was interesting to talk with people from around the world and to discuss the challenges and opportunities for people who live and work within a greenbelt. With the exception of England, with its generous payments for environmental goods and services, and the 12,500 km long European Green Belt (which is the former Iron Curtain and has no real agricultural lands within it) there seems to be no plan to preserve the economic viability of the farmers within these protected areas.

Food & Farming: An Action Plan for 2021

Recent concern for food shortages has sparked an interest to preserve more farmland and, to my relief, an interest to simulate the economic viability of the farmers within our greenbelt. The Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation have pledged a generous donation to the development of our Food and Farming Strategy and 10 Year Action Plan. Special thanks are due to Kathy MacPherson, Research Director of the Friends of the Greenbelt, and a regular attendee at our Greater Toronto Area Agriculture Action Committee (GTA AAC) board meetings for her recommendation in the granting of the

Upcoming GTA AAC events:

•Wednesday, March 30: Golden Horseshoe Food and Farming Summit at Delta Meadowvale Resort & Conference Centre, Mississauga

•Wednesday, March 30: GTA AAC Annual General Meeting at the Delta Meadowvale Resort & Conference Centre, Mississauga, 5:30 pm.

contribution. It is my hope that the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation will champion some of the actions proposed in the 10 Year Strategy. Partnerships with others will be critical to the success of our strategy.

Plans for the summit are completed and approximately 140 people will be attending the summit this week as stakeholders shape the future of the agriculture and food industry in the Golden Horseshoe and Holland Marsh areas for the next ten years. Attendees have been invited from strategic sectors including the three levels of government, planners, economic development and public health officers, universities and colleges, retailers, food processors, agricultural commodity groups, food policy groups, conservation authorities, food related non-government organizations and farmers. With this mix of people sitting at the tables we hope to write some comprehensive actions and identify champions to own them. The next big job for the coming year will be to secure sufficient funding to help us carry out the strategy over the next ten years.

These are exciting and challenging times. I look forward to working with these talented people to develop and implement an action plan for the Golden Horseshoe and Holland Marsh areas that will be the envy of governments and greenbelts around the world.

Respectfully,
Nick Ferri, Chair, GTAAAC

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