

Producing Prosperity in Ontario's Golden Horseshoe

Food and Farming Strategy being created for the Golden Horseshoe and Holland Marsh

A summit planned for early March to discuss a food and farming strategy for the Golden Horseshoe has been re-scheduled. Organizers of the summit report that initial response to the first draft of the Agriculture and Food Strategy for the Golden Horseshoe released in mid-January has been positive, but given the magnitude of the project, some respondents thought the timeline was a bit too aggressive.

"We want to get this right (and) I believe the timing is right for a comprehensive agriculture and food strategy. 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," says Nick Ferri, chair of the Greater Toronto Area Agriculture Action Committee (GTA AAC), one of the partners of the project.

Ferri notes that 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.

The draft study document "Agriculture & Agri-Food Strategy and Action Plan for the Golden Horseshoe" will be the focus of the 'Food & Farming: An Action Plan 2021' workshop in Toronto next month. Stakeholders with an interest in sustaining a thriving agri-food cluster in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Hamilton,

Niagara and the Holland Marsh are all welcome to attend the event. Participants will be asked to comment on the draft study document and brainstorm the action plan to transform and invigorate agriculture and food production in the study area.

"Let's boast about agri-culture and the agri-food industry becoming the driving engine of the Ontario economy," says Ferri. Workshop keynote speaker Bob Seguin, Executive Director of the Guelph-based George Morris Centre will address ideas for positioning agriculture in the Golden Horseshoe and Holland

Marsh as a key solution provider for Ontario's economic, environmental and social needs.

The draft study document was prepared by Planscape Inc. for the GTA AAC, together with the City of Hamilton, the Niagara Region and the Holland Marsh Growers' Association and will be available for download at www.planscape.ca/agriculture.html or www.gtaaac.ca.

The workshop will be held Wed. March. 30 at Evergreen Brick Works, 550 Bayview Avenue, Toronto. Seating is limited and advance registration is required. RSVP deadline is Mon. March 21

and should be made to the Region of Durham Planning Department at 1-800-372-1102 x 2551 or by email at planning@durham.ca.

