



Message from the chair

April 26, 2011

New GTA AAC executive board

The elections for board members and executive members for the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee (GTAAAC) were held at the April board meeting. The 2011/2012 executive is led by Nick Ferri, representing the Peel Federation of Agriculture as Chair; with Barb Shopland, (food Industry) and Allan Thompson (Regional Councillor, Region of Peel) as Vice Chairpersons; Fiona Nelson (Toronto Food Policy Council) and Ted Eng (Durham Federation of Agriculture). The new positions for three additional members-at-large were also filled, and joining the board is Marlene McClure, Unilever (retired) representing the processing sector; Rebecca LeHeup, Ontario Culinary Tourism Association (retail sector); and Eric Rosenkrantz, of Matchbox Gardens (young farmer). I am pleased to welcome the new members and look forward to working with the new board. A complete list of board members and advisors will be available on our web page at www.gtaaac.ca.

To accomplish our goals the board has decided to establish a number of standing committees which will be accountable for specific tasks. The Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy and Action Plan will be the responsibility of the Steering Committee. Three other committees will be assigned to look after the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair; to work with Sustain Ontario to host a Country Folk/City Folk event; and finally a committee to assist in the procurement of future funding.

2011 Work plan

Our work plan for 2011 was presented and discussed during the meeting. As a committee our energy will be directed towards the completion of the Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy. Phase One was completed in January. Phase Two is currently underway and final consultations will be conducted throughout April and May. Data from the March 30th Summit is being consolidated and will be available for viewing on the Planscape web site the first week of May. The twelve top actions identified by the attendees at the Summit

will be key to the direction the Action Plan takes in the next ten years. A final discussion paper will be released the first week of June to encourage additional input and the Action Plan will be released in late fall, following the provincial elections.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy and Action Plan update

Going forward the committee will be meeting with the attendees from the Summit who identified themselves as champions of specific actions. The GTAAAC will work closely with these champions to develop implementation plans. As part of its communications strategy the GTAAAC will hire a public relations firm to promote the study results and engage our intended audiences.

The board has also assembled a slide deck to be sent to the provincial political parties in anticipation of the upcoming fall provincial election. Input for the slide deck was developed using key actions from the Summit and messages from the Agriculture and Agri-Food Strategy and Action Plan.

The weather has been cool this spring, which has been a blessing for this farmer. Slow progression of the fruit buds will result in a later blossom time and hopefully less chance of a killing frost at that critical growth stage for apples and fewer sleepless nights irrigating strawberries to keep their blossoms from freezing. Sitting here, with the warm sun shining on my keyboard, I realize that the time for meetings must diminish shortly as the time for farm work draws me away.

Respectfully,
Nick Ferri, Chair, GTAAAC

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