

Food for Thought

On May 29, six years ago, York Region Food Network hosted an evening of community awareness and action about Food Security in York Region. Our guest speaker was Valarie Tarasuk, a professor in the Department of Nutritional Sciences at the University of Toronto. Again, this May 29th we are holding an event to bring Professor Tarasuk's message back to York Region. We now have a group to share the podium, Freedom 90, which has added many voices calling for real progress on hunger and poverty issues. Unfortunately, little real progress has been made in the last six years.

Rather than long term solutions, we seem to be trapped in a model that perpetuates the status quo. We can do better.

In York Region, people visit food banks and meal programs because they don't have enough income to meet their basic needs. A person working full time earning minimum wage cannot make ends meet. Low incomes and high housing costs are leaving people vulnerable.

We need to value food differently. Food is sustenance, health and enjoyment. We should not be patting ourselves on the back for our generosity and community capacity for a charitable model of food banks that feeds people mostly unhealthy food, often not enough food, and surplus food that probably shouldn't have been produced in the first place.

We need to ensure that people can access their basic needs with dignity. Although food banks allow many people to feel good about helping, we need to find ways to contribute that do not extract the self-esteem and dignity from the recipient. Giving people grocery cards instead of non-perishable, highly processed and often unhealthy food will allow individuals to make purchases based on their needs and provide the opportunity for healthy choices.

We have built up a 'poverty industry' that encourages waste and creates unjustified divisions between people based on wealth. We should not feel good about giving when the generosity is often preceded by thoughtless consumption.

The necessary changes are easier to understand when we look through a healthy food system lens. Obesity rates and chronic diseases are on the rise and are affecting everyone regardless of income levels. The estimated annual value of food wasted in Canada is \$27 billion. We need to look at the whole system to effectively address these issues. The York Region Food Charter articulates the values to develop coordinated food-related policies and programs, and it aligns with a growing food movement across Canada with a vision of a thriving food system from farm to plate that supports healthy, vibrant communities. Let's start the change process.

Joan Stonehocker, Executive Director



The Buzz About Honey Bees

Pollinators, including bees, are an essential part of our food system: it is said that bees are responsible for approximately a third of the food we eat. Honey bees, which originally came from Europe, are some of the most widely-known and best-loved pollinators because of the sweet honey they produce. According to the Canadian Honey Council, there are now approximately 7,000 beekeepers caring for 600,000 colonies in Canada. Honey bees are amazingly resourceful and surprisingly gentle, providing delicious benefits to us through honey and the food system as a whole.

Honey bees have a complex division of labour that helps to ensure the hives run smoothly. There are three main roles: the drone, the worker and the queen. The main job for drone bees is to mate with the queen. The queen bee lives for up to 5 years and can lay up to 2000 eggs per day. She goes out on a mating flight only once and mates with several drones to collect the genetic material she needs to support the colony. She can then choose to leave eggs unfertilized, so they become drones, or fertilize them to become workers. Worker bees have a variety of tasks in the hive that change over the course of their lives.

These range from feeding the young and the queen; nest building and maintenance; and collecting and processing propolis, water, pollen and nectar to make into honey.



Honey production is a labour intensive process. Bees work all season to ensure they have enough stored to last through the winter. Very simply, once honey bees have collected nectar and returned to the hive, they give the nectar to other bees or deposit it into the comb. Then, they furiously fan their wings to encourage water to evaporate. The honey is then sealed with wax. According to the Canadian Honey Council, it is possible for a single colony to produce up to 100 lbs of honey in a season.

With colony collapse disorder diminishing honey bee stocks worldwide, there are ways for us all to help the bees thrive. Planting a pollinator-friendly garden, limiting pesticide use and joining a local beekeeping association, like the Toronto District Beekeepers' Association, are all ways to create and support bee-friendly spaces in York Region.

Bronwen Fitzsimons
Urban Agriculture Coordinator

Did you know?

Native Bees are incredibly important to the health of our food system but are talked about less frequently. Eastern Canada has approximately 400 wild bee species that mostly live alone, rather than in hives. Since many species live only for one season, they build up pollen reserves for their offspring instead of making honey. Unlike hive-dwelling bees, solitary bees don't swarm and they usually don't sting either. Here are some examples of native bees that you can keep an eye out for this season!

Wild Blue Orchard Bees are considered to be the best pollinators for orchards because they will go out to forage even in the bad weather that we often see in spring.

The **Wild Hoary Squash Bee** pollinates members of the squash family best because its daily routine matches well with the flowering cycle of those plants. Squash plants often flower very early in the morning – luckily, this bee likes to wake up early, too!

Buzz pollinators are able to release pollen from certain flowers (like blueberries) by vibrating the flower with its wings. **Halictid, Leafcutter and Miner Bees** all do this well.

The **Rusty-Patched Bumblebee** is Ontario's first endangered pollinator, with only a handful of them having been seen in Ontario in the past 10 years. They can be identified by a rust-coloured patch on the abdomen that is surrounded by yellow on all sides. If you see one of these bees, take a picture and report it to the Rusty Patched Bumblebee project at: www.facebook.com/rustypatchedbumblebee

A Community Vision...turning into action

On March 20, 2013, the first day of spring, we celebrated the unveiling of the finalized York Region Food Charter. With 85 attendees present and representation from municipalities, the Region of York, York Region School Boards, community organizations and the community, the unveiling of the Food Charter is a very exciting step for York Region's food movement.



A collaborative and integrated approach is essential to create a healthy and just food system for all. York Region communities have told us that they want food projects, programs and initiatives in their communities that support health and wellbeing, environmental sustainability, equity and social justice, economic opportunities, and education and skills. Centered on the principles of collaboration and community engagement, the York Region Food Charter is about bringing people together on an ongoing and regular basis to use food and agriculture as an avenue to develop healthy communities and a resilient food system.

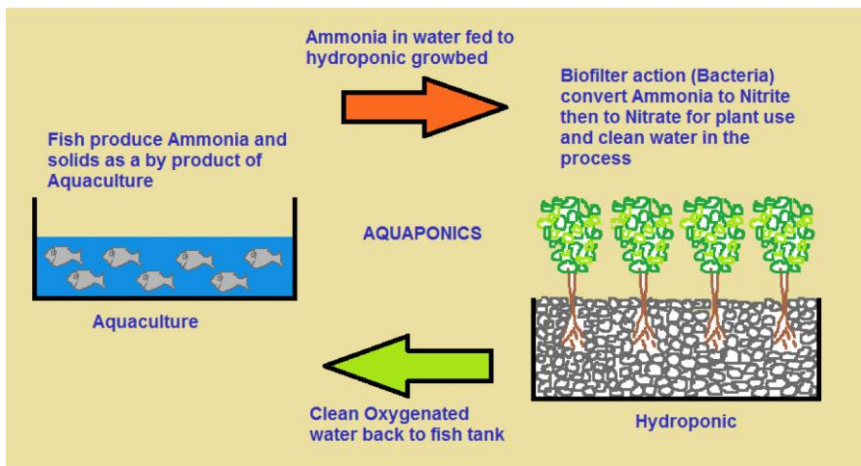
The York Region Food Charter is a vision statement. It is being translated into action by YRFN and our partners. One example of action is Seeds For Change 2,015 Campaign. Supporting the development of 2,015 new food growing spaces in York Region by 2015, this campaign is encouraging residents and businesses to think differently about how and where food is grown. Join the 2,015 Campaign by registering your food garden at <http://seedsforchange gardens.org/index.php/gardens/>!

Kate Greavette, Food Charter Coordinator

upStream

upStream grows food and serves as a working model of sustainable food production. As a social enterprise, we engage and educate the community and local businesses to positively contribute towards key environmental and social challenges in York Region. People, profit and produce for food security in our backyards and beyond.

But first, we must build it! We have secured assistance from a variety of partners in the community. Volunteers helped us with our first 'work day'; cleaning, dusting and painting. Home Depot is on board and will be painting the space white. This will facilitate better light reflection for the plants and also provide us with a clean canvass to engage youth in murals and graffiti art.



Home Depot will also be donating much of the material to build the unit as well as offering some handy, expert people to address some of the other technicalities involved.

Next, we grow. Then we sell. Then we teach. Stay tuned!



Tricia Richens, upStream Coordinator

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

“Celebrating Community”

Thursday, June 13th, 2013

7:00 – 7:30 – Reception

7:30 – 8:00 – Celebrating Community

8:00 – 8:30 – AGM

350 Industrial Parkway S., Aurora, ON L4G 3V7

If you would like to vote in the election of YRFN's Board of Directors, please RSVP to kima@yrfn.ca by June 6th to confirm your attendance and plan to arrive prior to 7:30 to receive your ballot.

FOOD FOR CHANGE: From Charity to Dignity

Wednesday, May 29, 2013: 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

at

Buttonville Women's Institute: 8931 Woodbine Ave, Markham, ON L3R 0J9

This is a free event, open to everyone. Light refreshments will be served.

'Dignified access to food for all' is a value articulated in the York Region Food Charter. Join us for an informative conversation about the relationship between food charity and food security in York Region.

Guest speakers

Valerie Tarasuk, Professor, University of Toronto

Yvonne Kelly, Volunteer Co-Facilitator, Freedom 90

Please register by May 22 to <http://guestlistapp.com/events/163740>

Join York Region Food Network's Fundraising Campaign

I support YRFN's work to improve access to affordable, nutritious food for all people of York Region.

I have enclosed my donation of: \$20 \$50 \$100 Other

Please make cheques payable to York Region Food Network.

YRFN will issue a charitable tax receipt for all donations over \$20. Registration 87044 7315 RR0001

Name: _____

Address: _____

To donate by credit card, visit our website at www.yrfn.ca and click on the link to CanadaHelps.org, a secure website where you can make a tax deductible credit card donation to YRFN.

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