

## CITY OF VAUGHAN

### EXTRACT FROM COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 16, 2025

Item 5, Report No. 45, of the Committee of the Whole, which was adopted without amendment by the Council of the City of Vaughan on December 16, 2025.

#### **5. LOCAL FOOD AND URBAN AGRICULTURE IN VAUGHAN**

The Committee of the Whole recommends:

- 1) That the recommendations contained in the following report of the Deputy City Manager, Planning and Infrastructure Development dated December 2, 2025, be approved; and
- 2) That the comments from Morgan Sage, York Region Food Council, Leslie Street, Newmarket, and Communication C1., presentation material titled "*York Region Food Charter*" be received.

#### **Recommendations**

1. That the York Region Food Charter (Attachment 1) and the Food Charter Action Document (Attachment 2) be endorsed;
2. That in support of the York Region Food Charter, Council direct staff to:
  - a. Evaluate the feasibility of installing a vertical, hydroponic farm on City property including investigating appropriate locations and partners to operate the farm, and report back to Council on the findings and recommendation;
  - b. Continue working with York Region Food Network, York Region Food Council and other applicable community organizations to support local food access and production;
  - c. Implement actions within the Food Charter Action Document that align with the City's scope and authority; and
3. That the Communications, Marketing and Engagement Department be directed to promote the City's support of the York Region Food Charter, as well as associated initiatives led by the City, Vaughan Public Libraries and York Region Food Council, as well as other organizations the City may partner with to implement actions from the Food Charter Action Document.

# Committee of the Whole (1) Report

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**DATE:** Tuesday, December 2, 2025

**WARD(S):** ALL

**TITLE:** LOCAL FOOD AND URBAN AGRICULTURE IN VAUGHAN

**FROM:**

Vince Musacchio, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Infrastructure Development

**ACTION:** DECISION

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**Purpose**

To seek Council endorsement of the York Region Food Charter and Food Charter Action Document and direction to investigate the feasibility of operating a vertical farm on City property.

**Report Highlights**

- The York Region Food Charter aligns with provincial goals and City plans.
- Implementing applicable actions within the Food Charter Action Document will help create a vibrant, resilient city that supports residents' access to healthy, culturally appropriate food and sustainable food systems.
- Vertical farming is a realistic solution to urbanization and population growth and provides an opportunity to grow fresh produce year-round to supply local food banks and food security organizations that operate in Vaughan.
- Further investigation is required to determine the feasibility of installing and operating a vertical farm on City property.

**Recommendations**

1. That the York Region Food Charter (Attachment 1) and the Food Charter Action Document (Attachment 2) be endorsed;
2. That in support of the York Region Food Charter, Council direct staff to:
  - a. Evaluate the feasibility of installing a vertical, hydroponic farm on City property including investigating appropriate locations and partners to operate the farm, and report back to Council on the findings and recommendation;

- b. Continue working with York Region Food Network, York Region Food Council and other applicable community organizations to support local food access and production;
  - c. Implement actions within the Food Charter Action Document that align with the City's scope and authority; and
3. That the Communications, Marketing and Engagement Department be directed to promote the City's support of the York Region Food Charter, as well as associated initiatives led by the City, Vaughan Public Libraries and York Region Food Council, as well as other organizations the City may partner with to implement actions from the Food Charter Action Document.

## **Background**

### **Supporting local food and urban agriculture helps to create vibrant, resilient communities.**

"Local food" generally refers to food that is grown or produced close to where it is consumed, and there are social, economic and environmental benefits of local food, including the following:

- Local economic growth by supporting local farmers and agri-food businesses.
- More nutritious food due to produce being fresher at consumption (less travel).
- Social responsibility through the connection with local farms, greenhouses, and community organizations to support fair working conditions, including for migrant workers.
- Increased access to affordable, healthy and culturally appropriate food.
- Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions due to reduced transportation distances and reduction of packaging that could end up in landfill, as litter or processed.

"Urban Agriculture" refers to food production in urban areas and can include gardening and livestock raised in backyards, container gardening on balconies or rooftops, community gardening, vertical farming, and urban composting. Urban agriculture helps to support sustainable local food systems and enhance health and wellbeing and often offers the opportunity to build community connections.

"Agri-food network" includes elements important to the viability of the agri-food sector such as regional infrastructure and transportation networks; agricultural operations including on-farm buildings and primary processing; agricultural services, farm markets, and distributors; and vibrant, agriculture-supportive communities.

The agriculture and agri-food sector plays an important role in Vaughan's economy. The latest [agriculture and agri-food sector highlights](#), published by York Region, indicate that Vaughan is home to 52 farms and 7,862 acres of farmland, 131 food and beverage manufacturers and 1,296 agri-food businesses. Agricultural lands in Vaughan contribute to over \$33 million in total operating farm revenue.

**The York Region Food Council has requested that Vaughan Council endorse the York Region Food Charter.**

The York Region Food Network is a charitable organization that connects and empowers people to access healthy food through education and advocacy. Their work includes community gardens, drop-in meal programs, workshops and classes, affordable food boxes, and more.

The York Region Food Council was created out of the original 2013 York Region Food Charter and is housed within the York Region Food Network. The York Region Food Council is made up of representatives from York Region and the local municipalities, Public Health, post-secondary institutions, the farming community and more. The York Region Food Council envisions communities where health and social justice are prioritized and all residents have economic and physical access to healthy, local, culturally acceptable and environmentally sustainable food. The York Region Food Council works towards this vision by building networks across the food system, conducting research on the York Region food system, educating through public events, advocating for policy changes, and supporting the creation and implementation of food system initiatives.

In 2025, the York Region Food Council finalized an updated York Region Food Charter (Attachment 1) and Food Charter Action Document (Attachment 2). The York Region Food Council has been approaching local municipalities asking for endorsement of the Food Charter and Food Charter Action Document. The following municipalities have endorsed the 2025 York Region Food Charter:

- Town of Aurora – April 23, 2024, made a commitment to support the York Region Food Charter
- Township of King – April 29, 2025
- City of Richmond Hill – June 18, 2025
- Town of Georgina – Feb. 26, 2025

**The City received a proposal to install a vertical, hydroponic farm on public property.**

The City maintains relationships with several local food organizations and staff was recently approached by one of them with a proposal to adapt community gardening operations behind Fire Station 7-1 to include a vertical, hydroponic farm. Fire Station 7-1 is currently under construction, however the community garden behind it is expected to open for the 2026 season.

Vertical farming refers to growing crops vertically, typically indoors, which allows for maximum space utilization and year-round crop production in a controlled environment. Hydroponic farming is a method of growing crops in water, without the need for soil.

## **Previous Reports/Authority**

[Local Food Week and Ontario Agriculture Week Proclamation Request](#) – May 6, 2025

## **Analysis and Options**

### **The York Region Food Charter aligns with provincial goals and City plans.**

The Vaughan Official Plan, 2010 and draft 2025, supports food production in urban and settlement areas throughout the city of Vaughan and allows urban agriculture to occur in different forms such as community gardening, vertical farming, and urban composting. This meets the Provincial direction for large and fast-growing municipalities, as set out in the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024, to support local food and the agri-food network. Developing the agri-food network is also recognized as Provincial direction in the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Greenbelt Plan as an essential component of an agricultural system. Provincial policies encourage municipalities to support access to healthy, local, and affordable food planning by promoting the sustainability of agricultural, agri-food and agri-product businesses.

Endorsement of the York Region Food Charter aligns with Action 4.3.3 in Green Directions Vaughan, the City's community sustainability plan, to "promote local food and encourage urban agriculture by supporting initiatives such as investigating the support of a local food charter".

### **Through various policies and initiatives, the City is already supporting actions within the Food Charter Action Document.**

The City has been a member of the York Region Food Council since 2019 and City staff have helped shape the York Region Food Charter and Food Charter Action Document.

Additionally, the list below outlines the ways the City and Vaughan Public Libraries are already supporting actions within the Food Charter Action Document.

- Supporting and raising awareness of the agri-food sector through Local Food Week and Ontario Agriculture Week proclamations, the Economic Development website ([vaughanbusiness.ca](http://vaughanbusiness.ca)), and the Tourism Vaughan website ([visitvaughan.ca](http://visitvaughan.ca)).
- Promoting jobs within the agri-food sector and reducing barriers for young and diverse farmers to start businesses through a partnership with York University's YSpace – Food Accelerator Program, offering one-on-one small business advisory services, and the Vaughan Starter Company Plus program designed to help businesses start, grow or expand.
- Establishing community gardens and related policies and processes through the Community Garden Policy, the Age-Friendly Community Action Plan, and participation in the York Region Community Garden Network.

- Establishing lending libraries for kitchen equipment, household tools, garden equipment and more, with one location at Pierre Berton Resource Library, and another launching at Bathurst Clark Resource Library in late 2025.
- Promoting seed preservation and seed exchanges, in partnership with York Region Food Network, at Bathurst Clark Resource Library. Customers can obtain seeds for popular food crops using their library card.
- Hosting culinary literacy programs in the Vaughan Studios & Event Space centered around bringing the community together through food, including cooking and baking workshops, learning how to plant and grow food, exploring new dishes, and social lunchtime sessions – for all ages and abilities. Vaughan Public Library has also created a Kitchen Traditions Cookbook based on recipes from seniors in the community.
- Becoming a member of the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact, working closely with municipalities around the world to exchange best practices, and support the implementation of innovative food policies as part of the City’s ongoing commitment to building sustainable, inclusive, and resilient urban food systems.

**The City should strive to further support the York Region Food Charter.**

It is crucial that the City continues to support the growing population and urbanization by providing access to sustainable food systems and healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food which will help fight food insecurity and create a vibrant, resilient city.

Below is a list of opportunities for the City to investigate, which align with the Food Charter Action Document.

- Apply an equity lens for establishing community gardens.
- Increase access to culturally relevant food and support for local food through procurement policies and provide spaces for farmers to trial new crops.
- Promote food literacy through social media, outreach, workshops, posters, and hands-on programming.
- Increase access to land and incubation spaces for new or small-scale farmers, especially for equity deserving groups.
- Support the Vaughan Public Library lending library through the use of City social media channels, webpages and other marketing tactics.
- Provide access to community for space to grow, cook, train and make connections.

**A vertical farming initiative aligns with City objectives and the York Region Food Charter.**

Vertical farming provides a realistic and sustainable solution to population growth and urbanization issues, since it produces crops year-round, while also having a smaller footprint than other urban agriculture practices.

The initiative aligns with Objective 4.3 in Green Directions Vaughan, to “Improve community well-being through support of local food, the Agriculture System, and the Agri-Food Network”. A fully accessible vertical, hydroponic farm also aligns with Vaughan’s Age-Friendly Community Action Plan to expand opportunities for gardening to all ages and abilities.

Installing and operating a vertical, hydroponic farm on City property provides an opportunity to grow fresh produce year-round to supply local food banks and food security organizations that operate in Vaughan. It also aligns with the York Region Food Charter and Food Charter Action Document in the following ways:

- growing food closer to where people live
- supporting the agri-food sector by providing opportunities for employment, crop testing, mentoring and job training
- providing opportunities for sharing and learning between agencies already fostering food security

**Vertical farming is a permitted use under the Comprehensive Zoning By-law.**

The City recently updated its Comprehensive Zoning By-law (001-2021) to allow vertical farming operations in Employment Zones EM1 and EM2. In November 2022, the City also approved a minor site plan amendment for 927 Clark Ave., to allow a vertical, hydroponic farm to be installed on the property. The property owners worked with a Canadian company to create and install the first accessible, modular vertical farm in Canada.

**More consultation is required to determine the feasibility of a vertical, hydroponic farm at Fire Station 7-1, or any other City property.**

York Region Food Network has operated a successful community garden behind Fire Station 7-1 (835 Clark Ave.) for many years. Typically, there are about 25 volunteers each year and they harvest between 250 kilograms to 350 kilograms of food which is distributed to garden volunteers and to families in need in York Region through meal programs. In 2024 and 2025, York Region Food Network was unable to utilize the garden due to construction at the fire station. York Region Food Network will be re-establishing their community garden operations once construction at the site is complete.

Fire Station 7-1 is zoned Agriculture, and by this definition intermodal containers are a permitted use, however vertical farming operations are not. Several City departments will need to be consulted to determine whether Fire Station 7-1 is feasible for a vertical farm. Initial concerns raised were impediments to the surrounding neighbourhood, as well as site security.

There may be other public property locations which are more suitable for a vertical, hydroponic farm, and staff will need to assess each of these locations as well as the legalities and risks associated with hydroponic farming. Staff will also need to determine the City's financial obligation, and appropriate partnerships needed for operation of the vertical farm and distribution of the crops.

### **Financial Impact**

There are no direct financial implications resulting from this staff report. As staff work to identify needs and opportunities related to the City's local food and urban agriculture goals, and the feasibility of a vertical farm, new financial implications may arise and will be brought forward through the budget process as required.

Staff will work with the Strategic Economic Initiatives team to identify any grant or sponsorship opportunities to supplement City-led initiatives.

### **Operational Impact**

With the endorsement of the York Region Food Charter and Food Charter Action Document, the following departments will be engaged:

- Communications, Marketing and Engagement for promotion and communications support of the endorsement and associated initiatives led by the City, VPL, York Region Food Council, and other related organizations.
- Procurement Services for determining opportunities for local food policies.
- Economic Development for establishing partnerships with agri-food businesses and farmers and finding suitable incubation spaces.
- Facilities and Parks Delivery, Facility Management, and Recreation Services for providing access to space for growing, cooking, training and making community connections.
- Inclusion and Community Outreach for parameters to apply an equity lens to the establishment of community gardens, and engagement with equity-deserving groups.

Investigation into the feasibility of a vertical, hydroponic farm on City property will include input from the following departments:

- Vaughan Fire and Rescue Service
- Facilities and Parks Delivery
- Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations
- Facility Management
- Economic Development
- Procurement Services
- Office of the City Solicitor
- Office of the City Clerk

## **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

The 2024-2027 Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Strategy is an action plan that was approved by York Regional Council in 2024 and focuses on sustaining and supporting the entire local agri-food sector. Action 2A.3 states “Support the York Region Food Council activities for enhanced coordination, alignment and collaboration of the Regional initiatives, including supporting the development of the York Region Food Charter.” By endorsing the recommendations set out in this Staff Report, the City will be taking meaningful action to further support the Agriculture and Agri-Food Sector Strategy.

Four local municipalities have endorsed or supported the York Region Food Charter including City of Richmond Hill, Town of Aurora, Town of Georgina and Township of King.

## **Conclusion**

Endorsement of the York Region Food Charter and the Food Charter Action Document demonstrates to the residents of Vaughan that the City supports a resilient food system that fosters healthy communities. The City is already working toward many of the values in the York Region Food Charter and actions in the Food Charter Action Document.

Staff will work with York Region Food Network, York Region Food Council and other applicable community organizations to support local food access and production and implement actions within the Food Charter Action Document that align with the needs and opportunities of Vaughan’s local food and urban agriculture systems.

Investigating the feasibility of a vertical farm on City property supports the endorsement of the York Region Food Charter, and will provide an opportunity for the City to support local food banks and food security organizations with fresh produce year-round. It will also serve as a showcase of agriculture in an urban setting. Staff will determine appropriate locations for a vertical farm and establish the necessary partnerships for operation and distribution.

**For more information**, please contact: Alanna MacKenzie, Sustainability Specialist, ext. 8941.

## **Attachments**

1. York Region Food Charter 2025, York Region Food Council
2. Food Charter Action Document 2025, York Region Food Council

**Prepared by**

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# YORK REGION FOOD CHARTER

The York Region Food Charter outlines collective values and priorities and is a guiding document for food-related policies and action.

The Food Charter is a vision of thriving urban and rural communities as well as First Nations and Indigenous Communities where residents, organizations, businesses, and governments work together to create a resilient food system that fosters healthy communities.

The Food Charter is centered on food sovereignty<sup>1</sup> and community-determined food and agriculture systems. This document is intended to build connection and responsibility to the land, and healthier food systems.



We seek to meaningfully engage diverse voices that represent York Region's communities and address issues in appropriate and relevant ways. By addressing food related issues, we strive to have a local impact while working towards systemic change in food, community and social justice. This includes reconciliation and supporting the resurgence of knowledge and traditional ways of knowing and doing.

The York Region food system is built on a history of oppression that continues to this day. The impact of this oppression is vast and includes a disconnection from the land and the loss of natural ways of living on the land, such as freely foraging and harvesting food. The ongoing process of colonialism has attempted to undermine the traditional and cultural food traditions of Indigenous, Black and racialized communities. We recognize that these communities continue to be impacted disproportionately by food insecurity, which can only be addressed by self-governance and support, if requested.

# OUR VALUES



## 01. Equity, Social Justice & Food Security<sup>1</sup>

We value the right to food and community-determined food and agriculture systems<sup>2</sup>. We believe everyone should have enough income to effectively prevent food insecurity<sup>3</sup>.

### We Support

- Evidence-based income and social policies which have been proven to reduce food insecurity.
- Community engagement, advocacy and action around income-related issues.
- Collaboration with governments and community partners in First Nations, Indigenous, racialized and other marginalized communities to determine priorities for action to address food insecurity and poverty<sup>4</sup>.

## 02. Health & Well-being

We value the role of food in promoting health, including physical, mental, emotional, cultural, social and spiritual well-being.



### We Support

- Equitable and dignified access to safe, nutritious, culturally relevant, and affordable food.
- Food programs, policies and practices to improve, support and promote holistic<sup>5</sup> well-being.
- The role of food and nutrition in preventing and managing diseases.
- Reducing health inequities<sup>6</sup> so that everyone has the same opportunities for health regardless of social, economic and spatial<sup>7</sup> and environmental factors.
- Body liberation<sup>8</sup> and the importance of creating positive, holistic relationships with food, culture and the land.

## 03. Local Agri-Food Sector<sup>9</sup>

We value the role of the agri-food sector in cultivating a strong economy and equitable local food system while ensuring environmental sustainability.



### We Support

- Indigenous knowledge around hunting, harvesting and gathering.
- Connections between farmers and the broader community.
- Maintaining farmland for agricultural uses.
- The local food sector's growth and development by promoting sustainable technology and innovation in agriculture and food-related industries.
- Growth and production of foods representing York Region's diversity, including traditional world foods, and alternative diets.
- Access to land and training for individuals, communities, and new & small-scale farmers.
- Fair compensation and safe and respectful work environments across the agriculture and agri-food sectors.



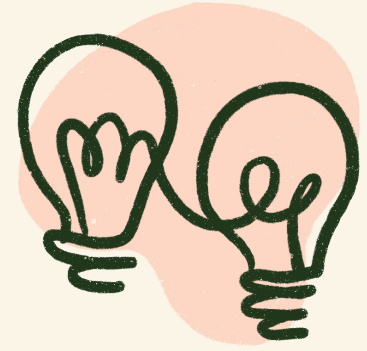
## 04. Environmental Stewardship

We value a sustainable food system that protects and enhances of the natural environment while working alongside First Nations and Indigenous Communities.

### We Support

- Meaningful engagement with and support for First Nations Communities in conserving biological and cultural diversity.
- The conservation and enhancement of land and natural resources, including water, seeds and livestock breeds, and any other species identified by the First Nations and other Indigenous People.
- Indigenous knowledge holders in sharing their knowledge, within both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, on ways to preserve and protect the land.
- Policies and practices that increase climate change resilience in food and agriculture.
- Land-use and planning policies that promote natural environments, enhance food security, and secure urban and rural agriculture land as well as other lands in which harvesting may take place, such as wetlands and forests.
- The creation of a circular food economy<sup>10</sup>, including reducing food waste, minimizing food packaging, promoting avenues for reuse and regenerating natural systems.

## 05. Knowledge & Sharing



We value sharing knowledge and supporting food literacy<sup>11</sup> so that all community members can confidently choose to grow, cook, compost, or participate in food-related careers, contributing to a more sustainable future for the next seven generations.

### We Support

- Creating an understanding of truth and reconciliation across the food system and amplifying First Nations leadership and innovation.
- Promotion of intergenerational and Indigenous learnings and the use of food to share teachings, stories, cultural practices, and ways of knowing.
- Education opportunities that support careers for skilled, knowledgeable workers in entering the agriculture and food sector.
- Learning the components of the food system and the connections between farming, food, the environment and health and well-being.
- Opportunities to learn and share food skills, traditions and knowledge.
- Nutrition and food literacy within schools and the community.



## 06. Culture & Community

We value food as a link that brings communities together and connects people to people, land, culture and identity.

### We Support

- The promotion of public dialogue and initiatives for reconciliation within the food system.
- Celebrating and promoting diversity through culturally and spiritually significant foods and traditions to connect communities and strengthen collaborations.
- Building community and cross-cultural connections through food initiatives such as community food programs and events.
- Information sharing, collaboration and collective action between First Nations Communities, community organizations, and local governments.

- 1 Food security is "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." (Food and Agriculture Organization, World Food Summit, 1996)
- 2 "The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" ([La Via Campesina](#)).
- 3 "Food insecurity is the inadequate or insecure access to food due to financial constraints" ([PROOF, 2024](#)).
- 4 Poverty takes different forms and is not limited to those living below a set income ([Canada Without Poverty, 2015](#)). "Poverty exists where people lack the material and financial resources to thrive" ([The Canadian Poverty Institute, 2024](#)).
- 5 Holistic is viewing the whole person (physical, emotional, spiritual, etc.) as interconnected to land and in relationship with others (family, community, nations, etc) ([Cull et al., 2018](#)).
- 6 Health inequities are avoidable and unjust differences in health between groups of people. These differences arise from social, economic, and political factors that shape the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. These factors determine individuals' access to resources, their risk of illness, and their ability to prevent or treat health conditions ([WHO, 2013](#)).
- 7 Spatial factors refer to the characteristics and organization of physical space, which influence how objects, elements, or organisms are arranged, distributed, or interact within an environment.
- 8 Body liberation is a movement rooted in the belief that all bodies have a right to exist as they are. Everyone deserves to feel empowered within their own body and embrace their bodies without fear of judgement or prejudice. Body liberation challenges the dominant culture of body shaming and discrimination towards fat, racialized, trans, queer, and disabled individuals. It aims to dismantle systems of oppression including anti-fatness, ableism, healthism and other forms of oppression focused on how bodies exist ([Oxford Review, 2024](#); [Centre for Health and Wellbeing, 2024](#)).
- 9 The agri-food sector is the actors and activities involved in the production of agricultural products, as well as in storage, post-harvest handling, value-added activities, transportation, processing, distribution, marketing, disposal and consumption of all food and agricultural products ([FAO, 2021](#)).
- 10 "A circular economy eliminates waste and pollution, and conserves resources. It is a shift from a throw-away to a circular mindset to extend the lifecycle of goods, food and resources through better design and continuous reuse, so nothing goes to waste" ([Regional Municipality of York, 2024](#)). We are promoting human food sustainability practices such as eat locally and seasonally, reduce food waste, use sustainable packaging, conserve water and energy, grow your own food, and educate others.
- 11 "Food literacy includes food skills and practices that are learned and used across the lifespan to participate within a complex food environment. Food literacy also means considering the social, cultural, economic and physical factors related to food." (Health Canada, [Canada's Food Guide, 2019](#)).



## FOOD CHARTER ACTION DOCUMENT

	York Region Food Council	Working Groups	Municipal Gov	Regional Gov	Organizations	Businesses	Public Institutions
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### Equity, Social Justice & Food Security

Advocate at all levels of government for evidence-based policies which have been proven to reduce food insecurity. This could include advocating for the implementation of a livable minimum wage, increasing social assistance rates and enhancing the Canada Disability Benefit.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Support partners with the creation of advocacy tools and training geared towards municipal, provincial and federal governments. Use these tools to support the development of robust policies that ensure adequate incomes so that all York Region residents have equitable access to food.	✓	✓	✓				
Collaboration with governments and community partners in First Nations, Indigenous, racialized and other marginalized communities to determine priorities for action to address food insecurity and poverty.	✓				✓		
Increase awareness of poverty, food insecurity, and income related issues for politicians, policymakers and the public through channels such as social media, events, and press releases.	✓		✓	✓	✓		
Empower people with lived experience of food insecurity and poverty to create systems change through peer advocacy while offering the appropriate support and infrastructure (e.g., peer networks, compensation).	✓	✓			✓		
Collaborate with the York Region Food Council in the creation of advocacy tools and training geared towards municipal, provincial and federal governments.					✓		

	York Region Food Council	Working Groups	Municipal Gov	Regional Gov	Organizations	Businesses	Public Institutions
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## Health & Well-Being

Advocate for coordination between governments for policies that support peoples' access to food (e.g., affordable housing, employment, and transit policies).	✓	✓					
Support dignified food access initiatives directed by those with lived experience (e.g., fresh food vouchers, food co-ops, low-cost markets/grocers, grocery gift cards).	✓	✓			✓		
Improve funding to school food programs to increase food access in schools (e.g., breakfast programs).			✓	✓	✓		
Increase the availability of culturally relevant food locally (e.g., procurement policies that support cultural food businesses, making them more available in publicly owned buildings; promoting innovation and growth of warm climate produce, through incubation spaces or grants for farmers to trial new crops).			✓	✓			
Promote nutrition and food literacy in schools and the community, including body liberation and the importance of creating positive relationships with food, culture and the land, through social media, outreach, workshops, posters, etc.			✓	✓	✓		✓
Implement food procurement policies for institutions (including schools, hospitals, government buildings, recreation centers) to support local food businesses and producers while providing fresher, more culturally relevant foods.			✓	✓			✓

	York Region Food Council	Working Groups	Municipal Gov	Regional Gov	Organizations	Businesses	Public Institutions
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## Local Agri-Food Sector

Advocate at the provincial level for reduced barriers (e.g., labour, capital, land access) for young and diverse farmers to start viable farm and food businesses that serve their communities.	✓	✓					
Advocate at the provincial level for improved financial supports for new farmers through affordable crop insurance programs and income support so farmers can make a livable wage growing food.	✓	✓					
Advocate at the provincial and federal levels to create stronger labour and legal protections for migrant farm workers to have secure work, living wages and pathways to permanent residency.	✓	✓					
Connect communities to where food is grown, hunted and gathered and grow food closer to where people live.			✓				
Make connections, support agri-food players (e.g., producers, distributors, packaging, retail, research) and raise awareness/show the value of the sector.			✓		✓	✓	
Promote jobs within the agri-food sector as viable career paths to attract and retain youth and job seekers to the sector. Work with educational institutions and the Government of Ontario to develop and offer farm-focused education and learning opportunities such as incubators, college programs, co-op opportunities, job training, and mentorship.			✓		✓		✓
Work with higher levels of government to provide grants to implement sustainable innovation and technology in the agriculture and agri-food sector.			✓	✓			
Connect communities to where food is grown, hunted and gathered and grow food closer to where people live. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate with the agri-tourism sector and incentivize communities to visit farms</li> <li>• Host community events to promote local agriculture (like fairs or competitions) that reflect the cultural diversity of York Region.</li> </ul>				✓	✓		

	York Region Food Council	Working Groups	Municipal Gov	Regional Gov	Organizations	Businesses	Public Institutions
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## Local Agri-Food Sector (Continued)

Remove barriers (e.g., explore updates to By-laws) for community members to access public land for local food production purposes.			✓				
Reduce barriers (e.g., labour, capital, land access) for young and diverse farmers to start viable farm and food businesses that serve their communities.			✓				
<p>Increase access to land for individuals, communities, new farmers, and especially for equity deserving groups<sup>1</sup> who face additional barriers to accessing land.</p> <p>Increase access to land for new and small-scale farmers through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farm incubators<sup>2</sup>.</li> <li>• Information sharing about land access and develop a way to match prospective growers to available land.</li> <li>• Alternative ways to access land (e.g., Rouge National Urban Park, conservation authorities, etc.).</li> </ul>			✓				

## Environmental Stewardship

Support Indigenous knowledge holders in sharing their knowledge on ways to preserve and protect land.	✓	✓					
Create and support policies that preserve agricultural land, farming, natural harvesting areas, and local food production. Incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing into the preservation and protection of land.	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Advocate for the creation of affordable housing without jeopardizing farmland and natural harvesting areas through urban intensification.	✓	✓					

	York Region Food Council	Working Groups	Municipal Gov	Regional Gov	Organizations	Businesses	Public Institutions
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## Environmental Stewardship (Continued)

Advocate for the protection of farmland and natural harvesting areas through land use policies that prioritize agriculture such as increased housing density and keeping agricultural land in agricultural uses.	✓	✓					
Advocate for municipal governments to embed language that supports the value of food into all policy.	✓	✓					
Embed language that supports the value of food into all policy.				✓			
Establish and invest in more community food growing spaces close to where people live. Use an equity lens to implement municipal policies and standards that promote community gardens and set clear processes for the establishment of community gardens.				✓			
Prioritize community growing and agricultural uses for land when reviewing municipal master plans and development applications.				✓			
Pilot circular food economy initiatives (e.g., reusable containers and utensils program in mall food courts) and support organizations and businesses to make initiatives financially sustainable.				✓			
Create policies and practices that work in collaboration with municipalities, communities and businesses (from farms to grocers) to increase sustainability and prevent and reduce food wastage (e.g., biomass energy generation, organic waste processing infrastructure, small scale composting).				✓			
Create partnerships and work with the provincial government and post-secondary institutions to carry out research for environmental practices for sustainable agriculture (e.g., cover crops, cultural foods, programs for farmers) to assist in climate change mitigation.				✓			

	York Region Food Council	Working Groups	Municipal Gov	Regional Gov	Organizations	Businesses	Public Institutions
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## Environmental Stewardship (Continued)

Provide grants to assist with farm management practices that increase environmental protection.				✓			✓
Engage in knowledge mobilization around Best Management Practices <sup>3</sup> in Agriculture to increase public awareness of these practices and how climate change impacts the food system.				✓	✓		
Embed language that supports the value of food into all policy.			✓				
Establish and invest in more community gardens and community farms close to where people live.							
Use an equity lens to implement municipal policies and standards that promote community gardens and set clear processes for the establishment of community gardens.			✓				
Prioritize community growing and agricultural uses for land when reviewing municipal master plans and development applications. Meaningful engagement and partnerships with First Nations communities in conserving biological and cultural diversity.							
Increase access to composting bins in public spaces, municipal facilities, and public events.			✓	✓	✓		✓
Meaningful engagement and partnerships with First Nations communities in conserving biological and cultural diversity.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Continued use and evolution of Best Management Practices in agriculture to mitigate and adapt to climate change and a growing population.						✓	✓

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## Knowledge & Sharing

Increase public and stakeholder awareness of community resources and programming.	✓	✓					
Work with First Nations leadership to bridge western and Indigenous knowledge on food and land through events and initiatives.	✓	✓					
Fund and promote accessible food literacy resources and hands-on programming on topics such as growing and agriculture, sustainability and environment, food waste, cooking, preserving, and composting.			✓	✓	✓		
Establish lending libraries for kitchen equipment and garden tools and promote existing initiatives.			✓	✓	✓		✓
Increase public and stakeholder awareness of community resources and programming.			✓	✓			
Increase community access to physical spaces for growing and cooking, food training, and connections.			✓				
Run school programming that encourages food discovery and food skill building.					✓		✓
Promote seed preservation and plant/seed exchanges.			✓		✓		

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## Community & Culture

Develop plan to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action within the York Region Food System.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Create opportunities for supporting, sharing and learning between organizations and agencies that are already fostering food security.	✓	✓					
Host events with and for youth to learn about the food system and create change-makers.	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Build a community of service providers to support community organizations and foster collaboration.	✓	✓					
Create a knowledge hub and support network for community organizations and First Nations Communities to connect, share resources and ideas, and advocate.	✓	✓					
Support community organizations in cooking and serving culturally appropriate food or meals by providing resources and learning opportunities.	✓	✓					
Host events and workshops celebrating cultural food and promoting cross-cultural exchange (e.g., Municipal-run food festivals, chef showcases, cultural cooking classes).			✓	✓	✓		