

## **Declaration of the Waterloo Region Food Summit**

November 16 & 17, 2009, Kitchener, Ontario

*On November 16 & 17, 2009, over 170 people participated in a Summit whose goal was to identify priorities for improving food access and food security in Waterloo Region. About one third of us have experienced not having enough to eat, or worrying about it, at some point in our lives. We discussed this Declaration at the event, added to it, and those of us who agree with it have signed it.*

### **Background**

Local research has continually shown that approximately one in ten residents of Waterloo Region either does not have enough to eat or worries about not having enough to eat. At the same time, many of our farmers struggle to make a living growing or raising food. Many of us who have enough to eat are experiencing health issues because we are not getting enough nutrition from the food we eat. And we know that our current food system depends far too much on fossil fuel inputs to be sustainable over the long term.

### **We believe:**

That everyone has the right to be able to access, and afford to buy, safe, nutritious, and culturally-appropriate food that has been produced in an environmentally sustainable way and that sustains our rural communities.

### **We envision:**

a fundamentally restructured food system in which:

- all stages/aspects/sectors of the food system are determined through democratic community participation, and
- the community possesses the skills and capacity to grow, produce, and prepare food in a way that maximizes ecological sustainability.

### **We will:**

support the work of people and organizations in Waterloo Region who focus on the priorities that we have identified at this Summit.

### **Priorities**

Below are what we believe to be the strategic directions for moving us towards our vision for Waterloo Region's food system. Under each strategic direction, we have identified two priorities for action, which we believe need to happen now.

#### **1. Advocate for adequate income for everyone**

1. Advocate for increases to Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program benefits through a systematic, transparent process.
2. Advocate for a living wage for all employees and educate employers.

#### **2. Support and promote urban agriculture**

1. Establish an urban agriculture and food council to pilot and coordinate priority steps
2. Identify land for urban agriculture

#### **3. Improve walkable access to healthy food**

1. Advocate for all Waterloo Region municipalities to provide prompt clearing of all sidewalks.
2. Support local businesses to provide local produce and products

#### **4. Improve people's skills for growing and preparing food**

1. Lobby the government to provide food preparation and gardening classes beginning at the elementary level
2. Use current facilities, gardens, programs, and information to educate individuals in proper growing and food preparation

#### **5. Pay farmers more for sustainable production of healthy foods**

1. Support direct partnerships between farmers and eaters (e.g. CSAs, neighbourhood markets, buying clubs)
2. Hold consultations to help develop a sustainable agriculture policy for the Region

#### **6. Engage the general public in food system issues**

1. Advocate for the integration of food system issues into primary, secondary, and post-secondary education programs
2. Engage local, provincial, and national media (mass and alternative) in food system issues

#### **7. Increase the availability of culturally appropriate food**

1. Strengthen networks between food agencies and multicultural populations to increase awareness of, and access for culturally appropriate food
2. Increase local agricultural capacity for producing culturally appropriate food.

#### **8. Influence national, provincial and municipal food policies**

1. Advocate for municipal and provincial government policy that supports people's ability to produce and procure safe food
2. Lobby for labels clearly identifying product of Region of Waterloo

#### **9. Continue improving emergency food assistance**

1. Find creative ways to enhance user participation and involve individuals and families in selecting foods for emergency food hampers
2. Support and develop programs to provide healthier options in food boxes and hampers

#### **10. Preserve natural integrity of the Region's food**

1. Promote organic farming in the Region's protected countryside
2. Advocate for the Regional government agencies to purchase more local and organic foods.

#### **11. Local processing and distribution**

1. Reduce local "wasted" food by processing in community kitchens
2. Focus on less pollution when distributing.

#### **12. Food Sovereignty Charter**

1. Create a food sovereignty charter for the Region of Waterloo and link with other Charter groups to implement a food charter nationally.

#### **13. Wild foods**

1. Encourage a healthy, wild food ecosystem with sustainable harvesting and hunting practices
2. Develop ongoing testing for bio-safety of wild food sources from the lowest food chain level.