



Possibility grows here.



March 28, 2013

Hon. Kathleen Wynne
Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food
Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
77 Grenville Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1B3

Dear Premier:

Our organizations congratulate you on the recent introduction of *Bill 36 - An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 (Local Food Act)*. Such legislation serves to highlight to the public, the opportunities and advantages of strong and robust food systems across Ontario. It will also serve, of course, as a launch pad for the further development of our food production, processing and distribution sector.

As you know, the food and farming sectors are a major economic engine in Ontario. We believe *Bill 36* will assist in strengthening our sector and look forward to working with you in making that happen.

Considerable work has been done already on developing local food systems but more needs to be accomplished across the province. We intend to set our sights high with regards the goals and targets spoken of in the Local Food Act. We appreciate that these goals will be published and the government will follow-up with a report on the degree to which they have been achieved. The inclusion of public metrics helps ensure action and achievement.

Premier, we also feel the Local Food Act can and should do more than promote awareness and strive to improve procurement. We believe the key to really accomplishing the goals of stronger food systems in Ontario lies in improving the basic food literacy of all Ontarians. In the short term this means food awareness programs including nutrition and food preparation programming. A longer term investment includes a strong food literacy component in our school curriculum. We go as far as to suggest hands-on food skills training in our school system.

Not only will food literacy programming strengthen our local food system but it will surely translate to a healthier population in the medium to long term.

Likewise, a Local Food Act should also address the very fundamental issue of food access – the ability of all Ontarians to procure nutritious and culturally acceptable food at all times. We recognize this is not a simple matter and perhaps not one that can easily be addressed in a Local Food Act but it is certainly one that looms large in any discussion of food.

Collectively, we hope to work with you on ways and means of improving food access in Ontario.

Premier, we hope that you will also extend the focus of *Bill 36* to encompass regional economic development opportunities. A well crafted *Local Food Act* will help strengthen Ontario's food and agricultural sector, resulting in social and economic benefits for communities all across Ontario. By recognizing the diversity and potential that Ontario's various regions hold, we are certain that we can further enhance the economic viability and resilience of Ontario's regional food and farming sectors.

Finally, we feel that is important to emphasize that *Bill 36* can realize several environmental goals. We aspire to have a *Local Food Act* that would include measures to further incent producers and processors towards environmentally sustainable practises. Using strategies that encourage the food and agricultural sector to continually move along the sustainability spectrum, this government can strengthen the local food system both in the immediate term and in the future.

Premier, we believe the Province of Ontario can be a world leader in developing a sustainable local food system that provides nutritious food to healthy Ontarians. There is much to be gained through an aggressive collective effort to make our food system a model for all to follow.

We look forward to working with you on *Bill 36* with regards to its current goals and to expand our efforts to secure a healthy future of food in Ontario.

Sincerely,



Mark Wales
President
Ontario Federation of Agriculture



Burkhard Mausberg
Chief Executive Officer
Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation



Michael Firmani
Chair
Food Share



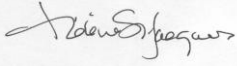
Bryan Gilvesy
Co-Chair
Sustain Ontario




Ralph C. Martin, Ph.D., P.Ag.
Professor, University of Guelph
Loblaw Chair, Sustainable Food Production



Darcy Higgins
Executive Director
Food Forward



Helen St. Jacques
Co-Chair
Toronto Food Policy Council



Doug Van Luyk
Chair
Holland Marsh Growers' Association



Jodi Koberinski
Executive Director
Organic Council of Ontario



Art Smith
Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association



Cathy Bartolic
Executive Director
Ontario Farm Fresh