



Putting food and farming issues first in the upcoming election

As Ontarians begin to prepare for the provincial election in June, one of the key roles of the NFU-O is to ask tough questions of those who want to represent us. We've come up with a list of ten questions highlighting current issues in agriculture and sent them to the four main parties. We will be posting the answers we receive on our web site.

Here are summaries of a couple of the questions we asked. For the complete list, visit nfuontario.ca.

- The true measure of economic success is a stable and predictable net income for farm families. However, broad economic analyses almost always ignore this most critical of all measurements. Is your party committed to enshrining “net economic return” as a principle measurement for analysis of farm needs and as an effective tool to evaluate all government taxation and spending activities? If so how will your party implement this upon gaining control of the government’s legislative agenda?

- Severe weather events and human activities have created significant hardships for food

producers, and these negative effects have necessitated actions to improve the environmental sustainability of our food production system. Food producers have not received fair societal support nor recognition for our role, and potential role, to improve our collective environment. What are the key initiatives which will empower food producers to protect food production capacity, provide true net financial support, and respect private ownership rights to engage in an effective environmental stewardship plan for Ontario?

- Ontario’s society presently engages in a colonial inspired food production model which has grown and evolved over time into our present food system. Nevertheless, colonial ownership, distribution, trade, support systems, etc. still serve as a major influence for our present food system. How does your party intend to reconcile Indigenous rights and legal obligations with our present society fairly for all affected parties,

and how will Indigenous values be reflected within the Ontario food system?

- Urban sprawl, fueled by non-farm speculative acquisition, presents our most clear threat for the protection of prime agricultural farm land. Developer driven growth should not be the defining driving force over community wishes. What is your plan to effectively end sprawl, rejuvenate existing communities, and protect forest, water, and farmland?

- What does Ontario food production look like in 50 years: who owns the land; who are the people farming it; who controls the offerings for food choice; and what changes need to take place immediately to bring about your party’s vision?

We encourage you to use these questions as a starting point for discussion with the candidates in your riding. Share their answers with your neighbours and encourage everyone to make farming and food the top issues in the upcoming election.

Coming Events

Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry, Ottawa, Prescott Russell Local 362 – Next meeting is May 1, 7:00 p.m. at Riverbend Pub and Dining, 3256 River Rd. Osgoode. The June meeting is June 14, 7:00 p.m. at Just Food, 2391 Pepin Court, Ottawa.

Kingston Frontenac, Lennox-Addington Local 316 is hosting a potluck social Saturday, May 5 at Patchwork Gardens, Battersea. Join members and friends at a potluck from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. with the meal beginning about 5:30 pm. As well as your potluck contribution, please bring your own cutlery and plates, and a lawn chair or two if you have them. Contact Ian Stutt at ianstutt@gmail.com for more details.

Renfrew Local 330 – Next meeting is Monday, May 7, 7:30 p.m. at the Barr Line Community Centre. Everyone is welcome.

Food builds community, community builds the food system



At the Local 316 AGM earlier this year, guest speakers were Emma Barken, manager of the Memorial Centre Farmers Market, and Mara Shaw, executive director of Loving Spoonful, a non-profit food access organization based in Kingston. A common theme in their presentations

was the importance of community connections in building the local food system.

Emma spoke about three factors that have contributed to the success of the Memorial Centre Farmers' Market: becoming a year-round market; collaborating with community organizations and individuals to offer programming at the market; and in the spring, summer and fall, moving the market to a grassy area, instead of being on pavement. Mara described ten Loving Spoonful projects undertaken in 2017 that increased access to healthy food for people in the community; all these initiatives involved connections with individuals, businesses, or organizations in the community.

Loving Spoonful was founded in 2008 in response to the 2007 Local 316 project, Food Down the Road, which identified the establishment of a food gleaning organization as a project outcome that would support the community food system. NFU members were involved in founding the Memorial Centre Farmers Market and continue to be vendors and board members.

A subscription to The Rural Voice is one of the benefits of being an NFU-O member