

THUNDER BAY AND AREA FOOD STRATEGY



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Thunder Bay and Area Food Strategy Background

The Ontario Trillium Foundation recently awarded 3 years of funding to a collaborative project which will support the development of a Food Strategy for Thunder Bay and Area. Our goal is to create a healthy and sustainable food system.

In the first year of the project, the Food Strategy Coordinator (Kendal Donahue) will be organizing Working Groups around each of the 7 pillars to carry out research and stakeholder engagement, and to begin drafting aspects of the Food Strategy. The project will involve working with a range of individuals, organizations, businesses and government officials in order to create a Food Strategy that is holistic, representative, and implementable. In year 2 and 3 of the project, the focus will shift to finalizing the Food Strategy and seeking municipal endorsement, changing aspects of the policy environment that will better support the Food Strategy goals, and piloting projects.

Thunder Bay is one of sixty-four local and regional municipalities in Canada that are undertaking initiatives to improve their local food system. Issues of hunger, farmer financial struggles, loss basic cooking skills, shrinking processing and distribution infrastructure, and high incidence of diet-related illness are endemic to municipalities and regions across the world. By choosing to develop a Food Strategy, Thunder Bay and Area is taking a very comprehensive and action-oriented approach to addressing these struggles.

The Food Strategy will be organized around the seven pillars of a sustainable food system, which were selected by community leadership at the 2013 Food Summit held in March. These are:

- 1) Forest and Freshwater Foods: Protect and encourage access to forest and freshwater food sources obtained by hunting, fishing and gathering.
- 2) Urban Agriculture: Expand urban agriculture including community gardens, backyard chickens, edible landscaping and protect urban forests.
- 3) Healthy School Food Environments: Support a healthy school food environment to ensure access for all students to healthy food, embed food literacy in the curriculum, develop school gardens and create healthy food zones around schools.
- 4) Food Access: Access to healthy food by ensuring an equitable distribution of food sources (i.e., retail, food programs, etc.)
- 5) Production and New Farmers: Protect farm-scale production including agricultural land preservation, capital investment support and new farmer mentorship.
- 6) Local Food Procurement: Encourage public sector procurement of local, sustainably-produced food to improve quality of foods served and sold in public venues and encourage institutional buying of healthy local food.

7) Processing and Distribution: Establish food infrastructure for storage, processing, distribution and marketing

The development of the Food Strategy is being directed by an Administrative Committee and Steering Committee. The Administrative Committee includes: Councillor Bernie Kamphof, Municipality of Oliver Paipoonge; Councillor Rebecca Johnson, City of Thunder Bay; Thora Cartlidge, Land Use Planner, City of Thunder Bay; Henriët DeBruin, President, Thunder Bay Federation of Agriculture; Gwen O'Reilly, Food Action Network Co-Chair, Northwestern Ontario Women's Centre; Catherine Schwartz-Mendez, Food Action Network Chair, Thunder Bay District Health Unit; Kendal Donahue, Food Strategy Coordinator, EcoSuperior Environmental Programs.

The Food Strategy will include the City of Thunder Bay, the municipalities of Oliver Paipoonge, Neebing, Shuniah, the townships of Conmee, O'Connor, and Gillies, and the Fort William First Nation.