

Dear Ward 3 City Council Members,

I am writing to amplify a collectively held concern from the Our Food Future working groups for urgent attention to the need for a **comprehensive sustainability plan following the conclusion of the Our Food Future funding in Guelph-Wellington.**

As dedicated partners in Our Food Future's successes, we strongly believe that addressing this matter is crucial for the long-term well-being and resilience of our community. This request is in line with the City's Community Plan and builds on the return on investment that this project has brought to our community - due to foundational leadership by not-for-profits and municipal committees formed to take on these world-stage calibre projects. Social finance leaders like Harvest Impact by 10C are changing how entrepreneurs can access financing in a way that can leverage ideas without extreme risk. Agricultural Challenges distributing microgrants are enabling growers to commit to address climate change with regenerative adaptations to changing soils and temperatures in this region.

The Our Food Future initiative has played a pivotal role in establishing Guelph as a global leader in the circular food economy for sustainable food systems. Its funding has facilitated the implementation of innovative projects and collaborations to support access to affordable nutritious foods, circular businesses and using waste as a resource. The success we have collectively achieved is evident in the positive impact it has had on our city, enhancing our reputation at a national and international scale. These regional successes are actively serving as a model for other communities, and it would be in our best interest to continue to grow deeply in this work together.

Personally - as a result of this project funding - I was able to stay in Guelph longer than my graduate degree completed in 2020 to be employed by the Our Food Future circular food economy project through the pandemic to present day. It has been a profoundly beneficial opportunity to apply a proof-of-concept research idea to a region-wide successful project alongside the wide-ranging team of brilliant circular economy leaders involved with Our Food Future and COIL. Evidence of this partnership through the development of a Food Environment Assessment in 2021 is presented publicly on the [Our Food Future Data Hub](#).

There were some tremendous accomplishments throughout this program duration-highlighted in the staff report to Council sent out in May 2023 and identified in the attached graphic. We see the interconnectedness of food access in these accomplishments with many of the other structural determinants of health issues our community is facing including housing, mental health, and addiction and continued increasing inflation.

As the funding for Our Food Future is projected to formally draw to a close this year, it is imperative that The City of Guelph proactively develops a sustainability plan to ensure the continued funding for the legacy projects and crucial initiatives that have been bolstered.

By establishing a well-rounded sustainability plan, Guelph can ensure that our progress does not stagnate and that our community continues to thrive in these critical areas. We see this as a place for the municipality to lean into collaboration with existing endeavours rather than work separately.

A comprehensive sustainability plan should include funding to:

- Continue to leverage available funding for food related projects in our community through a coordinated approach
- Invest in mid-term and long-term collaborative work necessary to secure a long-term future for a local food distribution hub
- Sustain and grow the Food System Resiliency Table by creating a pathway for it to become an official committee
- Support of the Development of new social enterprise and non-profit solutions that achieve social outcomes
- Support the community action tables for nutritious food distribution and waste reduction

This collective plan will continue to have clear goals, measurable targets, and a realistic timeline for implementation, ensuring the continuity of Our Food Future's accomplishments. Moreover, we know that public consultation and engagement are key goals for the City of Guelph and that you will continue to prioritize this with future steps related to the needs and aspirations of our community.

By taking prompt action to establish a sustainability plan, Guelph City Council can maintain its leadership in sustainable practices, set an example for other municipalities, and create a more prosperous, resilient, and equitable future for its residents. This approach will also be in line with the [Guelph Community Plan](#), specifically the desire for innovative economic opportunities for quality and long-lasting jobs. This builds on the return on investment that this project has brought to our community as a result of this partnership with not-for-profit organizations and institutions throughout Guelph-Wellington taking on foundational leadership roles to take on these world calibre projects.

I support a transition plan in forthcoming years to ensure the Smart City Office goals can continue to be tracked and managed. As many program participants are in the early stages of an established business with this funding, the innovative potential funded so far would not be fully actualized without a long-term funding strategy of this project.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I trust in your commitment to the well-being of our city and look forward to a continued partnership with the Our Food Future team for many years to come.

many thanks,
Jude Keefe (she/her/they)

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With gratitude to the keepers of the land in places I humbly call home: Anishinaabemowin of [Treaty 3](#) | [Cree, Métis](#) of [Treaty 6 + Treaty 8](#) | [Mi'kmaq](#) of [Epekwitk/Mi'kima'ki](#),

