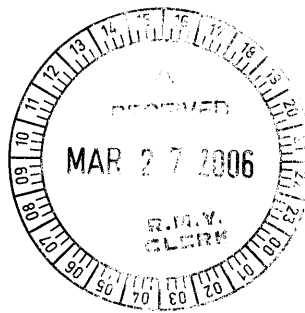


29 Grandview Ave.
Thornhill, Ont.
L3T 1G9
March 24, 2006



REGION OF YORK
CLERK'S OFFICE

FILE No. -

207
B Tudy

Mr. Bill Fisch, Regional Chair and CEO
and Council
York Regional Council
17250 Yonge Street,
Newmarket, Ontario
L3Y 6Z1

Re: Towards a Sustainable Region

Chair Fisch, Mayors and Regional Councillors:

Local food production, processing and agriculture are an essential part of a sustainable community. I attended the meeting in Richmond Hill on March 21 and discovered that this whole topic had not been addressed in the Region's preparation for discussion. I would like to raise it to Council for consideration.

The way to protect our irreplaceable, God-given, natural resource, farmland, is to keep "Sprawl" off it. Do not use our prime agricultural land for more suburbs. Increase the rate of intensification and infill housing well beyond the 40%, 81,000 unit projection.

No, this does not mean building canyons of apartment and condominium towers. This means planning and requiring the implementation of all the principles that Jane Jacobs outlined in her classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Those principles are most similar to the patterns of European cities. Short blocks/walkability. Diversity of styles, sizes and activities/mixed use. Neighbourhoods with sidewalks. Safety of "eyes on the street" and the contact with neighbours.. It means that we convert the space that is wasted by one- and two-storey strip malls, "Big Box" stores and rambling commercial-industrial areas into interesting streets that have human scale, four and five storey buildings with combinations of stores, professional offices, businesses and apartments and flats interspersed with public squares and public spaces These are some of the qualities that make a city environment interesting and desirable to live in. It is about how people enjoy life. Ask a Parisian or Londoner. Who seeks Scarboro?

Markets in Europe are for the distribution of local foods from dependable producers - your local grower/farmer - but they are also centres of human contact and communication. One of the Globe and Mail articles described how isolated and lonely women/mothers/homemakers were because the present suburban developments in Markham prevent easy social contact.

Agriculture is very definitely part of a Sustainable Region. Food is a renewable resource. Soil, properly cared for, renews itself. Local food provides security for the citizens of the Region as well as providing jobs and taxes. The jobs are not only in food production but also in supporting industries, food processing and retailing. Agriculture IS employment land.

Local food contributes to the health of the citizens. The fresher the food is, the more subtle nutrients are available. Not only that but it tastes better. Also, far less fossil fuel is used to transport it.

Farms contribute to the well-being of the environment -clean air, clean water, shelter and food for wildlife.

Farms attract tourism - Agro-tourism - farm vacations, bed-and-breakfast, value-added processing, pick-your-own, corn mazes, to name but a few activities. There is also the attraction provided by chefs and restaurants using the local produce.

Farms present a diversion and restful landscape for the urban neighbours. A rural countryside is a definite asset to the "Quality of Life" factor that *Planning for Tomorrow* addresses. Farms are the basis for that rural community.

What we need in York Region is an agricultural policy. We need Council firstly, to take a stand that will return the agricultural land to productivity. The land must not produce faceless, nameless, money losing commodities that compete on the world market but it should provide fresh vegetables and herbs, meats and cheeses, fruits and other farm products that directly *Feed Cities*. Yes, *Farmers Feed Cities* but *Local Farmer s Feed their Local Cities Best*. The municipalities of Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill must preserve the remaining agricultural land NOT as a mere land bank for greenfield development but for honest agricultural production. Houses cost more tax dollars than they pay for; farms use less municipal resources than they pay taxes for.

Saving the productive land **IS** the first step. Equally important is to preserve the **FARMER**. Land without a farmer is like a body without a head. Farmers keeps farming when they can earn a living wage doing so. New farmers take up the profession when they too can expect a living wage.

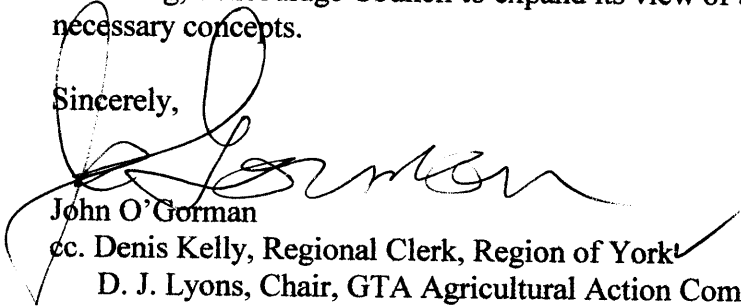
Therefore, the Region will keep farmers, as well as attracting new ones, by setting policies, projects and procedures that make it easier for farmers to produce and market their products. We have to *Put a Face on Food*; our citizens must notice and identify our local producers "Did you get any of Jim's beans last week. They were fantastic!" We can provide time, space and promotion for Farmers' Markets, local retail stores and restaurants that feature local foods.

The third policy item is to advertise York's productivity and attractiveness. The regions of Durham and Waterloo and the areas of Prince Edward County and Caledon already have strong promotional programmes and materials that make themselves tourist destinations. These other locales are wooing OUR citizens to spend money to improve THEIR economies.

The fourth section of the policy that has to be developed is for the facilitation and promotion of urban agriculture. Here we will promote not only home gardens but also community gardens, allotment gardens, rooftop gardens, greenhouses and their place in supporting health through community, exercise and the provision of food.

In closing, I encourage Council to expand its view of the Sustainable Region to include these old but necessary concepts.

Sincerely,



John O'Gorman

cc. Denis Kelly, Regional Clerk, Region of York

D. J. Lyons, Chair, GTA Agricultural Action Committee

Bryan Tuckey, Commissioner of Planning and Development Services