

>>> Alice Horwood <[REDACTED]> 2020-03-30 3:33 PM >>>

My name is Alice Horwood. Since many of you may not know me, I'd like to tell you a bit about myself and why I'm asking you to grant the PDFMA a license to operate at Morrow Park.

I moved to Peterborough in 1991 to attend Trent, and the Peterborough Farmers' Market taught me to eat local food. At the time, this wasn't a trendy thing to do; the 80s had just ended, when new and exotic foods were the flavour of the day. I moved from Hamilton, where the Farmers' Market was housed in a soaring, glass-sided building attached to the then-growing downtown mall. There was some local food such as apples and Mennonite sausages, but the space was dominated by imported cheeses and exotic fruit, veggies from other lands, exotic spices and prepared foods, and flowers from near and far. There were, and still are, only a couple real farmers left.

The Peterborough Farmers' Market was an eye-opening experience. It forced me to question where my food came from. The winter Market was root veggies and apples as far as the eye could see. It had never occurred to me to think about how grapes and zucchini and lettuce appeared in the grocery store year round, nor whether that was a good idea. Here was a stark difference that opened my mind to new ideas about food, and what I valued about it.

I was lucky to spend a few summers helping my friends at Plan B Organic Farms outside Hamilton through their earliest years. I learned a lot; mostly that I do not have the physical stamina to be a farmer. Hence I am eternally grateful to the people who do, and who dedicate their time, energy, and expertise to keep me and my family fed.

I returned to Peterborough, and had a child, and the Market became one of my favourite things about this City. Being able to build real relationships with the people who grow the food we eat has been central to our lives. I bragged about 'our Market' far and wide. I enjoyed the small, producer-only markets that I got to visit alongside my friends from Plan B, but I found myself craving the authenticity of home. Here was a long-standing tradition that brought together the hippies of Trent and the downtown arts community, but also the grandparents, and the hockey players, and the parents waiting for kids at gymnastics, and nuns in full habits, and...well, everyone, it felt like. These people weren't all there for the local, organic foods I sought, but I liked shopping alongside them nonetheless. It was the sense of community that I liked best about going to the Market. The way it functioned as a town square of sorts. I liked the way it knit together urban and rural communities.

Over the past decade, there's been a growing trend towards local food and "hundred mile diets". I want local farmers to do well, and a trend that drives customers in their direction is great. However, I'm also wary of the damage trends can do, in creating false dichotomies and ignoring nuance. In this case, I fear an idea was cemented in the public mind; that local food is defined by a radius of distance from one's home, or a local landmark, and that the goal is to eat only from within it. This is an easy sound bite; a simple metric by which to decide what to eat.

I have certainly prided myself that our diet has been about 75% local food for many years. However, I also think it's dangerous to reduce what we value about food to a number on a sign. Before I moved to Hamilton as a child, I lived in St. Anthony, Newfoundland. We ate very local foods: fish brought to our door directly from the harbour, still flapping; berries on which I gorged while my mother sensibly picked for our freezer; lobsters who terrified me; cabbages from Mr. Simm's magical earth-scented greenhouse...but we also depended on imported cans to see us through. Without them, Newfoundlanders used to go without adequate nutrition through long

winters. The fruits of foreign labour and foreign soil literally staved off starvation in the leanest seasons.

So, while I want to support local farmers, I also value farmers elsewhere. And I think there's room for both to be represented at a Market. I have been heartbroken by the recent campaign to force my beloved market to operate under a model that disdains resold produce as being "just like the grocery store". There are a lot of people in our community who can't afford to feed their families adequately, and I'm appalled that this was used as an insult. Certainly, I think we've all learned to reconsider the value of grocery stores?

I have a lot of grief about what has happened to the Market. I agree that there were clearly issues with the way the it was run, but feel that it was unfairly smeared by a slick marketing campaign that threw the baby out with the bath-water. I would have preferred real community dialogue and creative solutions. Important issues have been lost in the bickering that has ensued, and many real local farmers have had their livelihoods unfairly damaged.

I don't intend to delve into the details of my frustrations here, nor reopen wounds, but I want to make clear that I don't feel comfortable at the PRFM. If it becomes the only year round market in town, I will lose access to the local foods that sustain me, as will others in my community who share my feelings. I am not asking anyone who goes to that market to stop doing so. Far from it; as I've said, I want ALL farmers to be supported, and if that's the sort of market you prefer, then please go and enjoy it.

I am simply asking that you see that I deserve to shop at the Market I prefer.

Now, more than ever, I don't think we should be shunning anyone who is willing to provide food to our city. I ask that you give the PDFMA some breathing room to sort itself out. That there be no more insistence on a particular model of what a Farmers' Market looks like, so that it can simply be what it is or may choose to become. I want the vendors of the Market to have time to stabilise and regroup and decide how to proceed. Especially in this uncertain time. A license to operate at Morrow Park for a few years would allow them to do this. I feel that a reprieve is deserved by people who work hard to feed us all, and it's important to me so that I can continue to feed my family our favourite foods.

Thank you for your time - Alice Horwood.