

Peterborough Food Action Network

September 6, 2016

Allan Seabrooke, CAO
City of Peterborough
500 George St. N.
Peterborough, ON K9H 3R9

Dear Mr. Seabrooke:

On behalf of the Peterborough Food Action Network and our local Network of Community Gardens, we are writing to advocate for equal access to reliable water sources for all local community gardens. Currently, there 43 community gardens throughout the City and County of Peterborough, the number has grown from 11 since 2010. This places Peterborough with the highest number of community gardens per capita in the country. Each of these community gardens, supported by the Nourish Project, and run by independent citizen garden groups, provides a space for neighbours to gather & get to know one another, greening of underutilized space, and the opportunity for residents to grow fresh food for themselves, their families and if desired, to donate to the wider community. Last season, gardeners were able to harvest over 140,000 pounds of food with a value of well over \$350,000 from their community garden plots.

We believe that these community gardens are a very valuable part of our community, and that they require the on-going support of many organizations and partners to continue being successful and sustainable.

In 2011, the City of Peterborough Community Garden Policy was enacted. The Policy #0023 states that:

"The City of Peterborough values and supports sustainable community gardens because they contribute to: economical, nutritious, and local food production; an appropriate use of open space; health and well-being; fitness and recreation; positive social interaction; strong neighbourhoods; environmental education; and increased self-reliance."

This Policy has played an important role in the growth of a thriving movement of connected and bountiful community gardens throughout the City of Peterborough. However, one major challenge faced by community gardens remains unaddressed. Although several community gardens do have reliable access to water, this access is not equally guaranteed through the policy, and has led to uneven access to water for community gardens across the City.

Without a reliable source of water, community gardens are not accessible to everyone, and face challenges in remaining sustainable. In seasons such as the summer of 2016 where we saw unprecedented drought, access to water becomes particularly critical (please refer to Appendix

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A). Gardens with reliable access to water have thrived despite the drought, whereas gardens that do not; have seen gardeners working incredibly hard to reap a harvest, and in some cases have been forced to give up portions of their plots, or losing large portions of or entire harvests. Providing sustainable water sources is crucial to welcoming in new or experienced gardeners, and will ensure that community gardens are accessible to everyone regardless of income or physical ability.

We would like to advocate on behalf of the Network of local community gardens to initiate a discussion between the Nourish Project, the City of Peterborough Recreation Division, Public Works and the PUC, and any other relevant parties, to provide water, free of charge to community gardens across the City of Peterborough. This water access could take several forms including: a) Linking into existing or installing water taps; b) providing consistent delivery of water to fill up tanks at garden sites; or, c) subsidizing the cost of water for neighbours whom provide water to adjacent gardens.

Nourish is committed to providing education related to water conservation and encourages all community gardens to use water saving techniques such as watering from existing tanks, installing rain barrels where possible, and using mulches to keep moisture in the gardens.

Currently, there are only a small number of gardens that require access to water. For a nominal cost, we can ensure that community gardeners across the region have equal access to water, and the opportunity to grow sustainably and reap bountiful harvests.

We would like to request that the City of Peterborough Community Services Policy Analyst/ Recreation Coordinator engage in a conversation with the aforementioned partners who could support equal sustainable access to water for community gardens. Further, that you consider revising the Community Garden Policy to include guaranteed, reliable access to water for every community garden, new or established.

Please feel free to contact Jillian Bishop, Nourish Community Food Cultivator at 705-743-3526 x115 or growing@nourishproject.ca to initiate these discussions.

With thanks,

Original signed by

Dr. Rosana Salvaterra
Medical Officer of Health, Peterborough Public Health
Chair, Peterborough Food Action Network

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Appendix A – July 2016 Community Garden Examples



The King Edward Community Garden, July 2016, has access to running water which they use to fill a water tank from which gardeners can take water from for their plots. The garden has remained lush, and gardeners are reaping bountiful harvests.



The Stewart St. Community Garden, July 2016, does not have reliable access to water to fill their tank, and as a result, many plots have simply dried up, or gardeners have had to work much harder to haul water from their nearby homes, and still have been unable to produce lush, bountiful plots.