

June 11 2021

Your Worship Mayor Hall and City Councillors,

We are the Everyone At the Table collective, a small group of local food security enthusiasts, working hard to make the local bounty visible and accessible. Significant farm to table activity is underway in the region of Prince George and yet it is clear that this activity is largely invisible to the majority of the population. Making local food sources and services more widely visible not only increases access to local foods, it stimulates demand and production of such foods, while contributing to the health of the community and the economy. The on-going pandemic has heightened most people's understanding of the fragility of our food supply, making this a time for action.

We are writing today to congratulate you on recent decisions made by council about local food security which we support. We would like to tell you more about our work, offer to collaborate, and ask for your support for the ways in which we are working to advance food security. We read the minutes of the regular council meeting of May 31 2021 with gratitude and much appreciation for the work of the Select Committee on Poverty Reduction. You have our support for all the recommendations they made and we want to collaborate to make them happen. Because we work to improve local/regional food security and improve our local food system, we are particularly appreciative of the following recommendations:

"That Council APPROVES the recommendations of the Select Committee titled "Select Committee on Poverty Reduction Final Recommendations" in the attachment to the report dated April 29, 2021." paves the way for the recommended work to happen.

"That council direct administration to return a report to Council recommendations regarding proposed terms of reference and committee structure for a food policy committee." First step! Yeah!

Recommendations

(soon within 6 months to a year):

"Food Security: Advance opportunities for sustainable food sources including community gardening, food kitchens, and programming focused on food supply and education."

"Food Security: Use City tools (policy, grants, zoning, etc.) to support further development of community gardens and access to healthy food."

(1 year to 3 years)

"Food Security: Develop a Food Policy Council (and Food Charter) that supports issues around community food security and insecurity."

"Food Security: Use food access mapping to inform City project development decisions (i.e. provide incentives to develop projects close to food sources)."

<https://pub-princegeorge.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=8875>

These are all recommendations that would have found their way in the report we plan to write for City Council following our recent consultations of the community on food consumption, food production and food waste, so it was very exciting as we come out of our first round of data collection to find the city already there at the convergence.

We should tell you more about us. Moved by our shared vision of a secure sustainable local food system, we came together in late March 2021 and through Local Food PG society applied for a small MyPG grant for a project to celebrate food security in our region and to improve our local sustainable food system. We took our name from this project: Everyone At the Table: Growing Food Security in Prince George.

Those of us in our collective who are settlers on this land, could not do this work honestly without acknowledging the 9000+ years of the Lheidli T'enneh Nation's stewardship. The Lheidli T'enneh ancestors have cared for this beautiful land that feeds us all as they continue to do in the present and we welcome their teachings and ancestral knowledge as we work together towards food security for all people.

We are:

Terri McClymont, Executive Director of REAPS. REAPS has supported food security for over 2 decades providing resources, working with community gardens to enhance and promote access to growing food through collaboration with stakeholders and residents, and hosts the "Love Food Hate Waste PG" facebook page, as well as being the compiler of the original Local Producers list.

Theresa Healy, Ph.D. Group process facilitator/researcher, Vice President, Public Health Association of British Columbia (PHABC), Adjunct Professor School of Environmental Planning & Gender Studies

Roanne Whitticase, artist, farmer, webmistress extraordinaire

Kym Gouchie, healthy lifestyles advocate and inspiration, artist, indigenous cultural advisor.

Catharine Kendall, Executive Director of Connaught Youth Centre, planted community gardens, a cherry orchard, offers Community Kitchen and Horse Therapy programs to vulnerable children, youth and families, president of the Eaglet Lake Farmers' Institute.

Alex Rowan (roselyne lambert), beekeeper, daughter of farmers, treasurer of District C Farmers' Institute, communications director for PG Beekeepers Association, addictions therapist.

We got to work and since early April 2021, we have:

- Designed an online community event to illuminate the landscape of local food activities in the region and to inspire and mobilize collective action. The online event supported the participants in sharing and developing ideas and practices for Prince George and Region to become a leader and model championing locally sourced food.
- Created online and paper surveys and other in-person events on the topics of food consumption, production, and waste to hear the voices of those who could not participate in the online event.
- Created a website for all-things-food for the Prince George region.

<https://www.letseatlocalpg.com>. We built this space to allow us all to connect with each other to make our local/regional food systems visible: local food producers, community gardens, sources of free food, etc. It also hosts a library of existing food related research for our region as well as inspiration from other regions. The website means to connect us all by making visible what we are doing, celebrating what we have, noticing what we are missing, and supporting each other to improve our local food systems.

We are an action collective in its infancy, but we think what we have accomplished in two short months speaks to our commitment. We are intentionally not incorporating as a legal entity (society, etc) because our core values are:

- To bring together all the fabulous work going on in our region around food security and supporting an ecologically/socially/financially regenerative sustainable local food system, a food system that takes into account not just the financial cost of food, but also its social and ecological/environmental costs.
- To support existing societies, entrepreneurs, institutions such as Northern Health, or local governments such as the city government, Regional Districts and Indigenous government when their vision/mission is the same as above.
- To build synergy, to work towards funding collaboration between stakeholders, not competition.

- Inclusivity (Everyone At the Table). We are actively building bridges with the most vulnerable in our community, as well as with institutions such as Northern Health, City Council, the Regional District, and local Indigenous governments.

For now, we have completed the information gathering phase of our work plan and based on the information collected, we are writing a funding proposal to Canada Healthy Communities Initiatives.

Our goal is to continue to build capacity and mobilize the community to increase access to locally grown and produced food through:

- Strengthening the capacity of the Everyone At the Table collective to support future growth in food policy and implementation of community-based food programs in the Prince George area.
- Improving and validating the EAT just-launched everything-food-Prince George information sharing website
- Establishing the beginning phase of a garden share program in collaboration with Young Agrarians and a coordination of all local community gardens.
- Commercial Kitchen/food processing. Bring to the table all stakeholders to lead to the establishment of a commercial kitchen with walk-in cooler/freezer accessible to local/regional food producers and not-for-profits who feed the hungry in our community.
- A pilot project of an online store for local food producers with a weekly local food box.

We trust that you share our objectives and will be willing to give your support to our funding application. Please, contact us with any questions or requests for elaboration and we look forward to meeting with you in the near future.

Yours in pursuit of local/regional food security,

Terri McClymont, Theresa Healy, Roanne Whitticase, Kym Gouchie, Catharine Kendall, Alex Rowan.