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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

Tuesday 8 October 2013

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mardi 8 octobre 2013

**Standing Committee on
Social Policy**

Local Food Act, 2013

**Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Loi de 2013 sur
les aliments locaux

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL POLICY

COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA POLITIQUE SOCIALE

Tuesday 8 October 2013

Mardi 8 octobre 2013

The committee met at 1603 in committee room 1.

LOCAL FOOD ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LES ALIMENTS LOCAUX

Consideration of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013 /
Projet de loi 36, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur les
aliments locaux.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): We'll call the meeting to order. The Standing Committee on Social Policy is here to go into hearings on Bill 36, An Act to enact the Local Food Act, 2013.

HOLLAND MARSH GROWERS' ASSOCIATION

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Our first depute is the Holland Marsh Growers' Association, represented by Jamie Reaume, executive director. Thank you very much for joining us today. If you would identify yourself for the purpose of Hansard. You have five minutes to make a presentation, and it will be followed by three minutes of questioning from each of the three parties. If you'd like to proceed.

Mr. Jamie Reaume: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Jamie Reaume, executive director, Holland Marsh—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): One other thing: I will give you a signal when you have a minute left.

Mr. Jamie Reaume: Thank you. Jamie Reaume, Holland Marsh Growers' Association. I'm the executive director. I'm also the chair of the Ontario Food Terminal Board, so I wear a joint hat when it comes to the Local Food Act.

My comments will be relatively brief; I'll probably just use the five minutes. Obviously, we speak in favour of the act in regard to what's there, but we do have a preference for some things we would like to see.

Primarily, we do agree with the Bob Bailey bill about taxation, simply because that is the right thing to do for farmers. One of my farmers and our organization were approached to do a donation for the Ontario public service this week. We've donated 2,000 pounds of carrots and 2,000 pounds of onions that will be at the Daily Bread Food Bank. That was through Hillside Gardens,

Ron Gleason. That's about \$1,500 worth of product from their end, and that's what our guys do all the time. We are very generous people in the Holland Marsh; we are always giving. The numbers are astronomical when it comes to the fresh produce side, and this is merely a way to acknowledge that we actually do good work for the communities. That's what these guys are based around: being good stewards of both the land and the communities that they service.

Second to that, we do serve as the Holland Marsh, meaning that we are outside of the GTA by approximately 50 kilometres. In short, we are Ontario's soup and salad bowl and the Toronto area's backyard garden. We grow 67 different crops and a multitude of varieties. You feed your cities because of us. Therefore, we have a big picture in what we'd like to see. But this act itself is just a start. This act is merely a cornerstone. We want to see it passed, because then the dialogue and the debate becomes around what we do to make things better. Bits and pieces are not going to help. Mere amendments won't just add to it. We need to be able to look at this as a one-window opportunity of what we do in farming and food.

It's the reason why we also think that the week should be moved, not because we don't celebrate farming and food, but because we think that food is a different item than the farming aspect is. We'd like to see the week moved to June. We've stressed that before. The reason for that is that Queen's Park holds its farmers' market on its front yard with 20 to 30 different organizations that talk about the upcoming harvest, that talk about the availability of food, that provide an educational component to this industry that we all want to see do better.

That's why we step up and say that this is really an educational piece. This local food bill can become convoluted and lose the teeth that are required that would come under other acts. If you want to play on the distribution side and food hubs, then open up the Ontario Food Terminal Act. There's a specific clause on that. If you want to talk about snacks, if you want to talk about meals, then go to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and discuss how to make that better. If you want to talk about legislative purposes, there are committees for that.

This is a social agenda committee, primarily. If I read the committee correctly, you're here for the fairness of all Ontario. Therefore—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): One minute.

Mr. Jamie Reaume: I've got my one minute? Beautiful.

Therefore, in essence, what we're saying is that this is a social contact, this is a social act, this is a social bill that is geared to the consumer at the end. We applaud that. We thank you. But you could no more legislate local food to be eaten by your constituents than you can collect every tax dollar that's available in this province. We think this is a good start. We want to see it progress more, but we see this as a cornerstone piece to what we would call an Ontario food strategy, a much larger piece that fits the needs of all the citizens of Ontario.

Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much, Jamie; it was very good.

We'll start with three minutes of questioning from the official opposition. Mr. Hardeman.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much, Jamie, for your presentation.

You mentioned something about the food terminal and what we could do to make the system better. Could you just elaborate a little bit on it, mandating only Ontario food in your—I presume that's just in the farmers' market or into the open market rather than in the whole terminal?

Mr. Jamie Reaume: Yes and no. My mandate is pretty crystal clear, and it's from all the parties, and that is that we need to improve local food inside the terminal. We've started the process. Right now, we have Ontario farmers that serve Ontario products, but on what we call the horseshoe or that U that we talk about, we also have Ontario farmers that are not only servicing Ontario products and farmers in bringing in food, but they also get involved in the 365/7/24 that has become commonplace.

But, in answer to your question, we are seeing an increase in local food. We're up to about 23% or 24% as of this past year. We just set a record in that we moved more than a million tons of food through the terminal, which has never happened in its mandate, and what we'd like to see is an increase of at least 2% to 3% every year of more local product going through. That's realistic for the amount of exportation that—

1610

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The other thing I'd like to ask about: You mentioned the tax credit for farmers donating to food banks. I've heard some concerns expressed about how much bookkeeping that would take if you put that in place, and where the burden would be. How do you keep track of a tax credit for something you take out of the field directly to a food bank? Could you give some advice as to how we would deal with it to make sure that we had honest accounting, to make sure that the amount of food and the amount of credit going are appropriate?

Mr. Jamie Reaume: Well, in answer to your question, my guys have now become prolific bookkeepers, despite the fact that they really don't want to be. They're involved in traceability. They're involved, as many of the

farmers are, in accountability for each of the fields that they do.

It's a relatively simple process once you're donating, because, really, you're only donating 100 to 200 pounds a week, and what happens is that you are able to build upon that. My guys do this all the time. Dominion, Bradford and District co-op—they donate a skid a week; at Thanksgiving particularly, then they'll do 10 skids. Five years ago, when we started, we donated a tractor-trailer load, 24 straight skids—2,000 pounds each, 48,000 pounds—down to the city of Toronto.

We can keep account of this. I think that the problem with it is going to be twofold for that, and I say this in sincerity: First, there is going to be a federal implication to this; and second, there needs to be an easier delivery mechanism around the tax credit itself. But is it doable? Absolutely. I'm afraid that my guys aren't out there to try and kind of rob Peter to pay Paul. They are actually doing this out of the generosity of their hearts to start with. They are not about to scam the system.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. Third party?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thanks, Jamie, for coming. I really appreciate it. I drive through the Holland Marsh every week on my way to work, so I appreciate the Holland Marsh, and I appreciate all of your comments.

Regarding the tax credit, I think you're an example of where this would fit perfectly; I really think so. But I have a couple of questions about other areas, and I would like to hear your expertise.

As a dairy farmer, you can donate milk. A farmer donates some milk, and the processor donates the processing. Because a lot of products, maybe not fresh vegetables, but a lot of products, require processing. We're having problems about how to quantify a dollar amount for the raw product for a donation, yet there's no donation for the processing. What would you think about the idea of including processing as well?

Mr. Jamie Reaume: Am I being honest about this?

Mr. John Vanthof: I would appreciate it.

Mr. Jamie Reaume: All of my guys deal with processing of some form or another. If that was not the case, you'd be getting dirty carrots and dirty lettuce, so it is processed to that level. In the Marsh, particularly, we're an example of where farmers grow specifically for the processing side, meaning they grow for a Hillside or a Carron Farms.

It's the same opportunity for the processors of dairy. I believe that anybody involved in the system, meaning anybody involved in that farming side, should be eligible for it, as long as there is an understanding between the farmer—the giver of, say, a raw product. And that includes pigs as well; you can't just drop a pig off—

Interjection.

Mr. Jamie Reaume: Well, I'd like to see it, but it doesn't happen. You can't drop a cow. There's processing involved with that, despite what some people think. There is processing in virtually every food that we do, so we need to work within the system. Again, it goes back

to having a delivery mechanism that is applicable and works for everybody.

Mr. John Vanthof: And if there was further processing involved—you've got a huge market right next to a huge producing area, but a lot of other parts of the province don't have that. Transportation is even more critical, and a further process would make a lot more sense.

Mr. Jamie Reaume: Yes. In that case, I would agree. I see the north as being the biggest venue for us being able to assist with.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. We'll move to the government. Mr. Colle?

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Jamie. My father, when he first came to Canada, came over on a contract in those days after the war, and he worked on the Holland Marsh for a number of years, near Bradford, so it's a place close to me.

The question I had is in terms of the Ontario Food Terminal Board, you mentioned that there was something there that had to be looked at. Briefly, just flag that again?

Mr. Jamie Reaume: Looked at in terms of—

Mr. Mike Colle: In terms of a change that you asked for or—

Interjection.

Mr. Jamie Reaume: Oh. I said that if you're going to do distribution hubs, you need to open up the act and take a look at it, because there are phrases within the act that preclude that. There were two pieces, actually, that talk about the Ontario Stockyards, which no longer exist, and the Ontario Food Terminal, which still exists. They are two diverse pieces, but the act, the legislation itself, is something that would allow for more of what I call an ability to put in the hubs. Those food distribution centres or hubs are legislated differently.

Mr. Mike Colle: Okay. And then the next thing you said—there were how many tons? Nine billion tons of—

Mr. Jamie Reaume: No. We brought one million tons of food inside the terminal this year, which was a record. Normally, you run anywhere from 880,000 to 930,000 tons kind of thing, but we had a million tons that ran through, which is an extraordinary amount of food.

Mr. Mike Colle: I've been involved with the Toronto international tomato festival. We're trying to promote canning of tomatoes in the Italian tradition, and it's increasing by leaps and bounds by second and third generation newcomers. But what I was trying to get a hold of—I found out how many tomatoes are produced by greenhouses. I know tomatoes are a cash crop, but how many pounds of tomatoes or bushels of tomatoes would perhaps be produced every year in the GTA or would the food terminal handles? Do we have any idea? Can we ever get a number? I've asked the ministry and they don't seem to be able to get a number on that.

Mr. Jamie Reaume: You're talking about—

Mr. Mike Colle: The Roma tomatoes, the San Marzano—

Mr. Jamie Reaume: You're talking about three different things. First, you're talking about the greenhouse,

which is a different sector. Second, you're talking about the vegetable processors, which is specifically the Romas and tomato varieties like that that go to Heinz down in the Leamington area. Third, you're talking about field tomatoes and the open crop for it.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes—

Mr. Jamie Reaume: Availability of poundage is rather difficult to track because many of the farmers themselves don't keep a really clear record of how many they move. The greenhouse sector itself would be a little different. The veg processors you grow per pound, but the free market, what I call the fresh market—it would be virtually impossible to figure out how to get a handle on that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Good. Thank you very much, Jamie. The last numbers I saw from the processing industry: There's about 40 tonnes per acre.

Mr. Jamie Reaume: Yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much for coming in. Obviously, your knowledge of the industry is very helpful. Thank you.

Mr. Jamie Reaume: Thank you all.

FOOD FORWARD

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): We will call the Food Forward representative here. Thank you very much for coming. We look forward to your presentation. As with the former presenter, you have five minutes, and that will be followed by three minutes each of questioning. Would you please identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard?

Mr. Darcy Higgins: Darcy Higgins, executive director of Food Forward.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. I'll warn you when you have one minute left. Thank you.

Mr. Darcy Higgins: Great. Thanks, Ted.

I represent Food Forward, which is a group of citizens who are working to create positive and healthy change through food. We've worked on many initiatives, including local food in hospitals, support for new entrepreneurs, including newcomer caterers and young local sustainable food superstars, and working to connect community food leaders, policy-makers and entrepreneurs who are doing great things in food.

I'm not here representing a specific industry sector but a public voice. I'm joined by a few of our members of Food Forward here today, folks from the Toronto Youth Food Policy Council, and others of the public who are interested in coming to the next meetings. Many of us who are here, including other speakers and deputants and those who have done written submissions, are also supportive of the Local Food Act and are asking to make it stronger. Local food procurement by the broader public sector is critical for local farmers and for the public who are eating the food.

The Local Food Fund that was recently announced I believe will be very positive for the food sector.

We wish that a Local Food Act would better address some of the other problems in the local food system, things like the environment, equity, health, job creation. As you know, we have deep issues in Ontario around the food system that must be addressed, like the loss of farmland, family farms, young farmers, produce production, processing infrastructure. But primarily today we are here to ask that the Local Food Act be strengthened in a way that creates more jobs, something that's critical for young people like me and across all sectors in the province. But I think we can do something in food.

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On the Local Food Act, we suggest considering amendments to see the act through a jobs lens. The stronger the act, the more jobs we can create. We have three specific amendments to propose, which some other MPPs and organizations have also been proposing. In a letter to Food Forward last year, the Premier committed to a strengthened act that would develop goals and targets around the production, processing, distribution, sales and marketing of Ontario food. The language of the act, we believe, should improve to meet this commitment, or else goals and targets could be up to the whim of the minister of the day. Therefore, we propose the act at least read that the minister "will," rather than "may," establish goals and targets.

The minister should also increase financial and educational support for public sector organizations in the agri-food sector to allow goals and targets to be met. From our experience working with and advising staff in universities and hospitals, institutions are at very different levels in local food procurement, and I think some government support would allow a lot to happen in this area.

Secondly, from here in Toronto to our rural communities, regulations in agriculture, public health and many other areas affect food and agriculture businesses. These regulations are difficult to follow and very complicated. Jamie would know this, as do new Canadians, for example, who are trying to start small catering businesses. A business owner I spoke with last week had dealt with conflicting stories from bureaucrats trying to figure out the system for years, and wasted a lot of money and time along the way. She started figuring things out and now has newcomers to Canada asking her for assistance. A woman who was in her restaurant business incubator a little while ago was in tears, asking her advice. She thought her business was sunk because of the issues.

Therefore, the minister should conduct a review of regulations that affect small businesses, with public consultations, and create a single-window approach to ensure regulations meet with the needs of health, safety and the environment, but are also accessible and practical for food and small-scale agriculture businesses to create new jobs.

Finally, we support Bill 68. We think it's a great idea to give to food banks. We also suggest—because community food programs are expanding these days and there are a lot of groups, a lot of charities that are also

doing very innovative work. We could talk about this more in a minute, but we believe that perhaps other charities that do community food programs, not just food banks, could be relevant for accepting donations.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. We'll move to the third party for questioning. Mr. Schein.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Darcy, welcome. Thanks for coming in today. We appreciate your contributions to the city and the work that you've been doing, and for coming here today.

Your experience working with youth when it comes to food: I'm curious. If we were to get more public education for young people when it comes to food, in your experience, what would that mean? Can we change our buying habits, our growing habits, with a better education strategy?

Mr. Darcy Higgins: Yes. There's a real mix of the level of knowledge young people have. There is a significant interest, so I think young people are driving for more knowledge about the food system, about where food comes from, and it would be excellent to get more of that in the classroom and more food education that's practical, hands-on, that involves growing or farm tours or work in the kitchen. Things around food jobs would be very beneficial.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Have you thought about using school infrastructure for community kitchens, for example? I know that a lot of people don't have access to kitchens, and we have schools where we're already paying to keep the lights on, where we're paying for the heat, but we're not using those kitchens very well.

Mr. Darcy Higgins: Right. Kitchens are very hard to come by in the city, so the more use of schools as community hubs, even thinking about that as a commercial kitchen that could be used in the evening—I think the Toronto District School Board is interested in doing more, having more kitchens. So having those come on board for folks who need to use them in community programs would be really good.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Also, when it comes to making charitable donations, I think that's great, and farmers who do that should be supported. In your experience, though, are food banks across Ontario able to refrigerate fresh food? How often is that possible?

Mr. Darcy Higgins: A lot of food banks are doing small-scale work, some at churches and such, so I can't say exactly what the background is. I think that some others, like community health centres that are charitable but are also doing the meal programs or community kitchen programs, would have a bit more refrigeration and also be able to use the produce.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you, Darcy.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. Government? Mr. Colle.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you. I have a lot of questions and very little time. You talked about job creation with some of the newcomers who are trying to get into the business of food. What was the obstacle for that lady

there you were talking about who was trying to basically start—

Mr. Darcy Higgins: This was in your riding, actually. I work with Josh Colle on some of these projects. It was figuring out the use of kitchens and some of the public health regulations. In your area and others, there are a lot of folks who are doing stuff at home, maybe under the radar.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, in their basements and stuff.

Mr. Darcy Higgins: Yes. I think the woman who has a business now in the riding had been told that she could just have another kitchen, so when she got another house, she had the two kitchens, but it was then on the second floor. Public health hadn't told her initially "no." So all of this investment went into putting in two kitchens and it wasn't in the right place and couldn't be done.

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm just thinking of all these stories over the years. I remember that there was a Portuguese gentleman who had a business in the garage. He was doing the Portuguese churrasco potatoes. The neighbour next door was complaining that these big transport trucks were coming weekly and he had a forklift and three or four people working in the garage peeling potatoes. They were trying to close him down and I was trying to explain to the building inspector, "This guy is hiring people. Is there any way we can accommodate him?"

Then there was also the example of Grace Street. There was a Chinese family in the basement doing chicken preparation for a Chinese restaurant on Bloor. I walked in and said, "Holy God." What can we do to sort of get that legalized?

Mr. Darcy Higgins: What about 30 states in the US have done are called cottage food laws. They've done a review and passed these laws allowing the basic, safer foods. You probably wouldn't be able to do chicken in your basement, but something like basic baked goods or a pie that you might do at a church sale or a fall fair type of thing, and that would give a good start to a lot of entrepreneurs to figure out some things that they could do. Those are American cottage food laws.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. We'll move to the official opposition. Mr. Hardeman?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much for your presentation. I just want to start off by saying that obviously you agree with all of the parties at this committee hearing in support of the food act. At least most of us want to do the best we can to make it do as much as it can. When the minister suggested, "We will reintroduce it, but a stronger food act," I think that some of the things you mentioned are what would make it a stronger food act. I think that's what we are collectively looking for.

You mentioned the issue about—rather than "may" set goals and targets or ask the stakeholders to set goals and targets, you're suggesting that it should read "shall" set goals and targets. If that change was made, what do you envision those targets looking like? Can you set targets if you don't know what the balance of Ontario food to other

food is now? How do you set a target to improve on that and so forth? Can you try to give me a feeling of how you think that should be set?

Mr. Darcy Higgins: There is a lot of research, and that baseline data, I think, has to be done. What I think we could at least do is say, "Yes, we will set goals and targets," rather than the minister "may" at any time do it. I don't know if we should have numbers in the act, because we're in different places with different sectors and different parts of the province or what "local" means in different areas. So there is a lot of research to be done by different groups of institutions with the government or with the public service on this, but if it's in a stronger way saying we will, within a few months, work on the development of these targets.

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Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The other thing I'd like to ask: You mentioned about broadening the ability of the tax credit to more than just food banks. Could you give me some examples of what you would include in that as other groups in the community?

Mr. Darcy Higgins: Sure. I believe it's in the brief that I gave; I gave some examples. I would say community food programs could be programs that run community kitchens. These are becoming much more popular around the province, where folks are involved in creating the food themselves and cooking, not just being handed the can or the produce but developing that, cooking, then bringing it home or eating as a community. Or perhaps active living children and seniors' programs, a lot of programs that may be giving a snack for an after-school program in a community that adds health—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much, Mr. Higgins. We appreciate you coming in and bringing your perspective to the committee.

Mr. Darcy Higgins: Thanks, everybody.

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): We will now move forward with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and your presentation: Mr. Wales and Mr. Lambrick. Welcome to the committee. You'll have five minutes to make your presentation, and then three minutes from each of the parties to question. We look forward to your presentation. Would you please identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard.

Mr. Mark Wales: Good afternoon. My name is Mark Wales, and I am the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. With me today is Peter Lambrick, a board member.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much.

Mr. Mark Wales: First off, I'd like to thank you for this opportunity today to address the committee regarding Bill 36, the Local Food Act. We are pleased to provide our comments on this important piece of legislation on behalf of OFA members. Our over 38,000 farm family

members come from all types of farming operations, and from the backbone of a robust food system that drives the Ontario economy.

The OFA supports the intentions of Bill 36. We believe that this legislation presents an opportunity to build lasting support for Ontario's farming and food sectors. Promoting awareness and striving to improve local food procurement is a great start, and should be endorsed through this legislation, but the goals of the act should not stop there. We believe that Bill 36 can and should do more.

Allow me to put this comment in context. The OFA and its national and provincial colleagues have done considerable work in developing a strategic approach to our food system. We have created a national food strategy—and you all have a copy of that document, so enjoy it. The national food strategy is a vision for farming and food that focuses on long-term solutions to the significant and evolving challenges that we face today.

While national in scope, the strategy presents a number of key objectives that are under provincial authority. The national food strategy envisions a future where Ontarians will always have access to safe and nutritious food, and that consumers will choose foods that lead to a healthy lifestyle. Essential to achieving these objectives, we need to invest in food awareness programs, to create education campaigns to encourage Ontarians to value food as a source of nutrition and to avoid waste. Human health and illness prevention starts with a strong food literacy component in our school curriculum and ends with a healthier population and a less taxed health care system.

We believe that Bill 36, the Local Food Act, can be the first legislative initiative that addresses these goals of the national food strategy. Local procurement is an important part of that, but we suggest that the opportunity now exists to pursue a more ambitious bill. The OFA has been very clear since the introduction of this act that it can and should have a broader impact by including targets for improving food literacy programming in our schools, by addressing improvements in food access and by providing support for local economic development initiatives based on food systems.

The Local Food Act also presents an opportunity to impact local food production and marketing by changing the approach to the property tax assessment of agricultural value-added activities. In the interests of growing our local food supply, we propose that the property tax treatment of value-added facilities give special consideration to products grown in Ontario. The OFA policy on property taxation of value-added facilities states that if, historically, at least 51% of the product is grown and value-added to by the same farmer or farmers, and at least 90% of the product is grown in Ontario, then the facilities should be subject to no more than 25% of the residential property tax rate—i.e., the farm class tax rate. If the Ontario government wants to effect real change in the availability of local food products in our food

systems, this definition should be incorporated into the Local Food Act.

With regard to local food systems, the OFA wishes to again acknowledge the tremendous benefits of the \$30-million fund that is now available in support for local food systems from the Ontario government. This is an excellent initiative to help jump-start the goals of the many thousands of Ontarians who have become engaged in and enamoured by Ontario's local food. OFA firmly believes these amendments will help Ontarians to develop a better understanding of the importance of local food, its value to the economy and its benefit to human health.

I would like to thank the committee again for this opportunity to comment on Bill 36. We look forward to working with you on Bill 36 with regard to its current goals and to expand our efforts to secure a healthy future for food in Ontario. We also invite you to review the national food strategy and its goals and objectives, and have happily provided copies for all committee members.

We will be hosting a reception starting at 5 o'clock upstairs. I'd love to see you all there.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): We'll look forward to that. Thank you very much.

Can we start with questioning from the government side? Mr. Colle.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you very much for the very thoughtful presentation. I want to discuss with you at length sometime—a tomato farmer told me, “The real root of the problem with a lot of the things we have with food in this county is that we have a cheap food policy. If people really appreciated the real value of food, we would start to pay people who work in agriculture, be they farmers or workers, what they really are worth.” I'll get into that later with you, but it was really thought-provoking, I thought.

The question I had is about your tax treatment there. Could you just explain that again, just so that I'm clear about the change? If someone adds on a processing element to their property, they would get a tax treatment that would be 25% of the normal assessed rate?

Mr. Mark Wales: Two things to go along with that: The first thing is the act that MPAC use to assess buildings on a farm has no definition for “primary agriculture” in it. Currently, if someone does a value-added activity, so does something that will help retain the value of the product—washes it, chills it, dries it, whatever—if they trigger a building permit and a visit by MPAC, they usually get assessed either “commercial” or “industrial.” That increases the tax rate by either times seven for commercial or 10 for industrial.

We need to first get the definition of “primary agriculture” resolved. We've been working on that for quite some time, and we've had agreement from MPAC and the Rural Ontario Municipal Association as well as all the commodities on how to go about doing that. Once that is done, then we need to address how we deal with value-added activities, which typically will fundamentally change the product itself—so you're transforming it

into something else. The best example I can come up with is making fruit wines. You're taking fruit and making wine out of it. Typically, what happens is that they get assessed usually industrial, and probably nine out of 10 times, that causes that business to cease.

We need to get that dealt with. You've got to deal with the "primary" definition first; then we can address value-added and find the fairest way. We're suggesting as our policy that it be the same as farmland, which is 25% of the rural residential tax rate.

Mr. Mike Colle: Okay. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Mr. Harde-

man.
Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much for your presence here today and for the presentation. If I could ask, first of all, if you could make sure that—you don't have to change the time your reception starts, but if you could make sure that it goes long enough so that this committee can finish its work before you close shop—

Mr. Mark Wales: We'll make sure we keep some stuff for you.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much.

I appreciated the comment from the government side. I think it's important; the issue of taxation on value-added farm buildings has been ongoing for some number of years, and it doesn't seem to be moving forward. I hope that through this process, we can move that along, although I don't think that's really the thing—it's got to go into the finance bill to make sure that it doesn't get lost in translation when MPAC is implementing it.

I do want to go a little bit to strengthening the act. In your mind—as you said, you agree, as we all do, with the act. But if we change nothing, what is it that the federation of agriculture would think the benefit of this act is going to be?

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Mr. Mark Wales: Again, the act itself is designed to raise the awareness and the importance of local food. I think my comments included mention that we need to make sure that food literacy is key. We have a generation or more who fundamentally don't know how to make a meal. One of the goals we set out in the national food strategy is that if 16-year-olds were able, at the end of the day, to cook six nutritious meals from scratch, they would, first off, understand what nutritious local food is, and they would have to go out and purchase it, so they would really understand it. That would go a long way to helping them understand. People don't know how to cook anymore. We've lost that in our society, and if we keep going, we'll lose it forever.

Home canning is another thing—again, in my farming operation, I grow quite a large number of vegetables. We have a large pick-your-own operation. I have a lot of Italian customers that come all the way from downtown Toronto to get their Roma tomatoes, so I was interested to listen to the member's comments earlier—

Mr. Mike Colle: Hundreds of millions of tonnes.

Mr. Mark Wales: And it's a shame. So what I do is, I have the local food bank out of London come and glean

the field when we're done. One of the challenges is that the people who are getting that product at the food bank have lost the skill of canning as well. So we've had some good support, actually, from the canning industry, which is willing to help.

People need to know how to cook, they need to know how to can and preserve it, and they need to understand how important local fresh food is to their better health.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: We need more food literacy.

Mr. Mark Wales: Definitely.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: There we go. Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): The third party?

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you for coming, Mark and Peter. You've done a really good job of identifying one roadblock to local food: the tax implications. It might be too specific for the Local Food Act itself, but I believe it sets out that the minister must set out targets and goals. Could we perhaps have, as one of the things that the minister should look at, a timeline in looking at the roadblocks that affect local food accessibility and the profitability of local farmers and processors, and set a goal of that and a timeline to look at it and possible objectives to removing those roadblocks?

Mr. Mark Wales: Objectives would be a very good thing. One of the challenges is, if you don't set targets of some kind, then it's hard to measure your progress.

One thing to make sure is that when you're setting targets, and depending on who those targets are for, you don't create an overly burdensome reporting requirement. There has been some suggestion about—I'm just trying to remember the topic. I thought I would have had a question on it, but I guess not. The tax credits for glean- ing, again—I was talking with Ernie about this last night and this morning. If that happened to go through as an amendment, my concern would be just to make sure it doesn't place an excessive burden on the food banks themselves.

So it's about process, nuts and bolts. I'm very supportive of the concept; we just need to make sure it works. But at some point, you need targets of some kind.

Mr. John Vanthof: But as an overarching piece of legislation, this could be used to direct other parts of the government to look at areas that are hurting them, like over-regulation. Things like municipal taxation can't be addressed within the Local Food Act. But the problem could be directed so that we look at the overall problems that face agriculture within a timeline to see how we can fix them, so it won't fall through the cracks again.

Mr. Mark Wales: I agree. One of the biggest challenges that face my members is over-regulation. We've been working with the government through the Open for Business process. I look forward to that process continuing to work to deal with those regulations, because we are the sector of the economy that is regulated by the most number of ministries and the most pieces of legislation. We recognize that we need rules, and that's what differentiates our products. But we need rules that

work for us, and we need to make sure they're consistently and fairly enforced.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much, Mr. Wales, for coming in and sharing your views. I appreciate the federation of agriculture's position. And thank you, Mr. Lambrick.

Mr. Mark Wales: Thank you.

ONTARIO GREENHOUSE VEGETABLE GROWERS

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): We'll now move to the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers and welcome Mr. Don Taylor. How are you today, Don?

Mr. Don Taylor: I'm fine. How are you, Mr. Chairman?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): I'm very good, thank you. You have five minutes; I'll give you a one-minute warning. Then we'll move to three minutes each for the questioning. If you could identify yourself for Hansard, too, please.

Mr. Don Taylor: I'm Don Taylor. I'm the chairman of the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers. I thought I had 14 minutes. If I have five, this is not going to be pretty, so I'll get going.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): You can use the rest of it in your answers. It's okay.

Mr. Don Taylor: I've provided a handout there that provides the detail that I would have gone over. There is some information there on the greenhouse sector, for those of you who aren't aware of the magnitude of the greenhouse sector.

We represent about 2,300 acres of greenhouse vegetable production in the province. We employ a little over 10,000 people. Our farm gate sales are approaching \$800 million this year. So it's a very big sector. It's also an expanding sector, which is not the case with all agricultural sectors. We added a little over 200 acres to our production base in 2012, and at close to \$1 million an acre, that's a significant investment in the provincial economy.

The other point I just want to make in terms of background is that the greenhouse vegetable sector, like all edible horticulture sectors in Ontario, competes domestically and in export markets in a very free-trade environment, and I'll underline the word "very" there. In our case, about 30% of our product is marketed domestically and about 70% is exported. It's that domestic portion that is our most profitable, and it's that domestic portion that is the springboard for all of our exports, which really bring in revenue to the country and to the province.

We are certainly in favour of anything that increases Ontarians' knowledge of their food and where their food comes from, and helps to promote the replacement of import foods with domestically produced foods.

I'm just going to make a few comments on recommendations, and these are bolded in your outline. The first one relates to the overall legislative approach. We cer-

tainly appreciate the approach that's taken in this act, and that is, in broad terms, we would prefer to see education and awareness, not regulation. We're particularly concerned that regulation not go into areas that might be questionable under trade agreements. If we started to require some of our public institutions to purchase Ontario foods, we could be starting to step over the line in terms of some of our trade requirements. For a sector that exports 70%, we don't want to do anything to threaten trade, particularly with the US.

In the rest of my comments, I'm just going to focus on the three broad purposes listed in Bill 36.

First of all, fostering successful and resilient local food economies and systems throughout Ontario: We very much support the creation of a government authority to establish targets and to require mandatory reporting from Ontario public sector organizations. As I said, we don't want to see that go into regulation. In fact, reporting could be very useful to us. If they're not buying Ontario, we'd like to know why, and maybe it's something we're doing that we can improve upon, to improve that for public sector organizations.

We also support the creation of appropriate recognition incentives to help those further along the chain to realize the importance of sourcing Ontario products. Any of you who have gone to the annual Foodland Ontario awards ceremony will know how well that works in terms of getting retailers' attention.

The second purpose, increasing awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food: I guess the main thing is—if I had no other recommendation, this would be it—we think the government has an excellent program in the Foodland Ontario program. We encourage them, through the Local Food Act, to get the most out of that program, and to maintain and support that program to the greatest extent possible.

There are some things that—if we could recommend changes in the Foodland Ontario program, we certainly would. One area that I think we need to focus upon comes from the success of the program. Ontarians are now looking for Ontario-produced foods, so there is a temptation for some of those further along the chain to market non-Ontario-produced foods under that label. We think there needs to be a little more policing there.

We also concur very much with the definition of local food as "food harvested in Ontario." We don't want to see the definition go any further down than that. One of the major purposes is displacing imports with Ontario-produced foods, so we think that should do it.

In terms of the third purpose, encouraging the development of new markets, I guess we would suggest that, if possible, we look at broadening Foodland's mandate to look at restaurant and food services, something that we're looking closely at. Secondly, although perhaps outside of the mandate of the Local Food Act, exports help support local food and the competitiveness of local food, so we would also encourage the government to look at programs that could help build exports.

Thank you.

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The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. Wonderful condensing from 14 minutes.

We'll move to the official opposition. Mr. Hardeman.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, Don. It's good to see you again.

I was encouraged to hear you talk about Foodland Ontario and how well it works. In fact, it is the number one recognized brand of anything. Of any branding exercise, Foodland Ontario is number one. Yet the average consumer does not know that all Ontario food is not part of Foodland Ontario.

Would you suggest that it would be a good idea if we included things produced in Ontario to be from Foodland? If it's edible, it should be part of the government's initiative to encourage local food to be consumed?

Mr. Don Taylor: Traditionally, Mr. Hardeman, if you go back, Foodland Ontario was for fresh produce, and there were some reasons for that. But a few years ago, the government expanded that mandate and allowed it to be used for other Ontario foodstuffs. Certainly, as the original owners of the brand, I guess, we would support that broadening.

You do run into complications when you start to get into processed food, in terms of what is the definition of an Ontario-produced food. So you could have a processed food that's primarily foodstuff grown outside of Ontario and the final packaging is done in Ontario. I know this act speaks to the potential for addressing regulations that would define that. So to the extent that you can clearly define what an Ontario-produced food is and, from a farm standpoint, it contains primarily Ontario farm-produced ingredients, we would support the broadening for sure.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: The other thing I just wanted to quickly touch on: The Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers recommend "that the objectives/purposes of the ... act can be best accomplished by encouraging education, awareness and promotion of Ontario-grown food and not by a regulatory approach." Do you think the present act does enough to actually achieve anything?

"Encouraging education": It doesn't seem to encourage education at all. In fact, the word "education" is not prominent in the act at all. I was wondering if you could just comment on that a little bit.

Mr. Don Taylor: Well, I think at least one of the purposes of the act does speak to increasing awareness, and I guess I'll use that as consistent with education. Admittedly, there could be more done by the act, but I guess we see it as a starting point, and hopefully it can be built upon from here. And we are encouraged by those three broad purposes, for sure.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much.

The NDP. Mr. Schein.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thanks, Mr. Taylor, for coming in. I'm curious to hear you talk about impacts of NAFTA and so forth, but then mention targets, but that would be non-binding. I'm curious to know what the impacts of

targets would be. How would they be used if they were not binding in any way?

Mr. Don Taylor: Particularly for public institutions, Mr. Schein? Is that what you're asking?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Sure.

Mr. Don Taylor: I think that a person who manages one of the public institutions outlined in the act has to pay close attention when the government is advising that it would like them to set a target and then provide on-going reports as to how they are doing in terms of achieving that target. So we think that's quite a bit of encouragement for public sector organizations.

We do think that if you go further and absolutely require it, you are going to run into potential problems with trade—and we've had issues with some of the US policies with respect to this—but you're also going to run into issues with the mandate of the organization. I mean, if they're supposed to live within a budget and do the best they can, if they can't do that with Ontario food—that's the other part of it that I would mention—I think we'd like to know why, because maybe there's something we can do better to help them reach their targets and help us reach our targets. So that report back to us is an extremely effective tool to help make that happen.

Mr. Jonah Schein: And keeping statistics on how much local procurement is actually in our public institutions—would that be helpful?

Mr. Don Taylor: Exactly.

Mr. Jonah Schein: The idea of food labelling: Do you have further ideas? What would that look like to support, to increase food labelling, or is that what you're saying?

Mr. Don Taylor: This relates to my comment on policing Foodland. Is that what you're—

Mr. Jonah Schein: Go ahead.

Mr. Don Taylor: Some of this is just accidental at the retail—that's what they always tell me when I bring it to their attention, anyway. But you do get bin wrap around bins that might have contained Ontario product at one time but now contain Mexican, and it still says "Foodland Ontario" on the bin wrap.

We've worked hard with Foodland Ontario, both the government and the sectors, to get Ontario citizens—when they see that symbol, they know that represents food grown in Ontario. Well, if it doesn't, that's misleading.

Foodland Ontario has survived so far without much of a policing program—without any policing program, but we think all of this is not accidental anymore. Ontario citizens are looking for Ontario food, and they're being misled. So we think that there needs to be a little bit of policing of that brand.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much.

Moving to the government side, Mr. Crack.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much, Mr. Taylor, for coming. I know you've talked about it previously—trade agreements, trade requirements, trade obligations. That's an important component

of why the bill has come forward as it has. Our concern is setting targets that could compromise potential obligations and obviously have an impact on your particular business.

You've indicated that you export 70%. Could you maybe just elaborate perhaps on what set targets—if they were excessive? If the committee was to receive amendments and consider those and pass, what would that mean to your organization?

Mr. Don Taylor: I'm not sure if I understand the question, Mr. Crack, but I think setting targets is not setting a requirement. It's setting a target and then having to report back on how you're doing on it. So it doesn't mandatorily require that you meet that, which we think should meet our trade obligations. There's nothing wrong with encouraging—in fact, that's what Foodland Ontario does now. But you'll have to understand that our sector lives in mortal fear of that border being closed. Fresh produce is only fresh for a day or two, and if the border closed for five days, we would potentially have millions of dollars of produce that would have to be destroyed.

So we think setting targets and we think requiring reports back are very useful, but if one goes beyond that, you're going too far, in our opinion.

Mr. Grant Crack: Okay. Well, thank you. I think Mr. Colle wants to ask about tomatoes.

Mr. Don Taylor: We have 420 million pounds of tomatoes produced, Mr. Colle.

Mr. Mike Colle: I got it from you guys, but I couldn't get it from the cash crop sector.

The question I had is, you know the packaging? One of the problems I have is that I need my glasses, it's so small. I'm trying to find out, is this an Ontario product or is it from Mexico? If we could get some good-sized Canadian Tire lettering on that so I can see "Ontario" on it. That's what I find over and over again: This small print is driving me crazy.

Mr. Don Taylor: I concur. In fact, it's complicated further. Probably most Ontarians don't realize this, but there are a number of the marketing companies that grew up with the greenhouse sector that still market the majority of our product. But they also bring in product from outside Ontario and market it under the same label—not under "product of Ontario." If you check closely—and put your glasses on—it can be a little hard to tell which is which, and anything we can do to improve the consumer's ability to know that is critical because we think the consumer is getting more and more convinced that there's a reason to buy Ontario.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Good. Thank you very much, and thank you, Mr. Taylor, for coming in today. We appreciate your input.

GREEN THUMBS GROWING KIDS

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): If we could move now to Green Thumbs Growing Kids. Welcome to the committee. You're to have a five-minute presentation, followed by three minutes of questioning. I'll give

you a one-minute warning, and if you could identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard.

Ms. Sunday Harrison: My name is Sunday Harrison. I'm the founder and program director of Green Thumbs Growing Kids. We're a community-based organization in downtown Toronto.

Thanks for the opportunity to present my views on proposed Bill 36. My comments will be oriented primarily to the second objective of the bill, which is to increase awareness of local food in Ontario, including the diversity of local food. I want to say that I appreciate the inclusive wording of that objective because what grows in Ontario includes a lot of foods that were perhaps not grown by either First Nations or European settlers, and gardeners and farmers are learning what can be grown here from other parts of the world and how to prepare it. So I appreciate that.

I read through the comments in the debates before this bill came to committee, and it's clear that many people already agree on increasing food literacy in the policies that govern Ontario.

1700

I relish the opportunity to inform the committee of what food literacy on the ground looks like—sorry for the pun. For 13 years, our small community-based charity has partnered with schools to create gardens on school property and to lead workshops in the school gardens. In winter, we make healthy soil with food waste and worm bins in classrooms. In spring, of course, we plant. In summer, we run garden programs for all ages. In the fall, the students harvest and prepare recipes from the foods that they grow, including potato dishes, kale chips, salad rolls, pesto and salsa. We just had a brilliant workshop today, making salad rolls in the garden; it was just lovely.

Every season we offer hundreds of these garden-based workshops at three or four local schools. We do it with very little public money, yet it is public school students who benefit. We use federal and local wage subsidies to hire youth to help run the summer programs and keep the gardens productive. Staff and volunteers run everything on less than a shoestring, out of commitment to the idea of food literacy and environmental literacy.

Food in schools is a critical issue that knows no ideology, class or ethnicity. How we educate is critical for our democracy to have meaning, and the physical health of our children is critical to how well they learn. We know that hunger is an issue, but it is not enough to simply dump more packaged low-nutrient calories into schools. Students need to know where food comes from, and how and why to choose healthy foods. They need to know this from their own experience.

If Canada's Food Guide alone could teach healthy eating, we wouldn't have a problem with kids eating too much junk food. The problem is more complex. Adding food literacy to the curriculum means, to me, adding hands-on activities to increase student knowledge through experience, because Canada's Food Guide is already in the curriculum; it's taught at every grade. It's not enough. We're in the second generation of people

who do not have the basic food skills that predate the microwave and the single-serve plastic package.

Kids who have never tried fresh local foods have no way of knowing how good they taste. And growing your own connects you to the food in a deeper way from taste to waste, meaning you taste it more and waste it less. Research shows that children and adults alike eat better when they grow gardens, even in short seasons such as in Ontario's north. But we also know that school gardens are more about taste and supplementation and less about provisioning, unless it's just one crop.

The cost of healthy food should be supported through revenue tools only available to governments. Local procurements and supports for local, regional, municipal and school board partnerships with farmers should be included in the proposed Bill 36.

We propose that the following amendment be added to the bill: "The minister shall consider goals or targets related to food literacy and the use of school food gardens in the furtherance of the purposes of the act."

In 2010, the government introduced P/PM 150, which limited junk food in schools. It was called "comprehensive," but in fact it only dealt with part of the problem. A real example of comprehensive legislation is the 2010 Healthy Schools Act from the District of Columbia. This 37-page legislation exemplifies a far-reaching vision in food literacy and includes provisioning, local procurement—which is well-defined—school garden grants of up to \$10,000 per school, universal feeding programs, environmental initiatives, and physical activity. I brought a copy; I didn't bring 20 copies, because this is a lot of pages. I'm sure that some of the issues are a little different in terms of trade, but some of them aren't, so it could be very relevant in terms of planning a more fulsome policy.

Local Food Week might set good directions in terms of policy, but with all due respect, we already have some great policy frameworks that are much more developed than naming a week but are still largely unimplemented.

In 2009, this government passed the policy framework Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow, which commits Ontario's education system to teach environmental sustainability in every subject in every grade and explicitly names food as a subject for environmental study.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Ms. Harrison, your time is expired. Perhaps you could work the rest into some of the questions that come up. We could move to the NDP to begin that questioning.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thanks, Sunday. Thank you for coming in. I know that the work you do in my community is really important to the kids there, and I appreciate that.

I was excited to talk with you months ago about what we could do with proper resources. I think, through debate in the House, you heard people talk about the benefits of food literacy in schools. What you didn't hear probably was, actually, any commitment to resource those programs. I think you're astute in noticing that it

should cut across ideological perspectives, that food literacy can be considered back-to-basics—from some of my friends from the Conservatives here—but that it needs support and funding.

I wanted to highlight something that you said, which is the idea of goals and targets for food literacy in schools. I think that's really important, but what could you do with more resources in the schools? How many schools could you be helping? What more could you be doing? What are the impacts on students right now through the food education that you're having? What could happen if your dream of a garden in every school was realized?

Ms. Sunday Harrison: Yes. What was the question?

Mr. Jonah Schein: If you were not just doing this on a shoestring, if you actually had government support to help kids in this province learn about food—

Ms. Sunday Harrison: When we see a really beautiful garden-to-culinary program, like in spring and fall, and the community programs in the summer, I think it's just the opportunity. Really, what's at the core of it is the opportunity for each child to have that ownership and agency, a full sense of engagement with something that tastes good and smells good and isn't candy; it came from the ground. And then you planted a seed, and—oh my God!—you got something you could eat. There's a magic in that.

It happens between us. I think we're all of a certain age where we probably had that experience, but kids these days are not getting it, and that's what I think the beauty is: that really magical moment when you're young enough that it matters. It really matters to your later development and your later understanding of what healthy local food is.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. Mr. Colle?

Mr. Mike Colle: I certainly think we all agree that this hands-on approach is critical, through the schools. Hands-on learning, I think, is where everybody learns in a much better fashion.

You said also, which is very important, that the new world foods are being grown in Ontario—I know that now soybeans are going to take over corn as the number one crop grown in Ontario. Who would have believed 10 years ago that the soybean would be so—there are changing opportunities. Bitter melon is an incredible new crop that the Asian community is getting into. There is an incredible education value in understanding the impact of world foods in our diverse communities.

But the thing about schools—and I totally agree. I know I've got the gardens at my Toronto Community Housing project; they have outdoor gardens. But don't you think there have got to be more attempts to have children visit farms on a regular basis? I find that if you ask children—they go through eight years of grade school—they may have gone to a farm once and it was the farm up there at York University. What's it called?

Interjection: Black Creek.

Mr. Mike Colle: Black Creek. That's the only farm they ever saw. Is there any way that you think we could push farm visits, stays and activities for children?

Ms. Sunday Harrison: I think that's extremely important. Part of the problem is the cost of the bus. We would love to actually do a program where we would take grade 3 kids, go up to a farm, plant a long row, bring them back in Grade 4, harvest it and bring it back to school so they actually had a relationship with a farm, but that's a thousand dollars for a bus. You have to be really balancing some tough priorities in exposing children.

I think part of the beauty of school gardens is that it is more day-to-day, not to take anything away from what you are saying. I think there is enormous value in seeing crops produced on a much more farm scale. Understanding that, they only see the garden. It's not a complete picture of the food system by any means. It's the sensory piece, but it doesn't show the actual food system in a broader way, so I absolutely agree that that would be wonderful.

It would be wonderful if it was tied to farm-to-school provisioning, which I think has legs regardless of international trade obligations.

Interjection.

Ms. Sunday Harrison: Well, the farms make an arrangement with the school board to provide certain produce to that board.

Mr. Mike Colle: Okay.

Ms. Sunday Harrison: I think it can be done regionally, and you guys can figure out how to not trip any switches in the international trade. I think they have done a lot of this stateside, and I'm sure there are people who will come before your committee who know a lot more than I do about that side of it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. Mr. Hardeman?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much for your presentation. Just on the issue of school trips for children, I come from a rural area and, in fact, they have almost totally cancelled the ability of children to visit the farm, for safety reasons and so forth. My position here—my direction, really—is to put as much emphasis on education and food literacy in the schools to make up for the fact that they are not going there on field trips anymore. The only way they're going to understand how food is produced is to put it in the curriculum in the schools.

1710

I was interested in the part of your presentation on how in 2009, the government passed a policy framework to mandate that we would have this in the schools. It must not have been a mandatory subject in the curriculum for it not to be implemented. Could you just highlight what you think we need to do to make sure not only that we write a good policy and give good direction, but we actually see it happen?

Ms. Sunday Harrison: I think the problem is the curriculum is overloaded, so you need to actually find ways to bring it together and to reintegrate strands and expectations. Food is a marvellous way of doing that. I did make deputations when the ministry was revising the healthy eating curriculum to do just that, but it's not

enough, because they took each review subject by subject. To actually use food as a cross-cutting inquiry has enormous potential, but I think the ministry needs to see curriculum development in a broader way again, which they did under the environmental piece, where all curriculum now has been filtered through that lens.

But again, we don't measure that. We haven't looked and said, "Okay. Well, what do children know about the environment now that they didn't know before Bondar?" We haven't done that. There is no target. There was no analysis of how we were going to measure environmental learning.

My fear with food literacy is that we could go down that same path, where it looks good on paper, but teachers are just like, "What? You want me to do what now? What?" And food is kind of a bottomless pit, probably, from their perspective.

"Awareness" and "education" are not synonymous when you're getting into the formal system, so how are we going to make sure that what happens in schools is actually meeting the needs of the education system as a whole? I think it's great to have it on the table as far as the Local Food Act goes. Again, using food as a way to integrate curriculum strands has way more legs than putting an add-on to say, "Okay. Well, now you have to teach something new," because they have too much to do.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much, Ms. Harrison, and thank you very much for bringing your passion and your knowledge to the committee.

Ms. Sunday Harrison: Thank you.

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): We'll now move to the Canadian Environmental Law Association. They have presented us with a presentation, and it's in your pile. You'll have to go through the information you were given—

The Clerk of the Committee (Mr. William Short): A written submission.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): A written submission.

Thank you very much for coming in, sir. You'll have five minutes for a presentation and three minutes for questioning from each of the parties. I'll give you a one-minute warning on your presentation. If you would identify yourself for the purposes of Hansard.

Mr. Joseph Castrilli: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Joe Castrilli. I'm a lawyer with the Canadian Environmental Law Association. I'm just going to have a bit of local water, if you don't mind, before I start.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Local Lake Ontario water. Be careful.

Mr. Joseph Castrilli: Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, the Canadian Environmental Law Association is pleased to appear before you this afternoon to

discuss Bill 36. CELA is an Ontario legal aid clinic that represents individuals and citizen groups in the courts and before administrative tribunals on a wide variety of environmental matters. As a legal aid clinic, we also engage in various law reform, public education and community outreach initiatives. We have a long history of involvement in respect of laws and policies specific to the issue of food security, and we regard local food as part of that.

CELA welcomes the introduction of Bill 36 by the government because strengthening local food systems can have many positive benefits for Ontario's environment, economy and health. CELA also submits, however, that much more can and should be done under the authority of a bill designed to foster local food in the province than Bill 36, as currently written, may be capable of achieving.

In this regard, we would refer the committee to the February 2013 local food model bill that CELA drafted that we provided to the committee last week. CELA's model bill provides detailed and comprehensive provisions addressing such matters as targets, accountability, procurement, education, distribution and governance. We urge the committee to consider all of the association's model bill provisions as potential amendments to Bill 36.

The remainder of our written submissions focus on a few key issues such as:

- the need for a mandatory obligation in section 4 of the bill to establish local food targets and goals;

- the need for more frequent reporting by the government, pursuant to section 6 of the act, than once every three years;

- the need to develop a local food strategy so as to provide clear and concise information to the public about the government's vision for, rationale behind and means of achieving the purposes of the act; and

- the need to develop much more robust governance with respect to local food system development.

Time doesn't allow me to address all these issues, but for greater detail and specific wording on all of these issues, plus a variety of other matters that should be addressed in Bill 36, we urge committee members to review both our written submissions and the association's model bill.

Subject to any questions you may have, those are my submissions.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much, sir. We'll move to questioning by the government. Mr. Colle.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just in terms of your model bill, it was essentially presented to us just a week ago. When was it—

Mr. Joseph Castrilli: The model bill was drafted during the last half of 2012, and it was released in February 2013.

Mr. Mike Colle: Okay. Has there been any kind of update from other provinces or the national government on this, because I know there is an attempt to look at a national food strategy too? Would this be applicable to

maybe also working toward a national food strategy, or is it more contained in a provincial domain?

Mr. Joseph Castrilli: Well, it was designed to be a statute for the province of Ontario. It takes into account certain matters that go beyond the borders of Ontario, but for jurisdictional purposes, obviously it stays within the four corners of provincial law.

Mr. Mike Colle: Okay. Given where we're at with this bill and, you know, your model bill, what do you think is the main thrust, let's say, of CELA's bill that would be something we could work on to implement that would start to move us toward your bill? What would you think is the key area?

Mr. Joseph Castrilli: Well, I think the matters I addressed in my written submission, which is the shorter of the two documents you have before you, would be a place to start.

It's hard for me to pinpoint just one area, but I think the issue of governance would certainly be important as a whole, in terms of developing a structure within government. I'd like to analogize it to the spokes of a wheel: The local food regime is the hub of the wheel, and the advice the regime may obtain from various sectors is the spokes of the wheel. That's something we tried to design when we put in, I believe, part II of the bill, and in particular sections 6 and 7: the local food systems committee and the advisory council on local food policy. Those would be places to start if you wanted to try to expand the ambit of Bill 36.

But I'm not here to suggest only doing one thing; I'm here to suggest doing a lot of things. That's why the model bill was drafted in the first place.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. We'll move to the opposition. Mr. Hardeman.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much for your presentation.

Going to the question that Mr. Colle asked on the timing of your bill recommendations, that would have been between the first introduction of the Local Food Act and the reintroduction of the Local Food Act. In timing, would that be right?

Mr. Joseph Castrilli: I think that's right, because if you look at the model bill, it actually has footnoted references throughout to Bill 100, which I think was the first version of the Local Food Act. So yes, I think you're right.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Okay. I guess it's reasonable to assume, then, that the minister could have read your recommendations prior to preparation of the new bill.

Mr. Joseph Castrilli: Our model bill was released in February 2013, so I think it would have been possible for the government to do that, yes.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Okay. Thank you very much. The issue that has garnered a lot of discussion before and during the process here is setting targets and how you go about setting targets, and whether in fact at the end of that exercise, it would be trade-compliant. I think another presenter this afternoon mentioned that we have to be

very careful that we don't go beyond that trade compliance because we are also an exporting province and we want to continue doing that.

1720

Do you have some suggestions of whether the proposal in your bill would, in your opinion, be trade-compliant?

Mr. Joseph Castrilli: The primary concern that we saw with trade agreements was in the area of procurement, so we addressed that in section 12 of the model bill and we actually expanded upon that in our written submissions at pages 4 and 5. You'll note actually in the written submissions that there are, I believe, 15 US states that have passed legislation allowing purchasing preferences for in-state agricultural products. So it's clear that you can draft provincial or subnational legislation and still make it trade-compliant, and that's what we attempted to do in our bill.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: In your opinion, when you do that—you can do it obviously with the procurement that the province does for itself, but could you pass a law that gives preferences to procurement of someone that the government is not involved with?

Mr. Joseph Castrilli: I think in our bill, we tried to focus primarily, as Bill 36 does, on public sector organizations, and so that was the scope of the focus.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Good. Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Third party? Mr. Vanthof.

Mr. John Vanthof: Thank you very much for coming and for providing a legal perspective on local food because it is very important. Something that has bothered us from the start, when this legislation was proposed, is that there are terms like the minister "may" set goals, the minister "may" report. After all, we are developing legislation here. We're talking about laws, and it has always bothered us that I always see in brackets when I'm reading this: "or may not."

We're having trouble looking at a law that we don't really know what we're passing because the minister "may" set goals that we don't approve of around this table at all, and I would like to know your position on that and if we could strengthen the current act.

Mr. Joseph Castrilli: When we drafted the bill, we were cognizant of that concern. It's an issue in all environmental legislation in our experience, and so as much as possible we try to change the language from discretionary, the use of the word "may," to mandatory, the use of the word "shall." So we have done that wherever possible in the model bill. One of the places we did do it was in relation to the issue of the development of targets. You see that in a number of the sections in the early parts of the model bill, mostly in relation to the issue of having a time frame for actually developing targets.

There is no time frame in Bill 36, so one of the things we attempted to do, since we're not experts in what the targets in fact should be or even what the subject matter of the targets necessarily should be, was to set a time frame. We did a lot of research about what the issues

should be in the broader context of local food, but at the end of the day you actually have to—when you finally build a car, the car has to have an engine if it's going to go anywhere. You need to have some direction, and so a number of the provisions deal with mandatory obligations.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. We appreciate the Canadian Environmental Law Association coming in and making a presentation. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Joseph Castrilli: All right. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

ONTARIO COUNCIL OF HOSPITAL UNIONS/CUPE

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): I'd now like to welcome the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions, Canadian Union of Public Employees, if they'd come forward. You'll have five minutes to make a presentation, followed by three minutes of questioning by each of the three parties. Welcome to the committee. If you would identify yourself for the purpose of Hansard, thank you very much.

Mr. Doug Allan: My name is Doug Allan. I'm research representative with the Canadian Union of Public Employees. Thank you for hearing us on behalf of 30,000 workers in hospitals and long-term-care homes, including many who work in foodservices in those facilities.

We believe the legislation is a step, but falls short. Public sector institutions should be a bulwark for fresh local food. Hospitals and long-term-care facilities, which people come to when they are most in need and at their weakest points, especially need fresh, nutritious food. We believe that these public institutions should be at the forefront of this movement, and the government should take steps to ensure that.

Unfortunately, the trend has been very much in the opposite direction. Ready-to-use food is creating a junk food culture, not just in our institutions but more broadly throughout society. Giant corporations have focused the bulk of their efforts on creating and marketing highly processed foods that are loaded in salt, fat, sugar and additives. The growing dominance of these foods has helped create an epidemic of obesity and ill health, in our view.

Unfortunately, ready-prepared, highly processed and frozen foods have come to our hospitals and our homes, shipped in over the highways from distant food factories. For the good of our society, this, we believe, must stop, and the public sector must play a lead role in changing this trend.

As the processed, globalized food culture grew, a major new social movement has grown up. Across the world, individuals are creating a fresh and nutritious food culture. Instead of accepting a diet of highly processed or frozen foods that are manufactured and transported over long distances, they are demanding fresh food that is made locally—local food that is made fresh.

Public sector organizations should help build the movement for fresh, nutritious and local food. With their size, public sector organizations can play a significant role to counter the corporate food force and as a key force for fresh, nutritious and local food. We think that should be the goal.

Public sector organizations should provide fresh, nutritious food that is prepared in local kitchens, preferably on-site. Public sector organizations should buy local foods wherever possible; foods shipped thousands of miles create carbon emissions, divert jobs from local economies and compromise the nutritional content of the food.

Public sector institutions should support local economies. Public sector dollars should be used to create jobs in local communities. Corporate food has created a globalized food system that has dramatically weakened local food infrastructure, a fact that we have discovered on our own.

Unfortunately, these principles are not being met. There has been a very sad decline in hospitals and in homes in terms of the quality of the food that they are able to serve. Indeed, in some cases, the food looks like it has been prepared in a dishwasher.

In long-term-care facilities, the situation is particularly depressing. One CUPE local president recounts how fresh vegetables were replaced by frozen vegetables in their home. Many of the residents in that home, whose friends and family are dying off, will never eat a fresh vegetable again in their lives, a very, very sad development.

In Kingston, we ran a campaign to get local and fresh food in the hospitals. We lost, unfortunately, but did create significant interest in the local community.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): One minute.

Mr. Doug Allan: One minute? Well, I'll just end by saying that now, with austerity, we are finding that we are actually going backwards. There has been a small movement towards fresh, local food in hospitals—Scarborough Hospital is a case in point, and the SickKids hospital—but these initiatives are now under threat. In fact, the Scarborough Hospital system is under direct threat right at this moment.

Andrea Horwath, in the Legislature, raised this threat. The Premier said, "Well, we're leaving this to locally determined decisions." Well, in our view, if this was a priority for the government, respectfully, we would say that it would happen. They control hospitals quite significantly, and they can do that.

We think we're going backwards, not forwards. We can't just have nice rhetoric and nice-sounding legislation; we actually have to take a direction and push forward very hard on this. Otherwise, our health and our future is at stake. We think that the public sector can play a very important role in this development.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much, sir. We'll move to questioning, with the official opposition. Mr. Hardeman?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much for your presentation. I think it's rather interesting that we

have a bill, the Local Food Act, which we all agree is the right thing to do—encouraging local food consumption—and the number one issue seems to be how we get our hospitals and our society that we control to do it. And yet, we're all nervous about putting in "shall do it" as opposed to "may do it." If it's the right thing to do and it's the best food there is, why do you think we're having trouble getting everybody onside to just willingly do it? Why should we have to legislate ourselves into something that we think needs to be done?

1730

Mr. Doug Allan: I think that's an excellent question. I do think our hospitals and our homes are under extreme, intense pressure to reduce costs. Our experience, not just over the last few years, but for quite a few years, is that fewer and fewer resources are going into the food, housekeeping and support services in the hospitals. The local health integration networks, which fund the hospitals and the long-term-care facilities, have \$300 million less budgeted this year than they did two years ago. There is intense pressure to cut costs.

I think this is a priority. Because it is a social decision that we can make collectively, we have to prioritize that, but we also have to find the money to do that. It's not a lot of money. We were making significant progress in Scarborough. That, it seems, is under serious threat at the moment with the deficit that that hospital suffers, but I think, with some money and some political will, we can make progress.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: It would seem to me that if food—and I think, in everybody's mind, food is the number one priority for anyone, whether it's a patient or whether it's the person feeding the patient. If it's the number one priority, why is it so difficult to say, "Okay, that's where we're going to put our number one resources, to do that"?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): If we could have a very short response.

Mr. Doug Allan: A very short response? I think that in hospitals the number one priority is probably treating people who are acutely ill, and the other things get forgotten.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. The NDP?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Mr. Allan, thank you for coming in. I appreciate your presentation. Can you tell us a bit about the history of food in hospitals? I understand that the Scarborough Hospital has a fully functioning kitchen, which has not been operating until quite recently.

Mr. Doug Allan: Yes, it does.

For most of the previous century, food was made in the local hospitals. Through the period of the 1990s, our experience was that more and more food began to be manufactured, for want of a better word, in food factories, and then shipped to the hospital. The results were not satisfactory. There has been a movement—and I think our campaign helped play a role with that, I would say, perhaps immodestly—back toward fresh, local food, but it is a titanic struggle. I think even those small shoots that

we see in Scarborough and at the sick children's hospital are in serious jeopardy and our ability to move forward is in serious jeopardy. We've seen a very significant decline, both in our hospital housekeeping staff, which we think is associated with the rise in superbug infection in the hospitals that we found, and also in our food services staff.

We did a survey in 2010. We found a very strong connection between the sort of processed frozen food that's shipped into the hospital and bad reports of the quality of that food. We found, however, that in some of our smaller hospitals they still did have hospital kitchens that were functioning, and the reports were that the food was more satisfactory.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. Government side? Mr. Crack.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Mr. Allan, for coming and for your excellent analogies of what the hospital unions are going through.

You talk about the public sector being at the forefront and taking a leadership role when it comes to procuring local food, but you also included "whenever possible." I guess my question to you would be if you could comment on that. From a government perspective, if we legislate targets in our public sector and broader public sector service, given the vastness of the province of Ontario and the availability of local produce in any given area, I think that's something that is a concern to us. How would you legislate, "wherever possible"? I guess that's my question.

Mr. Doug Allan: I'm not an expert in drafting legislation, so maybe I can come at this from a slightly different angle. One of the big barriers we found, for example in Kingston, when we did a campaign on local food, was that the hospital would just say, "Well, there's not the infrastructure to bring food in from the local area. It just doesn't exist anymore," and we're sort of stuck. Actually, I think they made a genuine attempt to bring in some local fresh food, at least to the cafeteria, and that was something. But they needed a backstop. They needed a policy and some backing from the government to actually create the economies of scale so that that the local food infrastructure could be created once again. Without that sort of collective action by government, which can require that infrastructure to be created, I think we're always going to be stuck at a market trend that has gone more global, and bringing in food from very distant locations.

Government can play a role in countervailing that and creating a different trend, but I think leaving it up to individual hospitals—Kingston General Hospital, for example, is a big, big institution, but it's not so big that it can, in itself, create a local food infrastructure in the Kingston-Frontenac area. So government policy and government money is going to be required in order to help create that and to change the trend and make the food fresh, local and nutritious once again.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much, and we appreciate very much your coming in and sharing your views with the committee.

ONTARIO COLLABORATIVE GROUP ON HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): We'll now move to the Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity. Welcome to the committee. You'll have five minutes for a presentation, and then we'll move to three minutes of questioning from each of the parties. Would you please identify yourself for Hansard.

Ms. Lynn Roblin: My name is Lynn Roblin. I am representing the Ontario Collaborative Group on Healthy Eating and Physical Activity.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): I'll give you a one-minute warning when you're coming to the end of your five minutes.

Ms. Lynn Roblin: Okay, that's great. Thank you.

Thank you for having me here this afternoon to present to you our thoughts on the Local Food Act. I'm here to present some background information on the Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy, which is a plan for healthy food and farming here in Ontario, and how it can help with some of your decision-making around Bill 36.

I represent a group of not-for-profit academic organizations and academics who have been dedicated to looking at issues surrounding healthy eating, physical activity and the social determinants of health. For the past three years, we've had a food and nutrition design team actively looking at a food strategy that would be cross-government, involve civil society and private sector interests, and be a coordinated approach to food policy development, which Ontario has not had in the past.

We did have an opportunity to present this strategy to various ministries. Ten ministries attended a meeting we had earlier this year in February, and it was a great opportunity to show the possibilities where food does intersect with various ministries' work. The goals of this strategy are:

- to promote healthy eating and access to healthy food for all Ontarians;
- to reduce the burden of obesity and chronic disease on Ontarians and the health care system; and
- to strengthen the Ontario economy and the environment through a diverse, healthy and resilient food system.

We do have a draft document that lists a whole action plan with a number of priorities, which we've just put on the Sustain Ontario website. I'd encourage you to look at it there. I did not bring copies with me today, but there are a lot of really good examples of how we could help with this Local Food Act.

Some of the priorities that specifically relate to the Local Food Act are increasing access to safe, healthy, local and culturally acceptable foods, especially for vulnerable populations, through making sure healthy local foods are available in schools, daycares, workplaces and other public facilities, and through school nutrition programs. We're very pleased that the Ontario govern-

ment has supported student nutrition programs through the Healthy Kids Panel initiatives last week, with more support and 14 coordinators for food programs. That will really help, actually. We're hoping that will help access more local foods for the schools. We're also looking for more support for community access solutions, and you've heard about this already from presenters. There are opportunities locally with kitchen co-operatives, with local food bank programs, with cooking programs and things like that out there, and also community gardens.

1740

One of our other key priorities is increasing the utilization of Ontario food each year by government institutions. We've already heard some talk about some of those food procurement targets for the public sector, and I know some already exist. I'm from Halton region, and I know our cafeteria there has its own local food procurement target. So there are examples of what local food procurement targets exist in Ontario and in other jurisdictions.

Another point we raise is the importance of increasing the distribution and promotion of healthy and local foods. That would be supporting farmers and processors to deliver healthy products in demand, to market and promote local and sustainable foods, and to market, promote and support culinary tourism.

One of our key areas of concern today is increasing public understanding of healthy eating practices and skills for making healthy food choices through the life cycle. One of these is offering basic evidence-based food literacy through the curriculum to schoolchildren, but beyond that, to children in daycares, parents of young children and across the board. We really are lacking food skills and an awareness of what is a healthy food and certainly what is a local food, and how that contributes to our health, so lots of opportunities for that there.

One of our other priorities is ensuring that Ontario food products are preferred in all markets, so that we maintain an identifiable standard for Ontario food products. I believe we've already talked about the Foodland Ontario program, which is fabulous. We also want to ensure that Ontario is recognized as a leader in environmentally sustainable food production.

Some of the key asks we have are just to look at some of the specific wording, so instead of just "to increase awareness," we want "to increase awareness, access to and consumption of local food in Ontario," and an additional purpose, "(4) to support local food education, food literacy and food skills."

I've outlined some details to support that in the handout that I've passed around, so I hope that's helpful.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. Coming from Halton, you got an extra 30 seconds.

We'll move to the NDP for questions.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I thought we had an impartial Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): I am, with the exception of Halton.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm curious to hear further about your ideas around food literacy and schools. What would that look like?

Ms. Lynn Roblin: As the previous speaker mentioned, we do have Canada's Food Guide, which I proudly worked on, actually, with the federal government, and it's our primary education tool in schools. But where we're really lacking is food skills. When I was a child, in grades 7 and 8, we all got home ec. In grades 9, 10, 11 and 12, it was optional, but it was still there and it was available.

We do not have a mandatory food skills program here in Ontario, and we'd like to see that, particularly at the high school level, where there is so little opportunity for that. There is room in the curriculum for it. It needs to be creative, problem-solving; it probably has to be cross-curricular, but it needs to happen. We have kids graduating with math skills but not with food skills, so it's something that we're very interested in seeing happen.

Mr. Jonah Schein: In terms of student nutrition in the schools, how would you feel about setting local procurement targets attached to student nutrition?

Ms. Lynn Roblin: I think the student nutrition program guidelines already exist for the nutritional criteria of what's in those foods, and I think that could be expanded to include some targets for increasing local food use. I know that OMAF and Dietitians of Canada, which I am a member of, are already looking at a healthy fundraising program as a pilot, looking at linking local farmers and their foods and using those foods for fundraisers. There are all sorts of creative ways that local foods can be put into schools.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much.

We'll move to the government side: Mr. Colle.

Mr. Mike Colle: You remind me of back in the olden days. I was a high school health teacher, and what I would do is teach nutrition and Canada's Food Guide. I would tell them, "You're going to be tested three times this year, and I'm not going to warn you. What I'm going to ask you to do is bring your lunch to class, and then I'm going to grade each one of your lunches."

So every day they would ask, "Sir, is it today? Is it today? I've got a great lunch today." But I was just trying to teach and get them interested, and then I would get them to talk about nutrition at home. I would ask them: "What vegetables are you eating? Can you bring me a list of the vegetables that you eat around the house and how many times a week?"—getting them engaged and talking about good, healthy food at home. I think that's what you've been trying to do.

I was just wondering, how do we get people to increase their consumption of local foods? How do we do it? I've always said that one of the best deals in Canada is the price of food. I mean, nowhere in the world do we get the quality and price of food that we do in Canada. But how do we get people to consume local foods rather than imported foods, packaged foods—whatever it is? How do we do it?

Ms. Lynn Roblin: Well, I think we've already got a good example through our Foodland Ontario program, producing recipes, and I think we need those food skills to go with that. If people see the local foods—it's not just buying them; it's taking them home and doing something with them. We can start with educating kids on how to cook with some of these local foods, and they'll take that information back to the parents, as you've already indicated.

We just need more exposure to what those healthy foods would look like and how to prepare them.

Mr. Mike Colle: But really, a kid isn't going to look at a recipe. How do we get them excited? The former presenter talked about growing it, visiting, getting engaged. They want to touch these things. I just think, with your expertise—you've been at this—to give us more ideas on how we can get people excited.

I mean, we adults are always excited about food. We've got this great food truck explosion in Toronto. We've got street food, finally, after so many years of regulation where you had to eat those lousy, salty hot dogs all the time at street corners in Toronto.

We want to try to get people engaged. I think that young people are looking for that engagement, and we've got to find ways of sparking them.

Ms. Lynn Roblin: Yes, and I think you've already given some good examples. It starts with really young kids in daycare—right?—touching and feeling the food, experimenting with the food, helping to prepare food, helping to shop for the food—

Mr. Mike Colle: Yeah, preparing the food.

Ms. Lynn Roblin: —growing food. It goes all the way from daycares right up to high school and beyond with some of the adult groups we have in our community who haven't learned those food skills and where food comes from, and keeping that education going throughout the life cycle.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. We'll go to the official opposition. Mrs. McKenna? No? Mr. Hardeman.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much for your presentation.

Between the two acts—obviously we heard a bit of discussion about that this morning; there was an original act and then the new Premier and minister said she would introduce a strengthened act. Between the two acts, there was a long time when we didn't have to do much in this place because we were prorogued. So I had the opportunity to travel around the province and do round tables, knowing there was a new act coming, to discuss

the food act and what people thought should be in it and what we should do.

I don't think there was a single round table we held from one end of the province to the other where education wasn't the number one issue for everyone involved, as it is, I think, with your presentation. We've heard some alternative or different types of things we could do to further that education: to educate not only our children but their parents as to buying wholesome Ontario food for the table.

But all the things we've discussed, as it relates today—Foodland Ontario works wonderfully, but if it was doing the job, we wouldn't be here. So we need to do more. My suggestion is that we make it a mandatory course in the curriculum of our children in school: not something they may do if they wish to do it, but something they must do as a mandatory subject. What's your view on doing that?

Ms. Lynn Roblin: Well, what you've given an example of, Foodland Ontario, is a marketing program that's geared to the purchaser, whereas food skills development could be geared at the daycare or school-age population. What we're calling for in the Ontario Food and Nutrition Strategy—and I encourage you to look at that as a framework for your policy decisions—is that it's a comprehensive approach and it's multi-pronged. You need all these things to be working together to have an impact. As far as local food is concerned, it really does need to cross a few different areas.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Now, when you do your program, is it predicated on healthy eating or local food eating, or is that the same, in your opinion?

Ms. Lynn Roblin: Both. It's healthy and local food.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: They're both the same.

Ms. Lynn Roblin: Yes, they're both part of it. If you go into the strategy and look at the language, it's healthy and local food.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much for your presentation today, and thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before you—I mean, I'll stop. Well, maybe not. Maybe I'll just keep going until breakfast.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Ted Chudleigh): Thank you very much. That concludes our deputations for today. I'd remind the committee that we meet next on October 22. That's two Tuesdays out. We'll meet at approximately 4 p.m. for further public hearings.

Thank you very much. I'll try to see if I can get some apple blossoms. Would you like some apple blossoms? They're only in our caucus room.

The committee adjourned at 1750.

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Mr. Jeff Parker, research officer,
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