



Putting healthy, local, sustainable food on the municipal plate

Winnipeg Elections 2010 Toolkit

Across Winnipeg, people are getting interested in issues about food. This toolkit outlines some key issues about our food system, and helpful hints for organizing events and meetings with election candidates during the 2010 campaign. Together, we can put a healthy, local, and sustainable food system on the municipal plate!

Food and the City

Whether it's community gardens or food procurement or zoning agricultural lands, our local government can help create vibrant local food communities. Our elected officials – mayors and councillors – can take leadership on food issues that will have positive impacts on health, poverty, hunger, preserving farmland, employment, and community development. By doing so they can create a healthy economy, healthy environment, and healthy communities.

Why is Food an Election Priority?

- At least 1 in 8 jobs in Winnipeg is directly related to food and agriculture. And this doesn't include spin off economic benefits. Food and agriculture is a major part of our economy.
- 47,925 people use food banks in Manitoba each month, a rise of 18% from 2008 to 2009.
- Half of the people using food banks are children.
- 616,000 Manitobans are overweight or obese and a similar number do not eat enough vegetables and fruits each day.
- Farmers receive 27% of the price of a week's groceries. Agriculture is really important for Manitobans, yet the number of farmers continues to decline.

Across Canada, municipalities are taking the lead on creating local, sustainable food systems:



What are some food issues to talk about with your municipal candidates?

1 SUPPORTING LOCAL FOOD

- Support Manitoba farmers by developing policies to buy local food products.
- Facilitate the development of urban agriculture in Winnipeg.
- Preserve our best agricultural lands in and around the city from further development.
- Facilitate the expansion of farmers' markets in Winnipeg by removing bureaucratic barriers and providing space on city property or other supports.

2 CREATING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

- Support the development of community food hubs that hold facilities such as freezers/cold storage, kitchens, access to food handlers, compost sites, drying and smoking facilities, greenhouses, and cellars.
- Promote community gardens by making them a stable place in city infrastructure, by zoning gardens as parks, and by providing funding to develop a targeted number of new community garden plots.
- Develop a partnership between city and community to facilitate knowledge sharing and provide education, training and skill development around food security.
- Promote Winnipeg as a culinary tourism destination.

3 FOOD AND POVERTY

- Ensure all school age children are fed nutritiously.
- Create a grants program for community food projects such as good food markets in low-income neighbourhoods, community gardens, and student nutrition programs.



4 DEVELOPING SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

- Support food security initiatives by implementing regulation and bylaw changes in the following areas: edible landscapes, urban agriculture, farmers' markets, and community kitchens.
- Incorporate green agriculture into a green building code such as encouraging rooftop gardens.
- Encourage municipal and home composting.

5 FOOD POLICY

- Establish a Food Policy Council.
- Create a city staff position to work on food security issues and to bring municipal departments and community members together to work on food issues.
- Work with other levels of government to develop policies that result in food security and sustainable agriculture in Manitoba.
- Recognize that food is a basic human right.



Engaging your municipal candidates

ASK QUESTIONS

- Make a list of your questions. Keep questions short and to the point.
- Stick to a few key issues.
- Write a letter, send an e-mail, call, or make an appointment to meet with your candidate personally.
- Add a personal touch – what makes you passionate about this issue?
- Provide facts and have background information ready.
- Be specific with the actions you want the candidate to take.
- Attend election forums and ask about the food issues you are passionate about.



Sample food-related questions to ask your municipal candidates

“Farmers are really important to our local economy and some cities in Canada have already established local food procurement policies to support local farmers. As potential mayor (or councillor) of Winnipeg, what will you do to support local farmers?”

“Nearly 50,000 people in Manitoba visit a food bank each month, most of these in Winnipeg. How will you address this situation?”

“If you are elected, how will you ensure that children have access to healthy, nutritious food in school?”

“Many people in Winnipeg want to get involved in community gardening. What will you do to increase the number of community garden plots available to residents of Winnipeg and ensure the long term stability of these gardens?”

“Winnipeg’s wealth of food cultures and traditions provides great opportunities for economic development. What will you do to support farmers’ markets, local food enterprises, and community programs that create economic opportunities for Winnipeggers?”

“Cities across North America have found that food policy councils are an effective way to bring municipal staff and the public together to work on food issues. Will you support a food policy council for Winnipeg?”

Planning an event

PLAN A FUN EVENT TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT FOOD

- Paint a mural
- Do a skit or play
- Organize a concert at a farmers' market
- Organize a movie screening or a puppet show
- Celebrate food issues with a local food feast and discussion
- Invite your municipal candidates to attend!

PLAN A FORMAL MEETING

- Organize a group of people who are interested in food issues
- Make a list of the candidates you would like to meet
- Create a phone or e-mail script stating that you would like to arrange a meeting to discuss issues you've identified as a priority
- Confirm the time and how long you will be meeting.
- Create an agenda/timeline for the event and share with candidates.
- Follow up a few days before the meeting to confirm candidates participation
- Limit the discussion to a few key issues – provide personal examples from your experience.
- Send a thank you letter to the candidates



Candidate's Report Card

Rank your candidates on their farm and food commitments. Use this report card to generate media interest in your region.

Name	Healthy food for all	Viable, sustainable farming	Food, economic development, infrastructure & tourism	Community gardening and urban agriculture	Municipal decision making and Governance	Average Grade



How to use the report card:

- A: Clearly supports this farm and food priority
- B: Somewhat supports this farm and food priority
- C: Not quite sure, open to learning
- F: Does not support this food and farm priority

At the end, tally the grades for an overall grade of A-F
 Send results to info@winnipegfoodpolicy.org and we will post results on the WFPWG website

For more information



<http://www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca>
to read policy papers about how municipalities can address food security.



<http://www.winnipegfoodpolicy.org> to learn about opportunities for a food policy council in Winnipeg. This includes links to other food policy councils in Canada, research done on policy options for Manitoba municipalities, and information about our involvement in the Speak Up Winnipeg process.

The Winnipeg Food Policy Working Group

The Winnipeg Food Policy Working Group is made up of Winnipeggers who believe that food security is an important issue for the City of Winnipeg to address. Our mission is to make Winnipeg a food secure city characterized by a food system that:

- Ensures equitable physical and economic access to adequate, safe, and nutritious foods for all citizens, particularly low income citizens and children.
- Produces, processes, distributes, and sells food in a way that is economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable and equitable.
- Fosters human and environmental health, community economic development, and the local agricultural economy.





MAFRA manitoba
alternative
food
research
alliance



Winnipeg Food Policy
Working Group

This election toolkit was based on materials prepared by Sustain Ontario.
Written by Stefan Epp of the Manitoba Alternative Food Research Alliance.
Designed by Dayna Kroeker of the Manitoba Alternative Food Research Alliance.
Support for the publication of this document was provided by Food Matters Manitoba.
Photos provided by Food Matters Manitoba.

For more information about this toolkit or the Winnipeg Food Policy Working Group, please contact Paul Chorney at paul@foodmattersmanitoba.ca or 204-943-0822.