



Putting healthy, local, sustainable food on the municipal plate

# Municipal Elections 2010 Toolkit

Across Manitoba, 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 our Communities

Whether it's community gardens or food procurement or zoning agricultural lands, our local governments can help create vibrant local food communities. Our elected officials – mayors, reeves, 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?

- 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.
- 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.

## Agriculture and food jobs in Manitoba communities: (as a percentage of the total workforce)

- Winnipeg 12% • Thompson 11% • Rest of Manitoba 25%
- Brandon 18% • Portage la Prairie 29% • **Manitoba average 16%**

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.
- Preserve our best agricultural lands from further development.
- Facilitate the expansion of farmers' markets by removing bureaucratic barriers and providing space on municipal 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 municipal infrastructure, by zoning gardens as parks, and by providing funding to develop a targeted number of new community garden plots.
- Develop a partnership between municipal and community to facilitate knowledge sharing and provide education, training and skill development around food security.
- Promote culinary tourism.

## 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 municipal 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), what will you do to support local farmers?”

“Nearly 50,000 people in Manitoba visit a food bank each month. 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 want to get involved in community gardening. What will you do to increase the number of community garden plots and ensure the long term stability of these gardens?”

“Manitoba’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?”

“Communities 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?”

# 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](mailto:info@winnipegfoodpolicy.org) and we will post results on the WFPWG website

## For more information



Food Matters Manitoba (<http://www.foodmattersmanitoba.ca>) engages Manitobans towards healthy, fair, and sustainable food for all. Their goal is to cultivate community food skills, provide public education, and build partnerships and networks.

Food Matters Manitoba is involved in food security projects and education across Manitoba including:

- Golden Carrot Awards and World Food Day
- Growing Local Conference
- Northern Harvest Forum

The Winnipeg Food Policy Working Group (<http://www.winnipegfoodpolicy.org>) is made up of Winnipeggers who believe that food security is an important issue for the City of Winnipeg to address. Their 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.





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Working Group

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