



PUT FOOD IN THE CONVERSATION: MUNICIPAL ELECTION

A Toolkit

Fall 2016



Overview

Municipalities across Nova Scotia are holding elections on **October 15, 2016**. Now is the time to put food in the conversation for the upcoming election. While not traditionally thought of as a municipal issue, many aspects of community food security fall under municipal jurisdiction. Community food security is impacted by regional plans, bylaws, zoning, transit systems, municipal programs and more.

The Ecology Action Centre is holding an awareness campaign for the 6 weeks leading up to the elections. Each week will focus on a different theme, and **the week of Sept 26-30 will be food!** The campaign will involve both traditional media and social media, and this is where we need your help. During the week of Sept 26-30, we are looking for people to:

- start conversations about food on twitter, facebook and/or instagram, and retweet the Ecology Action Centre's food photo posts. Use the hashtag #HRMVotes.
- ask food-related questions of the candidates, either in person or via email, and
- amplify the message that food is an important municipal issue.

This guide contains:

- brief backgrounder on food and the city
- important food facts and related questions for use on twitter and facebook
- sample email and questions for candidates
- social media tips
- references for food facts
- contact information for candidates running in the Halifax region (attached)



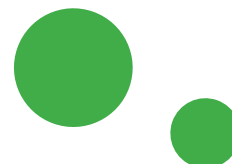


Food and the City - Background

Our current food system does not sustain our most vulnerable populations or the people who produce our food. Over 15% of Nova Scotians are facing food insecurity, and approximately 1 in 5 children live in food insecure households. Meanwhile, we have an aging farm population, struggling to earn a fair price for the food they grow.

Across Canada, municipalities are increasingly engaging in strategies and policies that support healthy, just, and sustainable food systems. This includes developing community and municipal plans that promote urban agriculture and encourage healthy and innovative food retail; building on municipal assets like libraries, community centers and transit systems; adopting procurement practices and waste recovery initiatives; and championing food charters and strategies. Furthermore, municipalities are well positioned to foster collaborations within and across sectors that support food systems innovation.

In Halifax, the Regional Plan recognizes the importance of preserving agricultural land and requires that the design of communities promotes food security. Halifax leads a strong community garden program. The city has been a key player in the 2016 pilot of the [Mobile Food Market](#), which brings fresh produce to underserved communities. Additionally, the city has played an active role in the [Halifax Food Policy Alliance](#), which produced [Food Counts: Halifax Food Assessment](#). This is a solid foundation upon which we can take the next steps toward building lasting community food security.





Sample Tweets and Facebook posts

(Each fact and question below is less than 140 characters.)

Theme 1: Food Security

Fact: At 15%, NS has one of the highest rates of household food insecurity across Canada.

Fact: One in seven households in Halifax is affected by food insecurity.

Fact: One in five children in NS lives in a food insecure household.

Question: How best can the city work to support a healthy, just and sustainable food system?

Theme 2: Healthy Food Retail

Fact: Many areas in Hfx don't have nearby grocery stores. This means travelling long distances, often on multiple buses, to get healthy food.

Fact: Only 35% of Halifax residents age 12 yrs and up report adequate fruit and vegetable intake.

Question: How will Hfx work to ensure healthy food retail in neighbourhoods, particularly those that have a shortage?

Theme 3: Community Food Programs

Fact: City facilities & land can be used to incubate projects to improve access to healthy food, reduce social isolation, and build skills.

Question: How can Halifax increase land & infrastructure access for community gardens, urban farms and food literacy programs?

Question: How can the city work to support community food programming in municipal facilities?

Theme 4: Social Services

Fact: Good jobs, social services, affordable housing and childcare are essential to achieving food security.

Question: How can Halifax work with the prov and fed govts to ensure a living wage that more accurately reflects the cost of a healthy diet?

Question: How can Halifax work to ensure equitable access to quality transportation?

Question: How can Hfx ensure all residents have the supports needed to access healthy food?

Theme 5: Food Innovation and Collaboration

Fact: Many partners collaborated to launch Hfx's first Mobile Food Market, bringing healthy, affordable food to 5 communities

Fact: 91% of Mobile Food Market survey respondents said that the MFM makes it easier to access fresh fruits and vegetables.

Question: How can Halifax foster partnerships to build & sustain innovative food actions like the Mobile Food Market?





Theme 6: Entrepreneurship

Fact: The agri-food industry provides employment for ~ 10% of NS's work force.

Fact: NS farmers' market sector has grown 3-fold in the last decade.

Question: How can the city work to support food businesses that increase availability of healthy, local food?

Theme 7: Procurement

Fact: Municipal facilities like schools and rec centres provide daily food options for many residents, particularly youth.

Question: How can Halifax work to ensure that local, healthy & culturally appropriate food is being served in all city facilities?

Theme 8: Food Production

Fact: Interest in agriculture is growing: Hfx has 3 urban farms, 41 community gardens, 6 community greenhouses & 164 farms.

Question: What land use policies and zoning bylaws can Hfx strengthen or put in place to preserve agricultural land and promote urban ag?

Theme 9: Food Strategy

Fact: Across Canada there are over 64 municipalities actively working to improve food systems policies & programs.

Fact: Want to know about food in the city? In 2015, the HFPA released Food Counts: Halifax Food Assessment.

Question: What is the city's role in developing a Halifax-wide food strategy?

Additional Facts about Community Food Security (CFS) in Halifax

- In Halifax, 42 of 165 schools have a school garden
- Nova Scotia was the only province in Canada that showed an increase in farm numbers between the last two agriculture censuses (2006-2011)
- There are over 50 breastfeeding-friendly spaces through the Make Breastfeeding Your Business initiative
- There are 43 Feed NS food banks as well as non-affiliated charitable food assistance in Halifax
- Since 2008, NS has seen a 28.6% increase in food bank use. In Halifax, 8,555 people, 2,660 of whom were children, relied on food from a food bank, in 2013
- It costs approximately \$823 per month to feed a family of four with a basic healthy diet in Hfx
- The average distance traveled by a food item from its origin to Halifax is 3976 km
- A healthy, just and sustainable food system is rooted in healthy and resilient communities
- Those on Income Assistance would face a monthly deficit of hundreds of dollars if they were to purchase a basic nutritious diet
- A 2014 study estimates the value of food wasted in Canada at \$31 billion annually





Sample Email to Candidates

Dear _____,

[Introduce yourself – if you are a community gardener, a mobile food market customer, a concerned resident of their district, etc. add it here].

Across Canada, municipalities are increasingly engaging in strategies and policies that support healthy, just, and sustainable food systems. This includes developing community and municipal plans that promote urban agriculture and encourage healthy and innovative food retail; building on municipal assets like libraries, community centers and transit systems; adopting procurement practices and waste recovery initiatives; and championing food charters and strategies. Municipalities are well positioned to foster collaborations within and across sectors that support food systems innovation.

I want to see Halifax build a healthy, just and sustainable food system. If elected to council, how will you work to support a healthy, just, and sustainable food system?

[Pick a few questions from the list on the next page and/or add your own.]

Sincerely,

[Your name]





Sample questions for Candidates

1. How best can the city work to support a healthy, just, and sustainable food system?
2. How would you work to promote urban agriculture and healthy food retail in neighbourhoods?
3. Would you foster collaborative efforts to build and sustain innovative food actions like the Mobile Food Market? If so, how?
4. How do you envision municipal resources (human, infrastructure, financial) being used to support community food security?
5. How would you work to support new food businesses?
6. Would you support the review and amendment of land use policies and zoning bylaws to preserve agricultural land and promote urban agriculture?
7. How will you ensure that local, healthy and culturally appropriate food is being served in all city facilities?
8. What are your ideas for ensuring that healthy food options are available for all residents, where they live, work and play?
9. How will you work to reduce food waste in our city?
10. Do you support more healthy food being sold at easily accessible convenience stores?
11. How will you work with the provincial and federal governments to improve social assistance rates and ensure a living wage which more accurately reflect the cost of a nutritious food basket?
12. How will you support residents to start more community gardens?
13. Would you support the development of a city wide food strategy and if so, what do you see as the city's role in this?





Twitter Tips

Twitter is an easy to use social media platform in which account owners post microblogs in the form of tweets to reach followers. Below are some tips to be a successful Twitter user.

Elements of a Tweet:

A tweet can be a total of 140 characters or less, and this includes spaces, hashtags as well as tagging or mentioning someone in your tweet.

Twitter Vocabulary:

- **Followers:** Anyone who follows your Twitter account and sees your posts. The more followers you have the greater impact your posts will have.
- **Hashtag (#):** Hashtags function to categorize your post by using key words and phrases, or may help provide context to updates that may not have made sense otherwise. Hashtags are placed directly before your key phrase and will not work properly if they contain spaces or punctuation. **The hashtag we're using for this municipal election campaign is #HRMVotes.**
- **@username:** By placing an @ sign in front of a username you can tag another tweeter in your post and the post will show up in their notifications. **Please see the attached spreadsheet for the usernames of the municipal candidates.**
- **Retweet (RT):** This action allows you to share posts that you stand out to you. **The EAC will be posting some photos with food facts and questions throughout the week. We would love if you would re-tweet us!**
- **Direct Message (DM):** Direct messages are private messages that can only be sent to someone who is already following you.

Other Considerations:

- Tweeting questions is a great way to start conversations.
- You can increase your audience by connecting your Twitter account to your Facebook account by sharing your questions or ideas to both social media platforms at the same time.
- The timing of your tweets may be important depending on the intent of your tweet. If your intention is to gain feedback on food policy issues, it would make better sense to post a tweet Monday morning vs. Friday night.
- Each Twitter account has a 1000 tweet limit per day and this includes replies and retweets.
- Visit Twitter Support for more information: <https://support.twitter.com/articles/215585>

For More Information

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References For Sample Tweets and Facebook Posts:

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