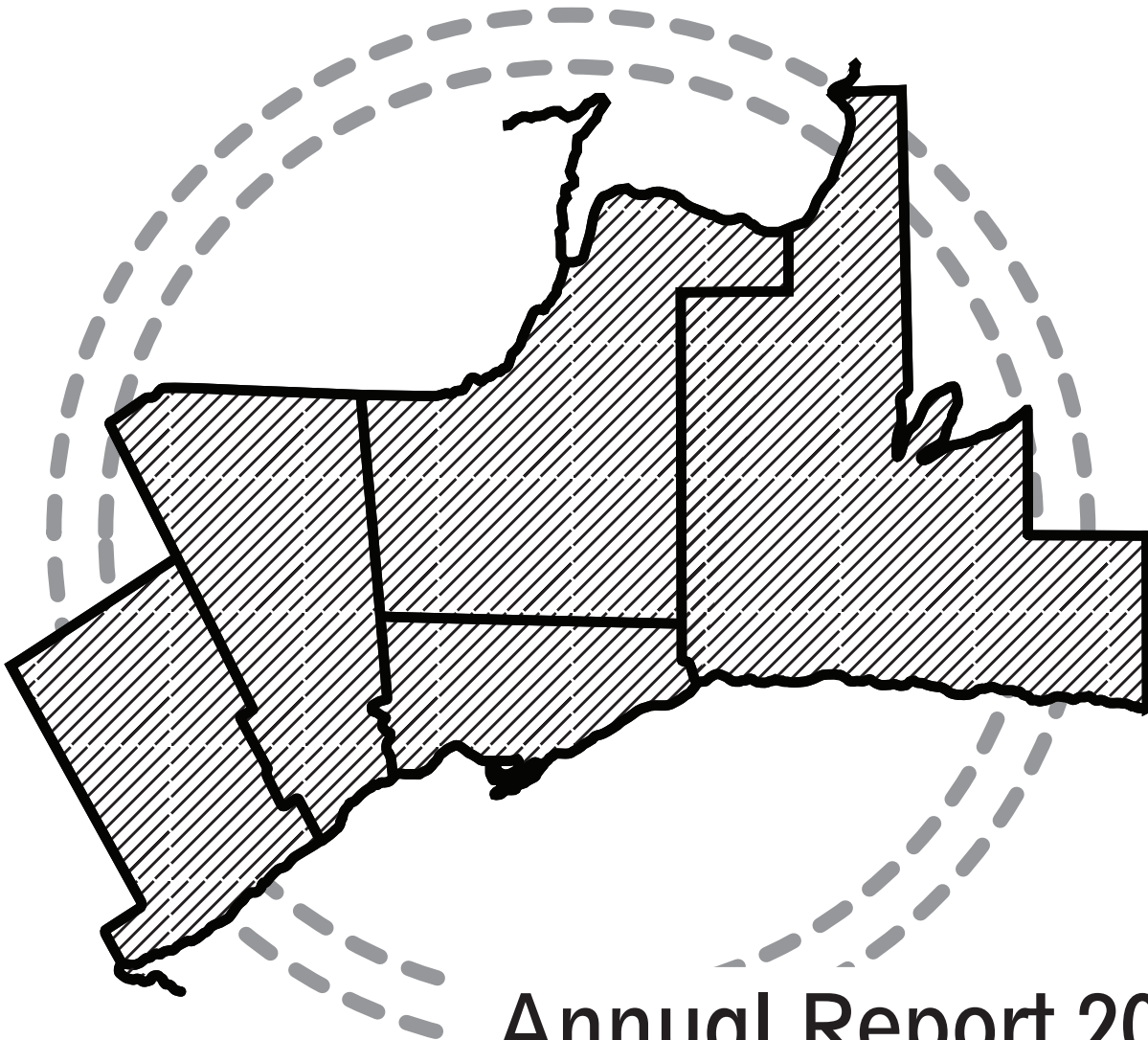

Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee



Annual Report 2006
Business Plan 2007

Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Plan

The development of the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Plan was a multi-stakeholder activity involving the four regional municipalities of Halton, Peel, York and Durham, the four Greater Toronto Area Federations of Agriculture (Halton, Peel, York and Durham), the City of Toronto, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Toronto Food Policy Council and the food sector.

The 37 actions in the GTA Agricultural Action Plan are a comprehensive development strategy for a vibrant farm sector in the GTA. The plan covers economic development, consumer education, marketing local food, land use policy and ways to sustain co-operative working partnerships.

The Plan includes nine priorities:

- Create the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee
- Provide dedicated agricultural economic development capability at the municipalities, with GTA-wide and provincial co-ordination
- Seek reforms in farmland and value-added taxation
- Recognize and adapt to cultural diversity and demographic realities
- Provide programs to assist in farm succession and support new farmers
- Work to achieve PPS and Official Plan changes that better protect agriculture
- Identify a variety of mechanisms for protecting natural areas while benefiting the landowner
- Enable farmers to supplement farm income through compatible secondary uses on the farm
- Adopt transportation policies and programs that keep roads safe for farmers

Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee

The Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Committee (GTA AAC) was created to guide the implementation of the GTA Agricultural Action Plan. It is a unique Committee with a diverse membership representing the stakeholders listed above.

The GTA AAC is the lead on only a few of the 37 Actions. These are the primary focus of the 2007 Business Plan. The other Actions are just as important but they are more dependent on leadership from various partners. The GTA AAC will be urging the partners to do their part and coordinate where appropriate.

Annual Report 2006

Business Plan 2007

Action #1 Rebuild the middle by supporting the development of web-based business-to-business tools for GTA local food: marketing, branding, contracting and procurement
Issue/Opportunity <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The decades-long trend in the food value chain towards a few very large chain stores has allowed food retailers to restructure the food marketplace to serve their interests — reducing many other players, especially farmers, to price takers.2. Farmers want alternative opportunities in the marketplace so that they have more choices than signing up with one or the other retail-run supply chain. This means rebuilding the middle — creating new ways of connecting farmers with consumers.3. In April of 2006 a 10 year Ontario Culinary Tourism Strategy & Action Plan was announced by the Ontario Minister of Tourism. Its Steering Committee has adopted the formation of a business to business website which would serve as a virtual office of culinary tourism.
Action Taken 2006 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Ontario's Culinary Tourism Strategy was presented to the GTA AAC.2. Contact maintained with the Ontario Culinary Tourism Strategy.3. Contact maintained with the GTA Culinary Tourism Pilot.4. Barbara Shopland joined the GTA AAC.
Action Planned 2007 <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Partner with other organizations and initiatives to develop web-based business-to-business tools for local food. (The Ontario Culinary Tourism Strategy has begun the development of a business-to-business website for culinary tourism.)2. Expand the website concept started by the Ontario Culinary Tourism Strategy to include all markets for GTA local food.3. Assist GTA farmers with getting information about their farm production in a format that works for web-based marketing.4. Support the development of specific web-based tools, for example, a search engine that will answer queries such as: "Show all the farm shops

<p>within 10 km of my postal code.”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Support activities that bring together the various businesses showing their production or seeking product on the B-to-B website to develop trust and formalize value chain arrangements. 6. Support the development of brands that enhance the value of GTA local food. 7. Establish a Working Group to guide the project.
<p>Relates to actions for which GTA AAC has lead responsibilities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Action 1. Define the unique strengths of GTA agriculture, and based on these, identify the priority research and development (R&D), business management, technological and marketing requirements to enable this industry to increase its profitability by capitalizing on these strengths. Action 17. Create a forum to facilitate alliances among the different agricultural sectors and outside agencies such as school boards, conservation authorities and the development industry. Action 18. Design a comprehensive communications strategy to promote local farm products and recreation, entertainment and education opportunities on the farm. Action 20. Develop a suite of new marketing techniques, using the population profile, which will capture the different consumer groups e.g. use of different languages and media outlets.
<p>Also relates to actions for which others have lead responsibilities:</p> <p>Actions #3, #4 and #5 of the GTA Agricultural Action Plan</p>

<p>Action #2 Celebrate GTA agriculture at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair</p>
<p>Issue/Opportunity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consumer awareness of the benefits of local food is gaining momentum. The top two benefits identified by an Ipsos Reid survey in November 2006 were: “helps the local economy” (72%) and “supports family farmers.” (73%) 2. A significant number of consumers are buying local food. Forty-five (45%) of survey respondents answered “always” or “usually” to the Ipsos Reid question: “When buying food in the past six months, how often did you buy locally grown food when it was available?” 3. The RAWF is planning to expand its exhibit: Journey to Your Good Health and is planning a Farmers’ Market at the 2007 Fair. 4. The recent Provincial Budget announced money marketing initiatives and the promotion of homegrown food.
<p>Action Taken 2006</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Created a small exhibit for the November 3 to 12 Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. 2. Thirty volunteers from throughout the GTA participated in the exhibit. 3. Celebrated local food and encouraged visitors to think about food miles. 4. Demonstrated the accessibility of fresh and local food with a GTA map showing the location of farm shops, farmers’ markets and other local food venues. 5. Distributed the “farm fresh” maps for each of the regions and a farmers’ market handout for Toronto. 6. Invited visitors to celebrate agriculture in the countryside during 2007. 7. Collected addresses from those interested in receiving the planned GTA Local Food Newsletter. 8. Handed out notepads directing visitors to the GTA Local Food website.
<p>Action Planned 2007</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Celebrate GTA agriculture with a much larger exhibit or presence at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. 2. Assist GTA farmers to participate effectively in the RAWF’s food related plans: an expanded Journey to Your Good Health and a farmers’ market. 3. Create an identifiable presence for the GTA farms that participate in RAWF’s food related plans. 4. Assist GTA farmers, producing ethnic or culturally diverse foods, to participate effectively in the RAWF’s food related plans. 5. Near the GTA farmers participating in the RAWF’s food related plans create an exhibit that demonstrates the accessibility of fresh and local

<p>food in the GTA.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Staff the exhibit with volunteers, including local farmers, from the GTA. 7. Promote a “local first” policy to all visitors. 8. Distribute the “farm fresh” maps for each of the regions and Toronto. 9. Collect addresses from those interested in receiving the GTA Local Food Newsletter. 10. Collect addresses for those interested in subscribing to the GTA Local Food List. 11. Partner with RAWF and other food organizations to develop this exhibit. 12. Establish a Working Group to guide the project.
<p>Relates to actions for which GTA AAC has lead responsibilities:</p> <p>Action 18. Design a comprehensive communications strategy to promote local farm products and recreation, entertainment and education opportunities on the farm.</p> <p>Action 20. Develop a suite of new marketing techniques, using the population profile, which will capture the different consumer groups e.g. use of different languages and media outlets.</p>
<p>Also relates to actions for which others have lead responsibilities:</p> <p>Actions #3 and #21 of the GTA Agricultural Action Plan</p>

Action #3**Communicate the importance of local food and near-urban agriculture in the GTA****Issue/Opportunity**

1. A growing number of organizations in the GTA and beyond are interested in local food and related issues. They want to understand what the GTA AAC is hoping to accomplish and are willing to help organize events that raise the profile of local food.
2. There is much to be learned from projects and initiatives around the world that are promoting local food. Email is the most economical way to reach key influencers with this information.
3. As the number of local initiatives related to local food and the number of celebrations of local food in the GTA increases, a website that provides links to many of them will help consumers find local food and join the celebrations. An email list that circulates announcements, fliers and brochures about local activities will work better for other consumers.

Action Taken 2006

1. The Executive Director made 15 presentations to a range of audiences, on themes, "Understanding the Working Countryside" and "Making Near-urban Agriculture Work." So far, in 2007, he has made 13 presentations with a primary focus on "Rebuilding the Middle: The Challenge Facing Local Food in Local Markets."
2. Partnered with Toronto Food Policy Council, Caledon Countryside Alliance and Local Flavour Plus to organize a local food event at the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair and a local food conference at Black Creek Pioneer Village.
3. Launched the GTA Local Food List documenting the growing importance of local food as a choice for many consumers and providing insight into programs and policies that will enhance local food systems and near-urban agriculture. It is a service to those interested in examples of what is being done to support the development of local food systems around the world. One news story, essay or book review per day is circulated. Interested readers can self-manage their subscription to the List. There are 221 subscribers.
4. Created the GTA Local Food website. It provides links to sources of local food in the GTA and posts some of the activities that celebrate agriculture in the GTA.
5. At a number of events, invited subscriptions to a proposed newsletter: "Discover: Local Harvest, Local Food, Local Flavour." There are 415 subscribers.

Action Planned 2007

1. The Executive Director will make presentation on “Rebuilding the Middle,” as opportunities arise.
2. Grow the partnership that organizes local food events and support the organization of three events during the year, for example, a networking event for participants in the local food chain (farmers to chefs, farmers and institutional buyers), a conference and a talk.
3. Circulate sample stories about local food policies and programs from around the world to key influencers in the GTA to encourage them to subscribe to the GTA Local Food List.
4. Maintain the links on the website and add more of the activities in the GTA that celebrate local food and near-urban agriculture.
5. Launch the newsletter: “Discover: Local Harvest, Local Food, Local Flavour.” It can circulate announcements, fliers and brochures that are prepared by others about their local activities and celebrations.

Relates to actions for which GTA AAC has lead responsibilities:

- Action 8.. Raise awareness of funding opportunities for GTA agri-businesses to capitalize on the local urban market.
- Action 13. Develop specific communication strategies to reach key decision-makers.
- Action 15. Develop a comprehensive inventory of marketing programs and initiatives, organizations and education curricula.
- Action 17. Create a forum to facilitate alliances among the different agricultural sectors and outside agencies such as school boards, conservation authorities and the development industry.
- Action 18. Design a comprehensive communications strategy to promote local farm products and recreation, entertainment and education opportunities on the farm.
- Action 20. Develop a suite of new marketing techniques, using the population profile, which will capture the different consumer groups e.g. use of different languages and media outlets.

Also relates to actions for which others have lead responsibilities:

- Action 12. Identify and compile key contacts and staff within each level of government and/or agency as key decision-makers within their organization.
- Action 14. Use the GTA Agriculture Profile Update as the basis for communication with the identified decision makers and to promote/educate agriculture to the broader public audience and key decision-makers.

<p>Action #4 Improve agricultural economic development throughout the GTA</p>
<p>Issue/Opportunity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Near-urban agriculture has unique challenges. 2. Near-urban agriculture has unique opportunities. 3. Each of our participating municipalities is paying attention to the economic potential of agriculture. 4. OMAFRA & AAFC are at the table 5. There is much to be gained by learning from each others experiences and by coordination of some of the initiatives.
<p>Action Taken 2006</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Working Group made up of economic development staff, OMAFRA staff and others from the municipalities held a series of meetings to share insights and coordinate activities. 2. A variety of economic development projects were completed around the GTA, for example, farm fresh maps and farm tours.
<p>Action Planned 2007</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue the meetings of the Working Group. 2. Continue the development of projects around the GTA. 3. Plan an Update of the GTA Agricultural Profile based on 2006 Census data. 4. Draft best practice documents for the various agricultural economic activities being developed around the GTA.
<p>Relates to actions for which GTA AAC has lead responsibilities: Action 16. Produce an Agricultural Education and Marketing Best Practices document for use throughout the agriculture industry.</p>
<p>Also relates to actions for which others have lead responsibilities: Action 9. Provide for dedicated agricultural economic development capability at the GTA municipalities and overall GTA coordination to promote local agriculture, connect producers with local markets including retailers and restaurants, and provide business support.</p>

<p>Action #5 Develop a toolkit for near-urban agriculture</p>
<p>Issue/Opportunity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As a result of the Places to Grow Act, Greenbelt Act and the revised Policy Statement under the Planning Act, GTA municipalities are reviewing their Official Plans. 2. Farmers are frustrated with the growing commuter traffic on just about every road in the GTA. 3. Governments at all levels are supporting stewardship initiatives on farms but most of the money is spent on one-time changes rather long-term stewardship patterns. 4. The concept of paying for environmental goods and services is being studied.
<p>Action Taken 2006</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborated with the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph, to develop research on a number of planning tools designed to enhance and energize near-urban agriculture. 2. Made an application to the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation for Funding. It was not funded. 3. Participated in a research project led by the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph into the viability of agriculture in the Greenbelt Belt.
<p>Action Planned 2007</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contribute to the Official Plan reviews that are happening throughout the GTA. 2. Urge the municipalities to undertake a specific study into tools that will support the success of near-urban agriculture. Tools that need attention include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Small farm enterprise zones, b. Mixed use countryside economic development, c. Energy self-sufficiency projects a permitted use in agricultural and rural zones. 3. Include in the study an examination of existing land use policies and regulations that hinder the success of near-urban agriculture, in particular the land use policies and regulations of the Niagara Escarpment Act, the Oak Ridges Moraine Act and the Greenbelt Act. 4. Ask regional Transportation Commissioners for a report on the initiatives taken and under consideration for making roads safe for farmers. 5. Raise the issue of road safety in near-urban agriculture at the Good Roads convention. 6. Explore ways of paying farmers for the environmental goods and services

they produce while producing food — creating a fee-for-service approach instead of the cost-share approach used by current stewardship programs.

Relates to actions for which others have lead responsibilities:

- Action 27. Continue protecting a critical mass of high priority agricultural land through a strengthened PPS, together with municipal agricultural designations. Prevent fragmentation of land by restricting or prohibiting rural severance policies in Official Plans.
- Action 28. Recognizing the evolving needs of farmers and reality of non-farm uses in the agricultural area, ensure Minimum Distance Separation requirements are included in zoning by-laws and implemented by Building Officials, and ensure there is public, staff and Council awareness of Normal Farm Practices, as represented in the Farming and Food Production Protection Act and MOE regulations governing pesticide use, Nutrient Management, etc.
- Action 29. The new Provincial Policy Statement should strengthen the criteria that need to be assessed in justification studies for taking land out of agriculture. Current approaches are too discretionary.
- Action 30. Investigate and evaluate different approaches to protecting GTA agricultural land via agricultural preserves for example, building on Markham, Pickering, Niagara, Oak Ridges Moraine and U.S. experiences.
- Action 35. Councils should consider adopting policies to permit secondary uses on the farm to enable the farm entity to improve economic viability. To ensure compatibility with existing farm and non-farm uses, secondary uses must be subject to tests that must be met based on local circumstances.
- Action 36. Adopt policies to permit value-added and agri-tainment operations that are compatible with surrounding agriculture, as these uses can increase farm income and provide an excellent opportunity to improve public appreciation of and support for GTA agriculture.
- Action 37. Adopt consistent transportation policies and programs for regional and local roads to ensure safe movement of farm vehicles e.g. efficient public transit to keep commuters off rural roads, slow-moving vehicle signage, consultation with farmers during transportation master planning, Class Environmental Assessments and during capital and operating budget deliberations. Farmers need to be consulted on rural road designs and upgrades (e.g. road type, alignments, shoulders, cross-sections, and sign placement).

<p>Action #6 Create opportunities for beginning farmers, especially those with ethnic and culturally diverse backgrounds</p>
<p>Issue/Opportunity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The GTA population has become very diverse, ethnically and culturally. 2. GTA agriculture has an aging farm population. 3. Ontario agriculture is attracting many second-career farmers.
<p>Action Taken 2006</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A population profile for the GTA is in progress at regional planning departments. 2. Contact maintained with Peter Mitchell's efforts to facilitate the development of resources for ethnic and culturally diverse farmers. 3. Contact maintained with FarmStart's efforts to create a program for beginning farmers, including ethnic and culturally diverse farmers. 4. Contact maintained with the Ontario Farmland Trust and their interest in new approaches to managing farmland. 5. Contact maintained with Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and their interest in making some of their land available for diverse food production. 6. Assisted in the development and delivery of a "Grow Your Opportunities" conference for farmers in Halton/Peel.
<p>Action Planned 2007</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain contact with the various groups that are creating opportunity for beginning farmers, especially those with ethnic and culturally diverse backgrounds. 2. Encourage researchers to explore the market for ethnic and culturally diverse food.
<p>Relates to actions for which others have lead responsibilities:</p> <p>Action 21. Investigate new opportunities to cater to changing cultural diversity and demographics, e.g. production of healthy products for consumers who value locally grown food.</p> <p>Action 24. Programs to promote and support entry-level farmers should be implemented, such as apprenticeship programs and coop placements for high school, community college and university students.</p> <p>Action 32. Encourage the Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) to develop programs, identify securement mechanisms (including financial) and obtain support from the province, municipal Councils and agricultural organizations.</p>

<p>Action #7 Taxation of near-urban farmland, on-farm value-added activities and on-farm businesses</p>
<p>Issue/Opportunity</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Property taxes are a burden for near-urban agriculture. 2. Existing property tax rules discourage new on-farm value-added activities and new on-farm business activities
<p>Action Taken 2006</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Halton Hills has modified the way it collects property taxes on farmland. 2. Durham Region has modified the way it collects property taxes on farmland.
<p>Action Planned 2007</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Seek options for moderating the burden of property taxes on new on-farm value-added activities and new on-farm business activities. 2. Ask the regional Commissioners of Finance for options. 3. Participate in the provincial review of the taxation of farmland, on-farm value-added activities and on-farm business activities. 4. Contribute the near-urban challenges to the work of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture on property taxes.
<p>Relates to actions for which others have lead responsibilities:</p> <p>Action 10. Collaboration between the agricultural industry and municipalities in lobbying the Ontario Ministry of Finance for fair farmland and value-added tax assessment. Tax incentives should be also be considered to reduce speculation in urban fringe areas, promote the industry to young farmers and encourage innovation.</p> <p>Action 11. Municipal governments should explore options for reducing farmland tax assessment.</p>

GTA Agricultural Action Fund
Statement of Financial Position
as of December 31, 2005
(unaudited)

Assets	
Cash and investments	792,477
Total assets	\$ 792,477
Liabilities	
Deferred contribution (Note 3)	792,477
Total liabilities	\$ 792,477

GTA Agricultural Action Fund
Statement of Operations
for the year ended December 31, 2005
(unaudited)

Revenues	
Provincial Funding	\$ (7,523)
Contributions	(1,000)
Total revenues	(8,523)
Expenses	
Materials & Supplies	3,284
Official functions	4,285
Recruitment advertising	954
Total expenses	8,523
Excess revenues over expenses	\$ -

GTA Agricultural Action Fund

Notes to Financial Statements

for the year ended December 31, 2005
(unaudited)

1. Purpose of the fund

The Municipalities of York, Durham, Halton and Peel collectively received \$800,000 on May 10, 2005 to implement a GTA Agricultural Action Plan.

2. Significant accounting policies

The GTA Agriculture Action Fund follows the accrual method of accounting for revenues and

3. Deferred contributions

The deferred contributions arise from MMAH unspent contribution. Changes in deferred contributions for the period are as follows:

Beginning balance	\$ 800,000
Plus: Contributions during the year	1,000
Less: Operating expenses	<u>8,523</u>
Ending balance	<u>\$ 792,477</u>

GTA Agricultural Action Fund
Statement of Financial Position
as of December 31, 2006
(unaudited)

Assets	
Cash and investments	781,863
Total assets	\$ 781,863
Liabilities	
Deferred contribution (Note 3)	781,863
Total liabilities	\$ 781,863

GTA Agricultural Action Fund
Statement of Operations
for the year ended December 31, 2006
(unaudited)

Revenues	
Provincial Funding	\$ (10,615)
Interest Earned	(50,394)
Total revenues	(61,009)
Expenses	
Professional services	53,834
Material & Supplies	6,373
Official functions	401
Training & development	217
Travel	183
Total expenses	61,009
Excess revenues over expense	\$ -

GTA Agricultural Action Fund

Notes to Financial Statements

for the year ended December 31, 2006
(unaudited)

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The Municipalities of York, Durham, Halton and Peel collectively received \$800,000 on May 10, 2005 to implement a GTA Agricultural Action Plan.

2. Significant accounting policies

The GTA Agriculture Action Fund follows the accrual method of accounting for revenues and

3. Deferred contributions

The deferred contributions arise from MMAH unspent contribution. Changes in deferred contributions for the period are as follows:

Beginning balance	\$	792,477
Plus: Contributions during the year		50,394
Less: Operating expenses		61,009
Ending balance	\$	<u>781,863</u>

**GTA Agricultural Action Committee
BUDGET**

January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007

BEGINNING BALANCE GTA AAC Trust Fund on Transfer to TRCA	782,000
REVENUES	
2007 Trust Fund Interest Income	20,000
Total Revenues	20,000
POSTPONED EXPENSES 2006	
2006 Expenses not processed by Halton Region before transfer of Fund to TRCA	19,000
Total Postponed Expenses 2006	19,000
CASH & INVESTMENTS AVAILABLE FOR 2007	783,000
CAPITAL EXPENSES	
Office Equipment including software	10,000
Total Capital Expenses	10,000
OPERATIONS	
Meeting Support	
Annual Meeting	5,000
Meeting refreshments	2,500
Room rental	1,000
Members travel	1,000
Total Meeting Support	9,500
Professional Services	
Executive Director	85,000
Executive Director's Benefits	17,827
Executive Director's travel & meeting expenses	9,173
Administrative support	20,000
Administrative support expenses	1,000
General accounting services (TRCA)	2,500
Auditor	2,000
Total Professional Services	137,500
Office Space, Supplies & Services	
Office space & furniture rental	2,875
Communications, technical support	3,600
Access to office equipment (colour printer, fax)	525
Office organization & consumables	1,000
Total Office Space, Supplies & Services	8,000
Total Operations	155,000
PROJECT SUPPORT	
Seed money for Business-to-Business Website for local food (Economic Development)	25,000
Exhibit at Royal Agricultural Winter Fair (Education & Marketing)	30,000
Business Plan Activities	30,000
Total Project Support	85,000
Total 2007 Budget	250,000
GTA AAC TRUST FUND BALANCE AT END OF 2007	532,000

GTA Agricultural Action Committee
BUDGET
January 1, 2007 to December 31, 2007

Notes to the budget

1. Revenues

Interest earned by the Fund during 2006 was \$33,437

2. Postponed Expenses 2006

Halton Region stopped processing GTA AAC invoices on December 31, 2006 in order .
to facilitate the transfer of the Fund to TRCA. A number of 2006 invoices were not ready
until after that date.

3. Administrative Support

To be provided by TRCA - one to two days per week.