

July 27, 2021



City of Port Colborne

Mayor Steele and Council

% [bill.steele@niagararegion.ca](mailto:bill.steele@niagararegion.ca) and Nancy Giles, % [nancygiles@portcolborne.ca](mailto:nancygiles@portcolborne.ca)

CC: Dan Aquilina, Director, City Planner, % [danaquilina@portcolborne.ca](mailto:danaquilina@portcolborne.ca)

Dear Mayor Steele, Mr. Aquilina and Members of Council,

Food security is a basic human right yet almost 60,000 people in Niagara are food insecure, experiencing limited access to nutritious, affordable and culturally appropriate food. Food security is essential for healthy eating - without consistent economic access to sufficient nutritious food, healthy eating cannot be achieved, increasing the risk of poor health.

Community gardens act as a promising strategy to decrease food insecurity because of their ability to provide lower-income households with access to nutritious food. More than 1,200 community gardens across Niagara are significantly improving access to healthy and affordable food, often for the most marginalized populations. **Yet, Niagara's community gardens face consistent barriers. The enclosed position statement amplifies the need to address specific barriers that community gardens face in Niagara. It also calls to action the implementation of policies, bylaws and/or practices that improve food security through community gardens.**

Niagara's municipalities have a role in creating barrier free access. The Halton Food Council's Community Garden Policy Scan clearly states **"Local governments do have a significant role to play in the process: by removing policy barriers; enacting supportive policies; providing support related to water access, land tenure, and composting; by signaling their support of community gardens in government communications; and by dedicating staff time to interact with community gardening groups."**

**We highly recommend Niagara's municipalities implement policies and best practices related to:**

- Land Use for community gardens, urban agriculture and food security
- Waiving or reducing fees imposed by the municipality
- Provide options for holding certificates of insurance
- Commitment to the program with reasonable annual investment
- Ongoing program evaluation and development

We thank you in advance for your attention to the statement, the recommendations and for working in your community to advance the impact of community gardens. We look forward to working with you to address these barriers. Should you have any questions or wish to follow up, please contact Tamara Coleman-Lawrie at [tamara@unitedwayniagara.org](mailto:tamara@unitedwayniagara.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Frances Hallworth".

Frances Hallworth  
Executive Director  
United Way Niagara

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tamara Coleman-Lawrie".

Tamara Coleman-Lawrie  
Director, Community Impact, United Way Niagara  
Facilitator, Niagara Food Security Network