

Getting Food Issues on the Radar: A year of elections...a year of opportunity!

This year voters are faced with three elections, and three opportunities to raise the issues related to food security:

- Federal Election date: October 14
- Municipal Elections date: November 15
- Provincial Election date: May 12, 2009

The most important thing you can do during an election time is VOTE! As voter turnout is historically low (especially at the Municipal level), your vote has a lot of power. Getting others out to vote is also very important. It can be daunting to learn about your candidates and where they stand on issues. Some of the ways to do this are to:

- Search for information on the web
- Attend all candidates meetings; ask candidates what steps they would take to address issues related to strengthening regional food security
- Read local newspaper coverage
- Ask your friends, family and peers what they are looking for in their candidates and why

Following are some ideas for actions around the elections that have been submitted to CR-FAIR. There is also a list of possible questions you might put out to your local candidates. We hope this gives you some ideas about participating in the elections and getting food issues on the radar.

Opportunities that elections provide:

1. putting food issues into the public spotlight during the elections
2. increasing participation of citizens in the electoral process, getting people out to vote
3. finding out where candidates/representatives stand on the issues
4. providing information to voters
5. promoting voting for, and election of, food friendly candidates
6. setting the stage for post election action-opening the door

Ten Ideas for activities that can be done during the election process

1. Provide information to networks about the election, when the all candidates meetings are, and reminders to vote (email listserves, meetings, etc.).
2. Send information to all the candidates and ask them to provide answers to some specific questions (see below). Formulate questions that allow you to come back after they are elected to hold them to it/help them do it.

3. Publicize candidates' responses /positions- through the media, writing letters to the editor, holding meetings, writing to newsletters, etc.).
4. Send a list of food system related questions out to your networks to take to all candidates meetings, people can add their own questions or adapt them to their liking.
5. Host a networking meeting of candidates who are supportive of food issues
6. Endorse candidates if they are able to give support to key points or a written statement. Have a number of groups or your network agree to support candidates and promote them through the networks if they sign on.
7. Invite candidates to a forum where they will be asked to respond to some key statements, or provide a forum where they can express their concerns and ideas/solutions about food security issues-send follow up information of what you learn to your networks.
8. Attend all candidates meetings on related topics (economy, environment, housing, health) and pose questions related to food security and the topic.
9. Write a letter to the editor outlining key issues and concerns, stating these are election issues and ask people to take them out to the all-candidates meetings and also meet directly with candidates in their area
10. Start an email campaign –identifying who are the food friendly candidates in your jurisdiction and anything you know about what they have already done in the area or promise to do.

Ten Questions around food security issues for your candidates

1. Food production and transportation is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions. On a scale of 1 to 5 how importantly do you rate the production of food regionally, in an attempt to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions?
2. If elected, would you support the adoption of the Capital Region Food Charter for your jurisdiction?
3. Do you agree that all lands in the ALR should remain within the ALR?
4. Would you commit to strengthening the rules against non food-related development on ALR lands?

5. Would you support the use of municipal lands and infrastructure for farmers' markets?
6. Would you support a municipal food purchasing policy embedding a 10% annual increase of foodstuffs served at municipal outlets being produced within the region?
7. Would you guarantee space and tenure for community gardens in your municipality? How would you do so?
8. What would you do to ensure that vulnerable populations have access to sufficient, good, local food?
9. Would you support the development of a Regional Food Policy Council? What would you see as their most important task?
10. Would you advocate for the municipality to work with other levels of government on food security issues? What issues do you see as being a priority for this region?

Here are three websites to find out more information about the elections and voting:

- Municipal: www.municipalelections.com/voters_guide.htm
- Federal: www.elections.ca/vot/abo/guide_ojib.pdf
- Provincial: www.electionsbc.ca

Here are some interesting links with information about different Federal election and voting strategies:

- [Beyond Factory Farming](#) (pdf)
- Election Action Kit – Make this election about Food Justice, from USC Canada (<http://usc-canada.org/what-you-can-do/election/>)

For those interested in “strategic voting” here are some interesting websites:

<http://democraticspace.com/blog/strategic-voting-guide>
www.voteforenvironment.ca
www.voteforclimate.ca

For an analysis of the Parties' environmental records:

<http://elections.desmogblog.com>