

## **Establishing a Regional Food Policy Council**

There are many things to celebrate about our food system here in the Capital Region. However, it is still a fractured system with significant gaps and challenges that affect the production, processing, distribution and general accessibility to our fresh local food. We have CR-FAIR (Capital Regional Food and Agriculture Initiatives Roundtable) doing food system work with a strong connection to the community, ensuring those 'voices' are heard. Many groups, including LifeCycles, are working outside of the governmental sphere to get positive food work done. The niche to be filled is the connection to decision makers – those that affect policy, programs and funds that are directed in our region.

For this reason, CR-FAIR, in partnership with the CRD Roundtable on the Environment's Food and Agriculture Sub-Committee, has determined through research and input from the public that the need for a Regional Food Policy Council in BC's Capital Region. Food Policy Councils (FPC's) are innovative collaborations between citizens, government officials, health authorities and interested stakeholders that play an integral role when it comes to food systems planning. A Food Policy Council (FPC) would provide a forum to develop, adopt, monitor and evaluate policies and practices related to the regional food system and the connection of this system to community, health and environment objectives. They must be visionary, forward thinking and strategic in their efforts to identify what kind of food system they want for their city or region.

We are proposing the FPC be housed within the Capital Regional District as an advisory to the Board. The FPC would also be inherently connected to the community through its membership, including CR-FAIR and PAC (Peninsula Agricultural Commission). CR-FAIR will continue with its mandate; having grassroots groups working in tandem with a government affiliated FPC is arguably the best arrangement to tackle long-term systemic problems that plague our regional food system.

Over the next months, CR-FAIR and the Food and Agriculture Sub-Committee will be making presentations to relevant committees, councils and boards at a municipal and CRD level to move this proposal forward. Questions or interested in finding out more? Contact Paula Hesje (The Land Conservancy) [PHesje@conservancy.bc.ca](mailto:PHesje@conservancy.bc.ca), Linda Geggie or David Coney.