

# Engaging with Governments for Food Security - It's Election Time!

**The BC Food Systems Network** is encouraging members around the Province to look at opportunities to bring food issues to the forefront during the upcoming municipal elections.

How do we ensure that municipal councils will be working towards a more localized, equitable and sustainable food systems?

Getting active during the elections fits into a greater longer-term strategy to work with all levels of government, to promote more food secure communities.

The following information outlines:

1. Upcoming election date
2. Opportunities that elections provide to get food issues into the limelight
3. 10 ideas for activities that can be done during an election process
4. 10 questions you can ask your candidates

Here is a link for more info about voting:

[http://www.municipalelections.com/voters\\_guide.htm](http://www.municipalelections.com/voters_guide.htm)

## 1. Upcoming Election

Municipal Elections date: November 15, 2014

## 2. Opportunities

Possibly the most important thing you can do during an election time is to VOTE! As voter turnout is so low (especially at the Municipal level), your vote has a lot of power and getting others out to vote is also important.

It is important to learn about your candidates and your choices. Some of the ways to do this are to:

- Search for information on the web
- Attend all candidates meetings
- Read your local newspaper
- Ask people about who they are voting for and why



**BC Food Systems Network**

Following are some ideas for actions around the elections that have been submitted to us. 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

### **3. 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 ideas below). Formulate questions that allow you to come back after they are elected to hold them to it/help them do it.
3. Publicize candidate's responses /positions through the media, write letters to the editor, hold meetings, write to newsletters, etc.
4. Send a list of food systems 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. If you can, 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 – identify 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.

#### 4. Ten Possible Questions for Candidates

1. What do you think is the municipalities' role in planning and promoting sustainable food systems?
2. What would be your priority project related to food and agriculture over your term?
3. A Food Charter sets out a vision for a health oriented, local and equitable food system. If elected, would you support the adoption of a Food Charter for your jurisdiction?
4. Is protecting farmland for future generations important to you? Do you agree that all lands in the ALR should remain within the ALR? Are there other ways that we can ensure land is available and accessible for growing food into the future?
5. Food production and transportation is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions. How importantly do you rate the production of food regionally, in an attempt to mitigate climate change?
6. Would you support the use of municipal lands and infrastructure to support the development of local food systems, for example for farmers markets, demonstration sites, farm incubators, leasing land to farmers, community gardens, food hubs?
7. Would you support a municipal food purchasing policy, embedding a 10% target for municipal outlets having food being produced from within the region?
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 to work on with other levels of government?

